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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Tuesday 6 April 2010**

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# House of Commons

*Tuesday 6 April 2010*

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

## PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Oral Answers to Questions

### FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### Afghanistan

1. **Andrew Selous** (South-West Bedfordshire) (Con): What assessment he has made of developments in Afghanistan since the London conference of January 2010. [325349]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (David Miliband):** Since the London conference, the Government of Afghanistan have made progress on some of their commitments, including the Afghan Cabinet's decision to approve the sub-national governance strategy and President Karzai's recent decree boosting the high office of oversight's powers to tackle and investigate corruption. In other areas, progress is slow—too slow. We continue to work with the Afghan authorities to encourage similar progress to be made in those other areas.

**Andrew Selous:** One area of our policy in Afghanistan—where, tragically, another British soldier lost his life at the weekend—on which I believe the Government have failed very badly is explaining to the public why we are there. Does the Foreign Secretary believe that that is the case and, if so, what is he going to do about it?

**David Miliband:** Every death of a British soldier in Afghanistan is a tragic event, and I think that the hon. Gentleman's attempt to link this to a particular Government decision is unwise and not worthy of him. There is unity across the House that the border lands of Afghanistan and Pakistan are the gravest terrorist threat to this country and that stability in Afghanistan is absolutely essential not only to countering the threat that al-Qaeda might re-establish itself there, but to achieving stability in Pakistan. That is the fundamental reason why we are there, and it is why all three major political parties support our presence there. We all know, however, that there will not be a military solution in Afghanistan—the combined military and civilian effort will create the conditions for a political settlement, which is, after all, the only way to provide stability in that country.

**Mrs. Ann Cryer** (Keighley) (Lab): What assessment has my right hon. Friend made of developments in Afghanistan regarding the well-being of women and their health, education and ability to work for their families?

**David Miliband:** I am sorry that this will be the last occasion on which my hon. Friend asks a question in this House; she has raised a very important point. On education, one can point to a qualitative shift. There are now, after all, about 6 million to 7 million children in school in Afghanistan, nearly half of them girls, which is a complete revolution in comparison with a decade ago. In other areas, however, as we heard from the civil society representatives at the London conference, progress has been much slower, including in areas such as political representation and health care, which my hon. Friend mentioned.

**Mr. William Hague** (Richmond, Yorks) (Con): Amidst all the debates that we will have in the coming election campaign, should we not all remember that throughout every hour of it we have 10,000 British servicemen and women in real battles in Afghanistan and that their role must be a paramount concern for whoever is elected on 6 May? Is it not true that the military advances made on the ground will be of long-term benefit only if the Afghan political processes also succeed and are seen to be legitimate? When the Prime Minister announced UK strategy for Afghanistan in November last year, he pledged that President Karzai would ensure that all 400 Afghan provinces and districts had a governor free from corruption and appointed on merit within nine months—by August this year. Is the Foreign Secretary confident that such benchmarks will still be met?

**David Miliband:** Perhaps you will allow me, Mr. Speaker, to say that I thought it completely appropriate for the Prime Minister when he spoke in Downing street this morning—and for the Leader of the Opposition when he made his response and for the leader of the Liberal Democrats, who I think took time out from the hurly-burly and political battles that the right hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) mentioned—to say that this election campaign provides a chance not to forget what is going on in Afghanistan, but to discuss with and engage the British people on that issue. That is something that I—and, I hope, other right hon. and hon. Members—will be keen to do, because this is the time to engage the British people on the sacrifice being made and the purposes behind it.

As to President Karzai's commitment, I believe that it was in his inaugural speech in the third week of November when he made the commitment to the transfer of security leadership and to extend governance issues in respect of corruption. The Prime Minister's commitment remains. Early signs, over the three or four months since the announcement, have been positive and a number of provinces have had replacement governors who are, I think, an improvement on their predecessors.

**Mr. Hague:** In light of all that, should we not all accept how alarming it is to those who support the efforts of British forces in Afghanistan to read so many reports in recent days of apparent division between President Karzai and western nations? Given that steps to reduce corruption and to improve local government are vital for the counter-insurgency effort, is the Foreign Secretary absolutely confident that relations between this country and the US on the one hand and President Karzai on the other hand are as they should be, and that there is a clear enough mutual understanding of the approach needed to handle the situation in Kandahar, to conduct the elections well in September and to make

progress on the integration and reconciliation process? Is he happy that all that is as it should be? Is not agreement on such things indispensable to our success in Afghanistan?

**David Miliband:** Agreement on such things is, indeed, indispensable, but verbal agreement is, of course, only one step in the process. I am absolutely confident that since the London conference there has been renewed unity not only between Britain and the United States but across the international coalition about the military and civilian strategy that is needed and the political settlement that can be generated. In respect of the Afghan Government, as I said in Kabul in November, words must be turned into deeds. That is the case both now and in the run-up to the Kabul conference, which is the moment when the international effort generated in London and the Afghan effort mobilised locally by a new Government—whose Cabinet has not yet been fully appointed, which points to some of the problems that exist—will need to be joined. That will be a very important moment to judge progress and how much confidence we should have. It would be unwise at this stage to say anything other than that we must continue to press very strongly on the agenda that President Karzai set out in November and that we have committed to—and we want to see it matched.

Finally, if you will allow me, Mr. Speaker—I apologise for talking at such length, but the Afghan issue is so important—the right hon. Gentleman has referred to comments made at the weekend. It is very important that we say very clearly that any suggestion that Britain, or any other country, has irregularly interfered in the election processes of Afghanistan is completely without foundation. Our troops were there guaranteeing the safety of people seeking to go and vote. I am sure that it is a unified position across this House to have absolutely no truck with such malign suggestions, especially about our troops, but actually about our whole country.

**Sir Menzies Campbell** (North-East Fife) (LD): I associate myself and my hon. and right hon. Friends with the Secretary of State's observations about Afghanistan and the debt that we owe to those who serve there, but, in his usual restrained way, he has not, I think, given the House a full and proper account of the Government's response to these extraordinary and bizarre allegations of external interference in the presidential elections. What representations has Her Majesty's Government made to President Karzai about these allegations, and if he is to be the centrepiece of political development, how can we have confidence when he makes such remarks?

**David Miliband:** I pleaded with Mr. Speaker to allow me to get in an extra sentence or two in order to address that, and I am sorry if that did not provide the comprehensive answer that the right hon. and learned Gentleman wanted. The Prime Minister spoke to President Karzai on Sunday, when he made absolutely clear our position in respect of these allegations. President Karzai did not repeat the allegations; in fact, he committed himself to working with the United Kingdom, but as I said in respect of an earlier question, it is important to turn those assurances into deeds. President Karzai is the elected leader of Afghanistan—he is the choice of the Afghan people. He certainly got more votes than any other candidate in the election, and it is by virtue of that election that he is our partner in securing our interests in that country.

## European Security and Defence Assembly

2. **Mr. Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): What his policy is on the future of the European Security and Defence Assembly. [325350]

**The Minister for Europe (Chris Bryant):** Following the lead we in the UK gave last week, as laid out in my written ministerial statement, all 10 member states have agreed to close the Western European Union. We believe that future arrangements for inter-parliamentary dialogue should reflect the intergovernmental nature of European security and defence policy, should involve all EU and non-EU European allies and should be cost-effective for the British taxpayer.

**Mr. Chope:** I thank the Minister for that response, but is he not closing down one organisation without clearly setting out the arrangements that he wishes to put in place for the proper scrutiny of international defence issues?

**Chris Bryant:** That was not a unilateral decision, although the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that Britain took the lead. Many countries said that they wanted further action and that the architecture for examining common security and defence policy in Europe was no longer sufficient, but they did not want to do anything about it. We took the courageous step of saying that we wanted to withdraw. We now have a year during which we can negotiate precisely what the future structure should look like. I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman and others who have sat on the Assembly, but it was costing us some €2.3 million a year, and we believe that that money could be better spent elsewhere.

**Ms Gisela Stuart** (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): Whether it is the WEU or the Council of Europe, is the Minister satisfied that we increasingly only have structures that serve those countries which are member states of the EU and that therefore marginalise those countries which are not? I think that that will do us long-term damage.

**Chris Bryant:** The complexity of the WEU was that it had so many different categories of membership. There were the 10 core member countries, but all 27 members of the EU were allied, and then there were other countries, such as NATO allies, who took on observer status. That is why we believe that now is the right time to put together a more appropriate structure, so that the Parliaments around Europe, including our allies such as Turkey—one of the countries which my hon. Friend may have been alluding to—can closely scrutinise the common foreign, defence and security policy that has developed across the whole of Europe.

**Mr. Mark Francois** (Rayleigh) (Con): The Minister pointed out in his written statement of 30 March that the EU's common security and defence policy remains intergovernmental and is thus a matter for national Parliaments. How does he see these arrangements operating in future, and how will he accommodate NATO allies such as Turkey and Norway, which are associate members of the current Assembly but which are not in the EU? How is this actually going to work?

**Chris Bryant:** One of the most important things is that we ensure that we have a cost-effective structure. The costs that have been incurred by the WEU Assembly alone for the United Kingdom over the past few years have been phenomenal. We believe, as does every other country among the 10 core members, that it is right to wind up that organisation. We do not believe it would be right—I can probably garner the hon. Gentleman's support for this, at least—for the European Parliament to take on responsibility for considering this matter. We believe that it is clearly laid down in the Lisbon treaty that that should not be a responsibility for the European Parliament. I look forward to debating some of those issues with him over the next few weeks, since he has already turned down five debates with me on Europe since the beginning of the year.

### Middle East Peace Process

3. **Richard Burden** (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): What his most recent assessment is of progress in the middle east peace process; and if he will make a statement. [325351]

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Ivan Lewis):** We welcome the Quartet's determination to move swiftly to proximity talks addressing issues of substance. We continue to press both sides to show the courage, commitment and compromise needed to make real progress. The UK remains determined to do everything possible to achieve comprehensive peace in the middle east.

**Richard Burden:** You will know, Mr. Speaker, that although all hon. Members in this place spend most of their time taking up issues at home, issues that arise abroad affect us all. Does my hon. Friend share my concern at the escalating violence in Gaza, and will the UK Government make it clear to the Israeli authorities that we will oppose any repeat of Operation Cast Lead and that no UK arms or equipment should be used in any such operation?

**Mr. Lewis:** My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to our concerns about the escalation of violence over the weekend. We want to see an immediate end to all violence in Gaza. The rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel must stop, and we also urge restraint from the Israelis. More fundamentally, we want to see Israel remove all obstacles to humanitarian assistance getting into Gaza, and we want to see the release of Gilad Shalit. Both steps would be important confidence building measures in support of the peace process.

**Mr. Paul Keetch** (Hereford) (LD): Will the Minister give his most recent assessment of progress in the middle east peace process in relation to the former Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair? Will he give us one concrete thing that Mr. Blair has achieved?

**Mr. Lewis:** I was going to congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his contribution to this House over a number of years—I still do—but I can give more than one example. One of the most important sources of progress in the middle east in recent times has been the improvement in economic development and enhanced

security in the west bank. The former Prime Minister has played a crucial role in making that progress possible alongside President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad.

**Mr. Keetch:** Will the Minister tell us how many Foreign Office resources have gone into supporting Mr. Blair's role? How many diplomats and how many security people have been involved? Should not that money have been diverted to the Foreign Office team on the ground? Is not that the best way for British foreign policy money to be spent?

**Mr. Lewis:** The hon. Gentleman should be aware that the former Prime Minister was appointed by the Quartet. He is the Quartet's representative in the region, and an appropriate level of resource is deployed by the United Kingdom to support his efforts in that role. I must say to the hon. Gentleman that it is disingenuous to ask questions to which he has already received the answers in writing.

**Mrs. Louise Ellman** (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): What role is Iran, with its opposition to Israel's very existence, playing in Gaza in escalating violence and supporting Hamas?

**Mr. Lewis:** My hon. Friend is right to raise concerns about the interference of Iran in Gaza and elsewhere in the middle east. There is no doubt that Iran poses a threat not only because of the development of its nuclear weapons but because of its continued support for a variety of terrorist organisations in the middle east that destabilise sovereign states. We need to be clear. If there is to be stability and progress, it is important that we take the role and threat of Iran seriously.

**Mr. David Lidington** (Aylesbury) (Con): First, I agree with both the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden) and the Minister about the priority that needs to be given to trying find a peaceful way forward in Gaza at the moment. Does the Minister agree that it would help us in trying to persuade the Israeli authorities to reopen the border crossings if they could be given the assurance that effective measures are in place to stop the smuggling of arms and explosives into the Gaza strip? In that context, can he say why, more than 12 months after our Prime Minister said that he was looking for ways to use British naval resources to stop such smuggling, no action seems to have been taken?

**Mr. Lewis:** UN resolution 1860 makes the importance of stopping smuggling very clear, which is the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised. Surely he is aware of the significant development in relation to Egypt creating a security strategy, which means that there is a serious reduction in the capacity of those who seek to smuggle those weapons, goods and services. As he is aware, that is vital not only for security, but because Hamas collects taxes and benefits from the smuggling of goods and services.

**Sir Gerald Kaufman** (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): Has the Minister seen the article in the 29 March edition of *The New Yorker* by its editor, David Remnick, who is a staunch supporter of the state of Israel? Mr. Remnick writes:

"Without the creation of a viable contiguous Palestinian state...it is impossible to imagine a Jewish and democratic future for Israel."

When are the Israeli Government going to be persuaded not only that the oppression of Palestinians is wrong in itself, but that it jeopardises the future of the Jewish state?

**Mr. Lewis:** The article to which my right hon. Friend refers is entirely consistent with statements that have recently been made by President Peres of Israel. It is very clear to us that there is urgency in terms of progress in the peace process, which relates to the creation of a viable Palestinian state alongside an Israel that is free from the threat of terrorist attack, the final status issues being dealt with as quickly as possible, borders being consistent with 1967, the status of Jerusalem, refugees and the offer from the Arab League to normalise its relations with Israel. The only recent glimmer of hope has been the Arab League summit at which Arab League leaders expressed their support once again for proximity talks and reiterated their offer, in return for two states, to normalise relations with the state of Israel.

#### Turks and Caicos Islands

4. **Mr. Eric Illsley** (Barnsley, Central) (Lab): What steps his Department is taking to improve the governance of the Turks and Caicos Islands. [325352]

**The Minister for Europe (Chris Bryant):** The finances and governance of the Turks and Caicos Islands were in a sorry state when we were forced to suspend constitutional Government. We are now working through the Governor on stabilising the public finances, on immigration issues and on issues relating to Crown land. The special investigation and prosecution team is in place and working.

**Mr. Illsley:** The Foreign Affairs Committee has recently been made aware of serious concerns about the special investigation team's current investigation in the Turks and Caicos Islands, namely about the lack of adequate resources to fund the investigation and about the timetable that will lead to the ending of direct rule from the UK as early as 2011, which might not allow for a complete investigation. Will he address those issues?

**Chris Bryant:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We need to make sure that a full investigation is conducted. That is why I am working very closely with colleagues in the Department for International Development to see whether there is a means of ensuring that the investigation team has the moneys to find out the truth, which is sorely needed in TCI. In that case, the moneys would be returned once assets were sequestered as a result of criminal investigations. We need to return as fast as possible to elections in TCI, because otherwise people will think that this is a return to colonial rule.

#### Afghanistan

5. **Linda Gilroy** (Plymouth, Sutton) (Lab/Co-op): What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the coalition in achieving the UK's foreign policy objectives in Afghanistan. [325353]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (David Miliband):** We regularly assess the progress that we are making in Afghanistan to secure our goal of an Afghanistan that can no longer be a haven for

international terrorism. Key indicators include the development of the Afghan national security forces, the delivery of public services and the development of the economy. The London conference reiterated the unity and coherence in the international effort, aligning this behind a clear Afghan plan.

**Linda Gilroy:** I thank my right hon. Friend for that response. Pakistan is very important to the effectiveness of the coalition in these matters. Will he tell the House what ongoing discussions there are with the Pakistan Government to encourage them in what they have been doing to bring security to the border with Afghanistan, so that there is no hiding place for terrorists and insurgents there?

**David Miliband:** My hon. Friend makes a very important point. For the first time, we have complementary pressure on both sides of the Durand line. It is also significant that, for the first time since 1947, there are more Pakistani troops on the Afghan border than on the Indian border. That is a very significant development: Pakistan has taken severe losses, but it has moved its deployments. The meetings held the week before last between the Pakistani Foreign Minister and the leaders of the armed services in Washington were absolutely critical, as they renewed and reformed the US-Pakistan relationship, which is critical to Pakistan's role in helping to achieve stability in Afghanistan.

**Angus Robertson (Moray) (SNP):** I associate the Scottish National party and Plaid Cymru with comments already made in support of service personnel on operations. The Pentagon's top commander, Admiral Mike Mullen, has said that corruption in the Karzai Government could ruin the coalition strategy in Afghanistan, so does the Secretary of State understand why a growing number of people in the UK are asking why our young men and women are dying every day in support of a Government largely built on graft, cronyism and electoral fraud?

**David Miliband:** I am glad of the hon. Gentleman's commitment to support the troops who are there, which I know is genuine and real. However, by saying what he has, he is recognising that they are there to ensure our own security. The Afghan Government are a partner in achieving that.

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that corruption is a cancer at the heart of any society. A society trying to fight a counter-insurgency is doubly cancerous: that is why the London conference placed such emphasis on it, and why we must hold President Karzai to his commitment in his inaugural speech to clamp down on what he called the "culture of impunity" in respect of corruption.

#### Zimbabwe

6. **Mr. Ian Taylor** (Esher and Walton) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of progress towards political reform by the Government of Zimbabwe. [325354]

9. **Mr. Adam Holloway** (Gravesham) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of progress towards political reform by the Government of Zimbabwe. [325357]

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Ivan Lewis):** Hardliners in Zimbabwe continue to obstruct political reform. Effective implementation of the media, electoral and human rights commissions agreed by the parties to the global political agreement in December is absolutely essential.

**Mr. Taylor:** Has the Minister noticed the case of Owen Maseko, the artist who has been imprisoned and harassed because of his depiction of the terrible carnage that went on in the 1980s under President Mugabe? Is this a sign that the problems in Zimbabwe are continuing, and that a political settlement is still very far from certain?

**Mr. Lewis:** I am sure that hon. Members in all parts of the House want to pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for his many years of outstanding service to this House on a variety of very important issues. On the substantive issue that he has raised, the continued flagrant abuse of human rights in Zimbabwe of course remains a concern, as does the lack of political progress on reform. We very much welcome President Zuma's renewed leadership on behalf of the Southern African Development Community, which we think is very important. We hope to have a report back from the recent visit to Zimbabwe within days, so that we can be clear about the implementation of reforms going forward.

**Mr. Holloway:** The Minister has spoken about President Zuma's package of measures to facilitate some sort of agreement. What chance does he give those measures?

**Mr. Lewis:** I am not a betting man, other than on the outcome of the forthcoming election. The serious point is that hon. Members in all parts of the House have called for South Africa to play a responsible leadership role for a long time. We all know that it is in the best place to influence real change in Zimbabwe. We believe that President Zuma's efforts are new and potentially radical, so this is a source of optimism and hope, to use a current phrase.

**Derek Wyatt (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Lab):** Will the Minister bring me up to speed on the extent to which the Financial Services Authority or his own Department have managed to determine the location of Mr. Mugabe's laundered money?

**Mr. Lewis:** The EU agreed in February to extend its targeted measures, which include an arms embargo, asset freezing and travel bans. Those measures are now affecting 31 companies and 198 people. On the specific point that my hon. Friend raises, I shall get back to him in due course.

**Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab):** At the founding of Zimbabwe, the UK put significant resource into helping the development of infrastructure—education systems and the training of people—through a wide range of organisations, including the TUC. A lot of the beneficiaries of those programmes have, of course, become the targets of Mugabe. Will the Minister work with his friends in South Africa to help to restore some of those links and get education programmes in which we can play a role back on the table?

**Mr. Lewis:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise that co-operation and collaboration, which achieved so many positive results. The UK is currently the second-largest bilateral donor to Zimbabwe, providing £60 million in aid, which is spent primarily on health but also on education. We remain deeply concerned by the intimidation, arbitrary violence, repressive legislation and curbs on press freedom that violate the rights of the Zimbabwean people. That is why political reform is so important.

### Iraq

8. **Meg Munn (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab/Co-op):** What assessment he has made of the implications of the outcome of the recent elections in Iraq for UK policy in the region. [325356]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (David Miliband):** The 7 March election was evidence of Iraq's progress towards full democracy, a particularly important development in the middle east. It is important that the result is respected by Iraq's political leaders.

It is also the case that Iraq's neighbours have a key role in supporting Iraq's democratic future. A democratic Iraq can play an increasing part in maintaining a stable and secure middle east.

**Meg Munn:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer and welcome the progress being made. In terms of further progress for Iraq, does he agree that contact with businesses is enormously important? Will he continue to do all that he can to improve the situation, particularly in relation to visas—the current arrangements mean that Iraqi business people are more likely to go to Europe than the UK?

**David Miliband:** My hon. Friend speaks with a good deal of expertise in these matters. She is absolutely right: as we have drawn down our military contribution in Iraq, there is growing importance for our economic, political, cultural and educational engagement with Iraq. That was the purpose of the Iraq investment conference in April 2009, and we are absolutely determined to make sure that British companies get the full benefit of a growing and more stable Iraq.

**Mr. Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con):** In the parliamentary elections five years ago, the then Prime Minister sent people out from the policy unit here to assist then Prime Minister Allawi with his election campaign, which actually looked like fairly discreditable interference in the affairs of Iraq. Can the Foreign Secretary confirm that Mr. Allawi succeeded this time without the assistance of anyone from the United Kingdom?

**David Miliband:** Certainly, I have no information to suggest that there was any support from the United Kingdom in that respect. Of course, as the hon. Gentleman knows, on that occasion the result did not work out in favour of the Government in the Iraqi election.

**Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley) (Lab):** I hope we continue to assist Iraq by all means possible, particularly in rebuilding the rule of law. I want to place on record an e-mail that I received a few days ago from the very brave judge who sentenced Saddam Hussein to death:

"I am...former chief investigative judge in the Iraqi High Tribunal...I am writing today after a long time to say thank you very much for your help"—

which means this country's help—

“to restore the Iraqi justice and rule of law. Without your support we could not have done what we did.”

**David Miliband:** Although my right hon. Friend is not retiring, I think the whole House owes her a huge debt of gratitude for the way in which she has conducted her work as the Prime Minister's special representative on human rights in Iraq. She has stood up for the rights of people in Iraq in a remarkable way, and although there was deep division in the House on the Iraq war, I hope that there is unity around the commitments that she has reported and made in respect of human rights, an independent press and a free and independent judiciary.

### Argentina

10. **Dr. Julian Lewis** (New Forest, East) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the state of relations between the UK and Argentina. [325358]

11. **James Brokenshire** (Hornchurch) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the state of relations between the UK and Argentina. [325359]

**The Minister for Europe (Chris Bryant):** We have a very close and productive relationship with Argentina on a range of issues, including in the G20, on climate change, sustainable development and counter-proliferation. We have absolutely no doubts whatever about our sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, nor over the islanders' right to develop a hydrocarbon industry within Falkland waters.

**Dr. Lewis:** Is the Minister satisfied that there remains enough defence capability in the Royal Navy to deter Argentina from any mistaken reversal of position, going back to military adventurism, given that we now have almost as few destroyers in the Royal Navy as there are Liberal Democrat Members attending this session of Foreign Affairs questions?

**Chris Bryant:** I am not in charge of Liberal Democrat attendance, although it is sometimes better to have fewer rather than more.

We are confident that we have what we need to be able to maintain the security of the islands, but it is important to bear in mind that the Argentines have made it very clear, even in some of the noises off that they have been making, that they are not talking about blockading the Falklands, and they are not talking about returning to the 1980s. That should be a reassurance to us all, although of course we should never be complacent.

**James Brokenshire:** The Minister will be aware that the Argentine Government have introduced new permit rules for ships travelling to and from the Falkland Islands. What impact is that having on the islands, and what steps is he taking to have those permit rules lifted?

**Chris Bryant:** Obviously, it is for the Argentines to make whatever declarations they want to make, but they have not made it clear what will follow on from the laws that they passed a few weeks ago. So far, as I was telling the hon. Member for New Forest, East (Dr. Lewis), there has been no blockade of the islands; there has been no impact on the islands, and I very much hope

that that remains the same. Frankly, no matter how much argy-bargy there is, we will always return to the principle of self-determination for the Falkland Islanders.

**Mr. Lindsay Hoyle** (Chorley) (Lab): It is all right for the Minister to say that it is not having an impact, but there is an impact: there are threats against companies that do business in the Falklands and that want to do business there in the future. Has not the time come for the Minister or the Secretary of State to visit the Falkland Islands to show their solidarity to the people who live there?

**Chris Bryant:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend; I think that he is now the second person who has offered to send me off to the Falkland Islands during the general election campaign, but I am not sure whether he is recommending that that should happen before I submit my nomination papers.

The serious point is that I had conversations with the Argentine Foreign Secretary during the inauguration of the new President of Chile in Santiago a couple of weeks ago, and it is very clear from those conversations that the Argentines have no intention of blockading the Falklands. They do not want to talk about war. They do not want—and it would be inappropriate for any of us—to raise the temperature of the conversation that we are having. In my conversations with people from the Falklands, I have made it clear that, if they want a Minister, they can have one as soon as they want them to visit.

**Dr. William McCrea** (South Antrim) (DUP): Will the Minister be very clear in saying that he will vigorously defend the rights of the Falkland Islanders to remain within the United Kingdom family and that they will not be used as a trade-off for oil exploration?

**Chris Bryant:** I do not know whether I can make it any clearer than I already have: we are absolutely certain about our sovereignty. We rest our case firmly on the United Nations principles, which state that the self-determination of the people on the islands is vital. We believe that we have stronger cards now, because the European treaties also happen to make it clear that the Falklands remain an overseas territory, as part of the United Kingdom. We are not complacent about this, but we are very determined.

### Burma

12. **Mr. Jim Cunningham** (Coventry, South) (Lab): What his most recent assessment is of progress towards democratic reform in Burma. [325360]

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Ivan Lewis):** Forthcoming elections in Burma will be neither free nor fair. Election laws published in March are restrictive and unfair.

**Mr. Cunningham:** What discussions has my hon. Friend had with our international partners regarding the release of political prisoners in Burma? In particular, what role has China been playing?

**Mr. Lewis:** My hon. Friend has a long track record of raising issues to do with Burma. It is important that the House continues to shine a light on events in Burma. As our Prime Minister said recently, the new election laws

are totally unacceptable. The targeting of Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy is particularly vindictive and callous. As a consequence of those new laws, the NLD has now said quite rightly that it is unable to participate in elections that will be illegitimate. Of course, we work with our international partners, especially those countries that have the biggest capacity to influence the situation in that country, and we continue to raise Burma with the Chinese.

**Mr. Keith Simpson** (Mid-Norfolk) (Con): The UN special rapporteur on human rights in Burma has made the unusually strong recommendation that the UN should consider establishing a commission of inquiry into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the Burmese regime. Last month, the UK ambassador to the UN said that Britain would support the establishment of a commission of inquiry. What steps are the Government taking to build an international coalition to take that forward, particularly by working with countries such as Australia that have already expressed strong support?

**Mr. Lewis:** First, we are pursuing an arms embargo against the regime in Burma with our international partners. We want the UN to take action as soon as possible on that initiative of our Prime Minister.

We support a commission of inquiry in principle, but it is important that we do not propose a vote at the UN on such an issue when we do not have sufficient international support for it to be successful. If that were to happen, it would give false comfort to the regime, so a lot of work must be done to build sufficient consensus to ensure that there is maximum international support for establishing such an inquiry.

**Mr. Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Does my hon. Friend realise just how much frustration is felt by those of us on both sides of the House who have campaigned on Burma for many years when we see so little progress? In his response to my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South (Mr. Cunningham), he did not say when we will ask China to face up to its responsibilities in the region and the country.

**Mr. Lewis:** Mr. Speaker, this is an opportunity to pay tribute to your personal role in ensuring that the issue of Burma continues to be a high priority for parliamentarians inside and outside the House.

My hon. Friend the Member for Huddersfield (Mr. Sheerman) will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary recently visited China, and this was one of the issues on his agenda. We make it clear in our bilateral and multilateral discussions, including with ASEAN and China, that everything possible must be done to put pressure on the regime so that it understands that until it is committed to democratic reform and free and fair elections, its isolation in the world will inevitably continue.

### EU Budget (Reform)

13. **Mr. Shailesh Vara** (North-West Cambridgeshire) (Con): What recent discussions he has had on prospects for reform of the EU budget; and if he will make a statement. [325361]

**The Minister for Europe (Chris Bryant):** Reform of the EU budget was last discussed at the December European Council. Heads of Government agreed that the Commission should produce a report in order for the Council to provide orientations on priorities during 2010. Her Majesty's Government remain committed to far-reaching reform of the EU budget.

**Mr. Vara:** I am grateful to the Minister for those comments. In 2005, however, the Government gave away £7 billion of money that was due to us from the European Union rebate in return for a complete review of the EU budget, which was supposed to have finished by the end of 2009 but clearly has not happened so far. By breaking their promise, and effectively giving away £7 billion of British taxpayers' money for nothing, have we not seen how useless the Government are at standing up for Britain's interests?

**Chris Bryant:** I really like the hon. Gentleman, but he sometimes speaks the biggest load of tosh when he absorbs everything that is poured out by his Front Benchers. The truth of the matter is that he, like many hon. Members, voted for enlargement of the European Union. We believed that it would be in the interests of this country to bring 10 new countries, and then a further two, into the European Union because we would be able to improve trade with them and they would be able to improve their human rights. However, we cannot wish something and not will the means, and if those new countries were to join the European Union, someone would have to pay that bill—we were prepared to step up to the mark. It is a shame that the hon. Gentleman's party has become so Europhobic that it dare not even look at the facts.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester, East) (Lab): Will the Minister reassure the House that, in any discussions on the reform of the budget, we will not lose sight of the goals that were set by the Lisbon agenda at the European Council in 2000?

**Chris Bryant:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right that we need to ensure that Europe is competitive, and able to compete for new jobs and to be part of future economic models, rather than relying on its historical system of budgetary expenditure. That is why we have supported reform of the common agricultural policy for a long time, and I personally believe it is morally offensive that Europe should overpay so that other parts of the world are not able even to compete on a fair basis.

### Overseas Operations (Financing)

15. **Mr. Tim Boswell** (Daventry) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the financing of his Department's overseas operations; and if he will make a statement. [325364]

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (David Miliband):** I refer the hon. Gentleman to my written statement of 10 February, in which I made it clear that I have agreed a package of measures with the Treasury to offset the foreign exchange pressures on the

FCO budget in the year ahead and allow us to continue to deliver a world-class and comprehensive diplomatic service.

**Mr. Boswell:** At this stage of my political career, may I drop any ritual references to the Government's overall difficulties with economic management or their shedding of the overseas pricing mechanism, which has given rise to these difficulties? Let us concentrate on the main point. Does the Foreign Secretary accept that Members on both sides of the House want this country to have a first-class foreign service representation and will not tolerate any deviation from that?

**David Miliband:** Yes.

### Afghanistan

16. **Hugh Bayley** (City of York) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the likely outcome of the forthcoming shura to be held by President Karzai of Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement. [325365]

**Mr. Mark Francois** (Rayleigh) (Con): Sixteen comes directly after 15.

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (David Miliband):** Indeed; I am grateful for the help from the Opposition Front Bench. The forthcoming peace jirga will be the Government of Afghanistan's opportunity to secure the support of the Afghan people for their reintegration and reconciliation proposals. To deliver this support, we encourage the Government of Afghanistan to make this event as inclusive as possible.

**Hugh Bayley:** Afghanistan needs a politics of national unity to defeat the Taliban and corruption, and to create conditions that will allow British troops to leave. What is my right hon. Friend doing to try and ensure that when the Loya Jirga is held later this month, it ends up creating a more inclusive politics for Afghanistan?

**David Miliband:** My hon. Friend makes a very important point. The greatest resource for international forces and for the Afghan Government is that less than 10 per cent. of the Afghan people want the Taliban back. There is widespread hatred for the brutality that they represent. However, a political settlement for Afghanistan is something that this Government have been advancing for some time, saying clearly that the purpose of military and civilian effort is to create the conditions for a political settlement. The peace jirga is the first chance to take that forward. It is not about negotiations, but about preparing the ground. We want it to be as wide as possible—1,200 to 1,500 participants have been mentioned. I welcome that. It is also important to say that all the tribes of Afghanistan must have a say in that future political settlement. It is not a matter of including former insurgents, only to find that northerners then leave the political settlement. It is important that all the ethnic tribes are balanced in a political settlement that can endure.

### Topical Questions

T1. [325374] **Mr. Eric Illsley** (Barnsley, Central) (Lab): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (David Miliband):** On 1 April I announced that I had instructed the British Indian Ocean Territory Commissioner to declare a marine protected area in the territory, which will include a no-take marine reserve. By establishing this marine protected area, the UK has created one of the world's largest marine protected areas and has doubled the global coverage of the world's oceans benefiting from protection. I wish to emphasise that the creation of the MPA will not change the UK's commitment to cede the territory to Mauritius when it is no longer needed for defence purposes. It is also without prejudice to the outcome of the current pending proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights. The BIOT administration has been tasked with taking the establishment of an MPA forward in order that this is achieved in a realistic, sustainable and affordable way.

Finally, on a separate topic—[HON. MEMBERS: "This is a different question."] No. On a separate matter, Mr. Speaker, I hope you will allow me to say, I am sure on behalf of the whole House, that we utterly condemn yesterday's attack on the US consulate in Peshawar and the earlier suicide attack in Lower Dir. There can be no justification for these bloody acts.

**Mr. Illsley:** May I return my right hon. Friend to the question that was raised a few moments ago—the problems that some of our overseas posts are experiencing as a result of exchange rate fluctuations? Surely it cannot be right that some of the staff at our overseas posts have to volunteer to work for a period for no salary to make up the posts' funding. Can we reinstate the overseas pricing mechanism and reinforce the measures that my right hon. Friend mentioned a few moments ago?

**David Miliband:** That is certainly one of the issues that will be considered in the next comprehensive spending review. The £75 million that has, in effect, been added to the Foreign Office budget for this year will ensure that the comprehensive first-class global network that we have is maintained and developed.

**Mr. William Hague** (Richmond, Yorks) (Con): May I associate the Opposition utterly with what the Foreign Secretary just said in condemnation of the attack on the US consulate in Peshawar?

Following up the question by the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley), will the right hon. Gentleman look again at the recent report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, which warned of "very severe strains" on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and "an unacceptable risk to the FCO's ability to perform its functions" as a direct result of his decision to transfer the entire exchange rate risk of the Foreign Office's expenditure to the Foreign Office for 2008-09? Given that no other major Foreign Ministry in the world conducts its affairs in that ridiculous way, will he now concede that it was a grave and short-sighted error and join me in saying that, whoever the Foreign Secretary is in one month's time, they should pledge to reverse that bad decision?

**David Miliband:** I think the right hon. Gentleman will find that many other countries are having to make the sort of efficiency savings that the Foreign Office in this country has made. As he will have seen, the French

Foreign Ministry and those of other countries are facing severe budgetary strain, and we make no apology for taking our efficiency measures seriously. However, I thought that he would want to welcome the fact that we have secured the £75 million to ensure that, when the Labour party returns to the Government Benches in one month's time, we are able to ensure significant long-term progress through the comprehensive spending review.

T2. [325375] **Mr. William Bain** (Glasgow, North-East) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend recollect that in 1997 this country was politically isolated in Europe and the social chapter had shamefully been left unsigned? Does he agree that great progress has been made in areas from justice to climate change through a more positive engagement in the intervening 13 years? Would that not be put at risk if we were to become the great ignored of the EU in the coming weeks?

**David Miliband:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. The pro-European part of the Conservative party is leaving this House, and we have already paid tribute to one such right hon. Gentleman. In 1997 this country was a source of despair to its friends and disdain to its enemies, and that has been reversed over the past 13 years—on Europe, on overseas aid spending and on a range of human rights and other democracy-promotion issues. We will fight this election proud not only of our foreign policy record, but of the fact that we are going to be proactively and positively engaged with the European Union.

T4. [325377] **Mr. Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): I cannot believe that the Foreign Secretary tried to suggest with a straight face that scrapping the overseas pricing mechanism was a good idea, or that he defended it. How can he seriously suggest that subjecting to the mercies of the foreign exchange market the budget of his Department and our ability to project our influence overseas is a good idea? Did he really sign up for it?

**David Miliband:** I certainly did not say anything other than that the efficiency savings that we are making are important. The hon. Gentleman is very welcome to check *Hansard* in the leisure time that he has over the next three or four weeks. However, the fact is that we run a comprehensive service, with 261 posts throughout the world. It is widely recognised for its influence both in bilateral and multilateral relations, and long may that continue.

T3. [325376] **Mike Gapes** (Ilford, South) (Lab/Co-op): Almost one year ago the Sri Lankan civil war came to an end. Some 280,000 Tamils were then put in detention, and 70,000 people in Sri Lanka are still in detention camps. What are our Government doing to press on the Sri Lankan Government the need to ensure that the Tamil population are completely released and reintegrated into society, so that they feel that they have a stake in a future Sri Lanka?

**The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Ivan Lewis):** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise that issue. We have provided £13.5 million of assistance in the post-conflict period to help almost 300,000 people who have been displaced by fighting. Of

course, there has been some progress in terms of the number of people in camps falling to about 80,000, but that is not good enough. The Government will continue to apply pressure to the Sri Lankan Government until all those people are allowed to return home safely and freely.

T6. [325379] **Tony Baldry** (Banbury) (Con): Does not the Secretary of State agree with the Foreign Affairs Committee that the current exchange rate pricing mechanism for the Foreign Office is simply unsustainable? The extra £75 million is welcome, but it is a one-off, and this is not an issue that can wait for a comprehensive spending review. Does not the Secretary of State think that he should negotiate a new bilateral deal with the Chancellor of the Exchequer?

**David Miliband:** I think that on reflection the hon. Gentleman, who I know follows these matters carefully, will understand that that would not be a very sensible course. Any Government after the general election will have to set a framework for public spending for all Departments, and it is quite right that the Foreign Office has negotiated a special bilateral agreement for this year. That is very important, but it is also important that we then take a long-term look at the funding of the Foreign Office and other Departments. The ability to do so on a three-year or even longer-term basis is a good thing, and that is the right way to proceed.

T5. [325378] **Mr. Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): In the nearly three years during which my right hon. Friend has been Foreign Secretary, has he ever taken a Labour fundraiser with him when meeting the leader of a foreign country?

**David Miliband:** No, I certainly have never taken a Labour fundraiser to a meeting with a foreign Government, and I look forward to the day when the shadow Foreign Secretary can give me a straight answer to the question whether Lord Ashcroft has ever been taken to meetings with foreign Governments in places where Lord Ashcroft has business interests. I have written to the right hon. Gentleman three times about that; I know that the postal service has its problems, but we have never had a reply.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman, but we must press on.

T8. [325381] **Mr. Shailesh Vara** (North-West Cambridgeshire) (Con): Following the recent worrying events in South Africa, what discussions has the Foreign Secretary had with his overseas counterpart to ensure the safety and security of British football fans who will be travelling to South Africa later in the year to the World cup finals?

**Angus Robertson** (Moray) (SNP): English football fans.

**David Miliband:** I hope that all UK citizens will be supporting the English team, and I am sorry if the hon. Member for Moray (Angus Robertson) wants to distinguish between English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish fans in respect of the World cup. Obviously, we talked about the issue when we met the South African President

and South African Foreign Minister during the state visit last month. They are taking the issues of security and wider provision for fans extremely seriously. The bilateral engagement between our two countries is of a very high order on this important issue.

T7. [325380] **Andrew Mackinlay** (Thurrock) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State tell us what representations were or will be made by him to the Israeli Government in relation to the Palestinian and Arab Christians who were denied access to the holy places over Easter, the most important festival in the Christian calendar? Will he do all he can to ensure that access is given to Palestinian Arabs, who are a minority, so that they can celebrate that important feast in future?

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** First of all, I am sure I speak on behalf of Members on both sides of the House in paying tribute to my hon. Friend's unique contribution to the affairs of this House. I shared a corridor with him when I started my parliamentary career; I shall leave it at that. It was a tremendous privilege to get to know him.

My hon. Friend has raised an important issue. One of the constant conversations that we have with the Israeli Government is about ensuring that there is maximum support for interfaith harmony in Israel and that any restriction of movement is lifted, other than in the most extenuating of security circumstances.

T9. [325382] **Mr. Bernard Jenkin** (North Essex) (Con): Can the Foreign Secretary confirm that it is his Government's policy to increase the British contribution to the European Union by billions of pounds and to pay for that by cutting back on the funding of British overseas postings run by his Department? Because that is the net result.

**The Minister for Europe (Chris Bryant):** The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well, because he is quite an intelligent man; that that is not the policy of this Government nor, indeed, of his party.

**Barry Gardiner** (Brent, North) (Lab): I hope that my right hon. Friend recalls the Royal Society's prognosis of July last year that tropical coral reefs might survive on this planet for only another 40 years because the rate of destruction was so great. Does he understand the very real hope that his announcement on Friday of last week, about the designation of the marine protected area in the Chagos archipelago, has given ocean scientists around the globe?

**David Miliband:** Last week's announcement has been widely welcomed in the scientific and environmental community, and for good reason. A unique resource is being created for the future—for all future generations, for the planet, for scientific research and for the protection of the environment. It is a very good symbol of the sort of internationalism and the sort of responsibility that this country should stand for.

**Sir Patrick Cormack** (South Staffordshire) (Con): As one who believes that our country is extremely well served and represented by our diplomatic service, may I ask the Foreign Secretary to assure the House that there are no plans to close or amalgamate any of our embassies?

**David Miliband:** I have spoken to the hon. Gentleman on many occasions and have come to know his wisdom and his commitment to the House and to our political system. I hope that he will not be too embarrassed if I pay tribute to him from this side of the House and thank him for his very many years of outstanding service, not just to his constituents but to the House. I know that we have tried to remove him at successive general elections, but without much success.

In respect of the Foreign Office's 261 posts around the world, we keep all our posts under very close review but there are no plans at the moment to close any embassies.

**Dr. Brian Iddon** (Bolton, South-East) (Lab): It is not just that Palestinians in Jerusalem and East Jerusalem are being prevented from praying; they are having their houses confiscated in ever-increasing numbers as well. Is my right hon. Friend aware that some of those Palestinians are having to seek asylum in this country, and should they be audacious enough to return to their own country and step off the plane at Tel Aviv, they are in danger of being tortured, put back on a plane and returned to Britain?

**David Miliband:** My hon. Friend makes a very important point. I wish him well in his retirement and thank him for all his service to his constituents, and of course to our party and the House.

Jerusalem is rightly at the centre of all the great religions; it is a tinderbox. It is very important that all sides are very careful in the actions that they take in that respect, and that the rights of all denominations and all faiths are respected in that special place. The committees and other structures that have been created to govern the holy sites are there for a purpose, and the rules and norms that they have established need to be adhered to very closely indeed.

**Robert Key** (Salisbury) (Con): The people of Estonia have held this country in particular regard ever since the intervention of the Royal Navy in their war of independence after the first world war. In fashioning the future foreign and defence policy of this country, will this Government and the next never forget the professionalism and sacrifice of Estonian forces fighting alongside British forces in Afghanistan and the professional and courageous military personnel who, on a tiny budget, show courage above all possible expectations?

**Chris Bryant:** I think that the hon. Gentleman is the last of the parliamentary swans making their swansong at questions this afternoon, but he is a very fine swan indeed. He has been a great Member of this House and I pay tribute to him and to the many other retiring sensible, pro-European Conservatives who still exist.

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right about Estonia and its contribution. Our troops, in Afghanistan now and in previous conflicts, have known perfectly well that the Estonians have been very strong and successful allies of ours.

**Christopher Fraser** (South-West Norfolk) (Con): Further to the question by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Chope), does the Minister agree that NATO should be the cornerstone of European defence?

**Chris Bryant:** Yes I do, and I am delighted that the Lisbon treaty makes that clear.

**Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cotswold) (Con):** Following on from the question by the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Meg Munn) about business in Iraq, is the Foreign Secretary aware that businesses that I speak to feel that the British Government are not supporting them adequately? Given that Iraq has the world's second largest oil supply and that there is a desperate need to rebuild its infrastructure after the war, what more can

he do to build ties with the incoming Iraqi Administration so that British business can do more business with Iraq?

**David Miliband:** This is the only European country that has held an Iraq investment conference and we are committed to UK Trade and Investment and other embassy functions that support commercial diplomacy. The hon. Gentleman's question would be better if he could give me any details of companies that he says have been frustrated. We would be very happy to work with them, because I assure him that many other companies are delighted rather than frustrated.

## Chagos Islands

3.33 pm

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Foreign Secretary if he will make a statement on the declaration of a marine protected area around the Chagos islands and what consultation took place before the announcement was made.

**The Minister for Europe (Chris Bryant)**: On 1 April 2010, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary announced the creation of a marine protected area in the British Indian Ocean Territory. It will include a no-take marine reserve where fishing will be banned. The creation of the MPA is a major step forward for protecting the oceans not just around the territory itself but throughout the world.

The decision to establish a marine protected reserve was taken following a full public consultation and careful consideration of the many issues and interests involved. The response to the consultation was high, with more than a quarter of a million people registering a view. The great majority of those responses came in the form of petitions, but the response was so wide-ranging that it was global, including from private individuals, academic and scientific institutions, environmental organisations and networks, fishing and yachting interests, members of the Chagossian community, British Members of Parliament and peers and representatives of other Governments.

The great majority of respondents—well over 90 per cent.—made it clear that they supported greater marine protection of some sort in the Chagos archipelago in principle. However, the views on the proposal were mixed and the responses were not confined to the options listed in the consultation document. The announcement is the first key step in establishing an MPA. There is still much work to be considered and we intend to continue to work closely with all interested stakeholders, both in the UK and internationally, in implementing the reserve.

**Jeremy Corbyn**: The Minister must be aware that on 10 March I was given an undertaking in a Westminster Hall debate that consultation with interested parties, Members of Parliament and the Chagossian community would take place before an announcement was made. No such consultation has taken place, and there has been no communication with me as chair of the all-party group on the Chagos islands or with the Chagossian communities living in Mauritius, the Seychelles or this country.

The Minister will also be aware, because he gave the apology on behalf of the Government, that a terrible wrong was committed against the Chagos islanders in the 1970s and 1980s, when they were driven out to make way for a US base. Every other marine protected area proposed anywhere in the world by anybody includes a local human element to protect the zone. He knows full well that the Chagos islanders support the MPA, but not with a no-take policy; they support it with a sustainable fishing policy that will enable a sustainable community to return to their islands to live and look after the MPA.

Finally, the Minister will also be aware that later this year the islanders' long fight for justice and human rights, which has been fought so that they can return to

their islands, will be heard at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Many of us believe that the islanders will be victorious. At that point, will he accept that the islanders' return can also be protective of the environment from which they were so cruelly snatched all those years ago?

**Chris Bryant**: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the work that he does as chair of the all-party group. He has brought the views of the Chagossians to the attention of many people in this House and further afield, expressing with clear articulateness their rights and needs. However, I should just say to him that our decision to set up the MPA has no effect on our relationship with Mauritius; it does not change one jot the guarantees that we have made to its Government. Nor does it have any effect on our relationship with the Americans in respect of Diego Garcia or on the hearings that will be held later this year at the European Court of Human Rights—this decision is entirely without prejudice to those.

I apologise to my hon. Friend and to the House, because it became clear to us that, notwithstanding the commitment made to him in the debate, no further information could have come in that would have made any difference to the decision on the protection of the marine environment in the British Indian Ocean Territory. He referred to the question of whether there should be a no-take agreement or a sustainable fishing arrangement. The truth is that very few sustainable fishing arrangements around the world have ever been successful, which is why we believe it vital that there should be a no-take arrangement in this area. Extensive consultation did take place over several months, including with my hon. Friend, part of which was, of course, the Westminster Hall debate that he led.

**Mr. Keith Simpson** (Mid-Norfolk) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Islington, North (Jeremy Corbyn) on raising this urgent question. He initiated the debate in Westminster Hall and the Minister might wish to think again about what the hon. Gentleman said about the lack of consultation with the Chagossians; at the very least, even at the public relations level, that was unfortunate.

It is appropriate that the House considers these issues before Parliament is dissolved, given that the Chagos islanders' case is before the European Court of Human Rights. There is a great deal of sympathy from those on both sides of the House for the plight of the Chagossians, and their interests must be placed at the heart of any decisions made about their homeland.

I would like briefly to put two or three questions to the Minister. What discussions have the Government had with the Government of Mauritius since the Foreign Secretary's announcing the creation of the marine protected area in the Indian ocean, which the Conservative party welcomes? The Foreign Secretary said in his statement last week that the creation of the reserve

“will not change the UK's commitment to cede the territory to Mauritius when it is no longer needed for defence purposes”.

Will Mauritius be legally liable to continue the marine protected area when that occurs? What safeguards will be put in place to ensure the long-term protection of the marine area and, in particular, any investment that the UK and other partners make in the development? Furthermore, what discussions have been had with regional

states, such as Maldives and Seychelles? Are they supportive of the idea of a marine protected area? Finally, what steps are the Government planning to take to ensure effective enforcement of the ban on illegal fishing in the zone, and how will they ensure that the marine protected area is not simply a paper proposal without practical impact?

**Chris Bryant:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his broad support for the measures that we are undertaking. I think that all Members of the House are keen to ensure that one of the areas of greatest biodiversity in the world, which is within British territory, can be protected for the future.

The hon. Gentleman asked some specific questions, including about what consultations and discussions there were with Mauritius. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke on Thursday with the Prime Minister of Mauritius, and there have been extensive discussions with others in the area. I should say, in answer to the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North, that one of the things we have to do over the next few months is lay out precisely how the reserve will function. During that process, of course we have to discuss specific elements with the Chagossians, their representatives and Members of both Houses, and we are keen to do that.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the fishing. He will know that the British Indian Ocean Territory is particularly important not only because 784 different kinds of fish live on the coral reefs, but because many fish migrate through the territory, and it is the fishing of those migratory fish in the territory that is providing a major problem for fish stocks across the whole of the Indian ocean. That is why we believe that this is a particularly important moment. We will be suspending the three licences presently made available, which bring in something like £1 million a year, and finding the money elsewhere.

**Mr. Paul Keetch** (Hereford) (LD): I also congratulate the hon. Member for Islington, North (Jeremy Corbyn) on raising this issue. Following the hon. Gentleman's important question about consultation, will the Minister say whether the Chairman and Members of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, which in this Parliament carried out an inquiry into our overseas territories, were consulted? Again following on from the hon. Gentleman's questions, will the Minister assure the House that the creation of the MPA, which the Liberal Democrats would, of course, automatically support, will not affect the ability of the Chagos islanders to return and have a sustainable community? Finally, will the presence of nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed US warships be permitted within the zone of the MPA?

**Chris Bryant:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman understands that the Government feel deep regret—many right hon. and hon. Members have also expressed such regret—for how the Chagossians were treated in the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, we believe that that has now been settled in the highest court of this land by the Law Lords. Yes, a court case will be heard in the European Court of Human Rights, but this is an important step to take, notwithstanding any possible discussions or judgment handed down by the Court, because we believe that the biodiversity in that territory is essential to the world. [*Interruption.*] The hon. Gentleman asks

from a sedentary position whether the Foreign Affairs Committee was consulted. The whole House was consulted, the country was consulted, and we extended the consultation process by weeks so that others could take part. I must say that many Foreign Office consultations get hardly any replies at all, even from the Liberal Democrats, and yet in this case more than 250,000 people expressed their view—90 per cent. of them in support of the MPA. Notwithstanding the rows that some people want to raise about the process, I hope that they support the policy that we are adopting.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. This is a matter of considerable interest, as is reflected in the number of Members seeking to catch my eye, and I should like to accommodate everybody. There is, however, pressure on time, so pithy questions and answers are the order of the day.

**Meg Munn** (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend the Minister will know that the vast majority of endangered species are in British overseas territories, rather than on the UK mainland. The Government have been criticised in the past for not paying enough attention to this aspect of our overseas territories. What effect will the proposed area have on protecting endangered species?

**Chris Bryant:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question, and I pay tribute to her because, when she had responsibility in the Foreign Office for the overseas territories, she started a lot of the work that has enabled us to undertake such work now. Reference was made earlier to the coral reefs in the British Indian Ocean Territory. Actually, it is one of the few areas in the world where the coral reefs have been rapidly growing again, and that is because of the work that we have been able to do in recent years. We will now be able to do more. There are 220 species of coral there, many of which are specific to the Chagos islands, and we will be able to protect them by establishing the MPA.

**Peter Bottomley** (Worthing, West) (Con): Will the Minister try again to explain what happened between 10 March and 1 April, the first day after Parliament rose for Easter? Will he also kindly explain the size of the proposed area, and tell us whether the Chagossians' return to the islands will be affected by these proposals?

**Chris Bryant:** There will be absolutely no effect on whether Chagossians have a right or do not have a right to return to the islands by virtue of the announcement that we have made. I thought that I had made that clear already—

**Peter Bottomley** *indicated dissent.*

**Chris Bryant:** The hon. Gentleman is shaking his head, so I have obviously misunderstood the precise nature of his question. Doubtless he will inform me of it later. He also asked what happened between 10 March and 1 April. We made the decision that no further information could possibly be garnered that would affect whether it was right or not to establish a reserve now. That is why we decided to act. We believe that it is in the interests not only of the territory itself but of the whole of the Indian ocean and of the biodiversity of the planet that we start the MPA as soon as possible.

**Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall) (Lab): The Minister has still not explained the reason for the urgency. The consultation ended only on 5 March, and the facilitator herself said that the process would take three months, so why has this been rushed through? Will he also answer this question: does this decision not rule out the Chagossian people ever going back to live there?

**Chris Bryant:** As my hon. Friend knows, we do not believe that the Chagossians will be returning to the islands—[HON. MEMBERS: “Ah!”] But this particular decision has nothing to do with that. It is completely separate from the decision, in its entirety. As I have already said, the House of Lords has made it clear that the position of the UK Government is correct in law, and the only place where there is now contention is in the European Court of Human Rights.

**Mr. William Cash** (Stone) (Con): Does the Minister accept that he has just let the cat out of the bag? What he has just said clearly indicates that he is trying to separate the MPA from the rights of the Chagossians, who, as the hon. Member for Islington, North (Jeremy Corbyn) said in our debate the other day, are regarded as having been subjected to a terrible wrong. Given the Minister’s much vaunted interest in human rights, would he be good enough to understand that some of us believe that when we are offered consultation, we expect to get it?

**Chris Bryant:** There has been substantial consultation. This has been one of the most far-reaching—and the most replied-to—consultations that the Foreign Office has engaged in. More than 250,000 people took part in it, and 90 per cent. of them supported the idea of creating an MPA. However, this decision has nothing to do with the rights, or the lack of rights, of people to return to the islands of Chagos. Yes, I completely agree with the hon. Gentleman that what happened in the 1960s and early ’70s was absolutely shameful. I agree with him that the early compensation that was paid was also shameful. Later compensation has been paid—something in the region of £14 million in today’s terms. However, it would be unrealistic to expect the Chagossians to return to those islands, however much individual Members of this House might want that to happen.

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend accept that he cannot hide behind environmentalism to mask what many of us fear is an encroachment on the rights and legitimate expectations of the Chagossian people? He argues that the consultation he carried out approved a measure of support for further marine protection, but does he not accept that very few people want further marine protection at the expense of the Chagossian islanders, which is what the House is concerned about this afternoon?

**Chris Bryant:** The extension of the marine protected area and the new measures we are taking will not have any direct or indirect effect on the rights or otherwise of Chagossians to return to the islands. These are two entirely separate issues. Some have suggested that one should protect humans and not bother to protect the marine environment—[*Interruption.*] I know that that is not what my hon. Friend is saying, but in order to protect those who fish across the whole of the Indian ocean I believe that we have to protect the marine environment.

**Mr. Mark Field** (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): Given that the Minister has called the treatment of the Chagossians “shameful”, does he not understand the concerns reiterated on his side of the House by the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) that this is being rushed through in double-quick time? That will lead many—and not just the usual suspects—to suspect that the Government are using the environmental issue as a fig leaf for the continued abuse of these human rights.

**Chris Bryant:** I have to underline for the hon. Gentleman that the environmental issues are very significant. The tuna that pass through the British Indian Ocean Territory feed many people across the east coast of Africa. Those supplies are being rapidly diminished. We need a no-take policy across the area. There are many other elements of biodiversity on the islands that we need to protect, but the decision has nothing to do with the rights or otherwise of the Chagossians to live on the islands.

**Laura Moffatt** (Crawley) (Lab): One of the most important groups of Chagossians were consulted—the large group who live in Crawley. They were very clear that they wanted the marine protected area, but they were keen to keep a foothold in their history. Although most will decide to remain in Crawley—I am very glad they will do so—they are keen to have a stake in the islands’ future. Can the Minister give us any assurance about that?

**Chris Bryant:** I should pay tribute to my hon. Friend, who has one of the largest Chagossian communities in the country in her constituency; I know that various Foreign Office Ministers have met her and the community. She is absolutely right that there should be an ongoing connection between the Chagossians and what happens with the MPA. That is why, as I said earlier, I am keen to ensure that, if I still hold this post after the general election, we have ongoing discussions with the Chagossian community in this country and further afield so that the implementation of the MPA meets the requirements and needs of the Chagossians.

**Miss Anne McIntosh** (Vale of York) (Con): Will the Minister clarify what would happen if the islanders returned and were unable to fish, as that would make it difficult for them to live? If they return, will they still be able to fish under the new regime?

**Chris Bryant:** As I said earlier, we believe it difficult and next to impossible to create a sustainable fishing regime in the British Indian Ocean Territory. Wherever it has been attempted elsewhere, it has failed. At the moment, the Chagossians have chosen not to take up any of the three fishing licences available within the British Indian Ocean Territory, but there are many elements involved in the question of whether life would be sustainable on the islands for the Chagossians—not least the fact that many of the buildings in which they lived back in the ’60s and early ’70s are no longer habitable.

**Mr. David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend needs to be aware that this issue will not go away. Will he explain why conservationists and scientists feel that they have been used by the Government in their introduction of the marine protected area as a way of stopping the Chagossians from going home?

**Chris Bryant:** Well, I am sorry. I am fond of my hon. Friend and I am sad that he has made that point this afternoon, as what he said is not my experience. The non-governmental organisations that I have spoken to have made it clear that they fully support the MPA.

**Tim Loughton** (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): Impressed though the House may be with the Minister's marine knowledge of the Chagos islands and his Rumsfeld-like impressions in not needing to know what he does not know, will he tell me what livelihoods remain for the Chagossians, many of whom live in my area of West Sussex? Secondly, will he tell us whether any pressure was brought to bear on him by his American counterparts in the naval base nearby?

**Chris Bryant:** Absolutely no pressure was brought to bear by the United States of America on me or anybody else. I am not in charge of the community in the United Kingdom; I have responsibility only for the British Indian Ocean Territory itself.

**Barry Gardiner** (Brent, North) (Lab): May I urge my hon. Friend to stick with the science, because he is absolutely right? A no-take zone in the area is vital; upon it depend the livelihoods of more than 500 million people in the Indian ocean territories, because those coral reefs represent the seed bed for most of the marine fish life in the Indian ocean. It is an absolutely vital resource, and he must absolutely stick with the science. May I further urge my hon. Friend to understand that the coral reefs there are so sensitive and pristine that the scientists who work there do not even wear sun tan lotion for fear of contaminating the coral?

**Chris Bryant:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I pay tribute to him for his long-term interest in these matters. The larger grouper fish and the wrasse are almost fading into non-existence in other parts of the Indian ocean and, without the protection that we will be able to provide in the British Indian Ocean Territory, they could well become extinct, thereby depriving many millions of people around the Indian ocean of any means of living at all.

**Mr. John Grogan** (Selby) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend think that the late Robin Cook, who is the only Foreign Secretary really to have recognised the rights of the Chagos islanders, would have endorsed this decision—and if Robin Cook had taken this decision, does my hon. Friend not think that the least he would have done would be to come personally to the Dispatch Box to defend it?

**Chris Bryant:** Well, I am absolutely certain that Robin Cook would have wanted to bring forward the protection for the biodiversity in the British Indian Ocean Territory.

## Business of the House

3.57 pm

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Ms Harriet Harman):** I should like to make a business statement. Following the Prime Minister's announcement earlier today, the business for this week will now be as follows:

WEDNESDAY 7 APRIL—Consideration of a business of the House motion to facilitate business to prorogation, followed by remaining stages of the Bribery Bill [*Lords*], followed by consideration in Committee and remaining stages of the Northern Ireland Assembly Members Bill [*Lords*], followed by motion relating to the draft Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Amendment) Order 2010, followed by remaining stages of the Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Bill, followed by all stages of the Appropriation Bill, followed by all stages of the Finance Bill, followed by consideration in Committee and remaining stages of the Digital Economy Bill [*Lords*], followed by, if necessary, consideration of Lords amendments. The House may also be asked to consider any Lords messages which may be received.

THURSDAY 8 APRIL—Remaining stages of the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 (Amendment) Bill, followed by consideration of Lords amendments to the Crime and Security Bill, followed by consideration of Lords amendments to the Constitutional Reform and Governance Bill, followed by consideration of Lords amendments to the Children, Schools and Families Bill, followed by consideration of Lords amendments to the Energy Bill, followed by consideration of Lords amendments to the Financial Services Bill, followed by consideration of Lords amendments to the Flood and Water Management Bill, followed by, if necessary, consideration of Lords amendments. The House may also be asked to consider any Lords messages which may be received.

The House will not adjourn until Royal Assent has been received to all Acts. The House will be prorogued when Royal Assent to all Acts has been signified. Parliament will be dissolved on Monday 12 April by proclamation.

As the Prime Minister announced this morning, Her Majesty will summon the new Parliament to meet on Tuesday 18 May.

**Sir George Young** (North-West Hampshire) (Con): I thank the right hon. and learned Lady for her statement. May I say how delighted we are on these Benches that the Prime Minister has at last pushed the button and called the election? We relish the prospect over the next four weeks of taking our argument for lower taxes on jobs, less waste and reduced debt across the country.

On the forthcoming business, will she confirm that there will be Prime Minister's Question Time as usual tomorrow, oral questions to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change on Thursday and no interruption to the schedule for Adjournment and Westminster Hall debates? Does she accept that we will enter into constructive discussions with the Government about the Bills in the pipeline, balancing the need for scrutiny with the need to get certain legislation on the statute book without further delay?

For the benefit of the whole House, will she tell us how long the debate will be on tomorrow's business motion? So that the House can pace itself, will she tell us how long she expects the House to spend on each of the Bills whose titles she has just read out?

[*Sir George Young*]

Finally, as she has made no announcement about the draft Standing Order on the Committee on Reform of the House of Commons, will she now confirm that the Government have finally kicked into the long grass the proposals to set up a business committee? Will she confirm that it will fall to the next Government to introduce this important House of Commons reform?

**Ms Harman:** I can confirm that there will be questions to the Prime Minister in the usual way and that there will be questions to the Department of Energy and Climate Change. We will table the programme motion this afternoon, so hon. Members will be able to consider it, and it will then be debated. Obviously, the length of the debate on the programme motion will be a matter for Mr. Speaker.

As far as the draft Standing Order is concerned, following the Committee on Reform of the House of Commons, we have agreed—the House has agreed—the election of Select Committee Chairs, the election of members of Select Committees and that Back-Bench Members should be able to—

**Mr. Andrew Robathan** (Blaby) (Con): That's a no, then.

**Ms Harman:** I am just trying to explain to the House the progress we have made. Back-Bench Members will be able to table motions that can be voted on. The House has resolved to agree that there should be a Back-Bench committee for House business. We have drafted the Standing Orders that would give effect to that and they have been tabled. I think it is wrong for hon. Members who did not win the vote to table amendments that serve as an objection and I would therefore ask hon. Members who have tabled amendments to withdraw them so that we can approve the Standing Orders. They do no more and no less than give effect to the resolution that the House has already expressed of wanting to proceed with a business committee. I think hon. Members should withdraw their amendments, which serve as an objection, so that we can conclude the matter in this Parliament. If that is not the case, and Members persist with their amendments, we will at least have made progress on all the things I have listed. The House will have decided in principle to make progress but the Standing Order change, which we have already drafted, could be done as the first act of the next Parliament.

**David Howarth** (Cambridge) (LD): I apologise for the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Heath) who, for obvious reasons, is in Somerton and Frome, from where, I am sure, he will be deservedly returned, as will my other right hon. and hon. Friends who are standing again.

May I ask the Leader of the House about the Digital Economy Bill? The proposal appears to be to take the Second Reading today and all the remaining stages tomorrow. Given that there are a number of highly controversial proposals in the Bill, especially that about web blocking, surely now that we are in the wash-up, the most appropriate thing for the Government and the Leader of the House to do at this stage is to say that the Government will not proceed with those controversial parts of the Bill. That will save us all a lot of time and trouble over the next two or three days.

I welcome the fact that the vulture fund Bill—the Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Bill—and the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 (Amendment) Bill are both on the list. That is very welcome. It seems to me to be extraordinary, however, that the proposals of the Wright Committee on a Back-Bench business committee, which the Leader of the House has herself put forward, are not on the list. She seems to be saying that those measures are not on the list simply because a few Members are opposing them, but there are, equally, a tiny number of reactionary Members opposing those two Bills. Surely those three measures are in the same position. It is in her gift to bring forward the Wright Committee proposals at this stage. On three separate occasions—three weeks in a row—she undertook to put those proposals to the House. Surely it is a breach of faith for her to refuse to do so now.

**Ms Harman:** As far as the Digital Economy Bill is concerned, the hon. Gentleman is right to say that there will be a full Second Reading debate today, so it will have a normal Second Reading debate. It has had considerable scrutiny already in the House of Lords: it had seven days in Committee, which is more than any other Bill in the programme, and three days on Report, whereas every other Bill in the programme had only one day. However, I know that Members want it to be scrutinised in this House too, and there will be a further chance for scrutiny at the time of making the regulations to give powers to the courts to block access to internet sites in relation to copyright infringement. As that element of the Bill has generated much debate, those regulations will be subject to a super-affirmative procedure, which will operate in the following way.

There will be a public consultation on the draft regulations prior to their being laid in Parliament and they will be laid in draft in the House with an explanation of why they satisfy the necessary thresholds required to make the regulations. Those thresholds are set out in the Bill. At the same time, the public consultation response will be published. Draft regulations will sit in the House for 60 days and, at the same time, Committees of both Houses will consider them. That is the critical part of the super-affirmative procedure. It allows Committees, including Members of this House, to consider the provisions even though there will not be Committee stage in the normal way. Final regulations that take into account the recommendations of the Committees will be laid in Parliament and will be subject to the normal affirmative procedure. Of course, the Bill will make progress in the wash-up only on the basis of consensus.

**Sir Gerald Kaufman** (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on including the Debt Relief (Developing Countries) Bill in tomorrow's business? That demonstrates not only the Government's profound commitment to international development but the fact that they listen to the House of Commons. Has she received any indication that the Bill's passage through the House of Lords will be facilitated so that it can receive Royal Assent before Dissolution?

**Ms Harman:** I thank my right hon. Friend for his words about the vulture funds Bill, which has considerable support across the country. We expect and hope it to make good progress in the House of Lords. As I have said at successive business questions on Thursdays in

the House, it was disappointing that Opposition Members blocked it. They needed only to drop their objections for it to go through, and now they have seen the light and dropped them, so we hope it will go through and become law.

**Mr. Roger Gale** (North Thanet) (Con): The wash-up following the decision to dissolve Parliament is, by tradition and convention, always uncontroversial and by agreement. Significant parts of the Digital Economy Bill are highly contentious and it is the view of many that it should not be debated at all following the announcement of Dissolution and that it could and should properly be left to a future Government, which could be done very swiftly indeed. Unless the right hon. and learned Lady is prepared to give a clear undertaking that the contentious parts of the Bill will be dropped, it will not go through. It is not good enough to say that it will be left to a statutory instrument in a future Parliament.

**Ms Harman:** But I was trying to explain to hon. Members that there will not be just the normal affirmative procedure, which does not allow for a Committee and for amendments to come from a Committee. If one thinks about what a Committee stage does, one sees that it allows Members of the House to consider the Bill in detail and to make amendments to it. The super-affirmative process that I have announced to the House, which will apply in the case of these contentious measures, will provide scrutiny by Members of this House in a Committee stage that can then lead to amendments. Therefore, whatever the House does by agreement in the wash-up will not come into force until there has been a Committee stage, in effect, under the super-affirmative procedure. I think the hon. Gentleman had worked out his concerns and objections before hearing my explanation that we would deal with the matter in this different way. This is something that can be discussed further when the Secretary of State moves the Bill's Second Reading later today.

**Hugh Bayley** (City of York) (Lab): The York-based company Jarvis made more than 1,000 track-renewal workers redundant last week. The skills of a work force are essential to the future of the railway. Network Rail is retendering the Jarvis work, and whoever wins it must re-employ the Jarvis workers. If my right hon. and learned Friend cannot find time for a debate on this important matter before Parliament is dissolved, will she at least ask the Secretary of State for Transport and the Minister for Yorkshire and the Humber—who I know has had many discussions about the matter—to meet me urgently to discuss these workers' jobs?

**Ms Harman:** I entirely take the point that my hon. Friend has made. He is absolutely a champion for people employed in his constituency, and he is understandably very concerned about the Jarvis employees who have been made redundant. I will ask the Secretary of State for Transport and my right hon. Friend the Minister for Business, Innovation and Skills to meet him so that he can discuss how to reassure his constituents and lay their concerns to rest.

**Alistair Burt** (North-East Bedfordshire) (Con): The right hon. and learned Lady may recall that, at the last business questions, I made an intervention about the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 (Amendment) Bill,

which I was promoting. In response, she said—accurately perhaps, but slightly sharply for her—that I was “earnest” but “not relevant”. She has included the Bill in the wash-up, so may I thank her most warmly on behalf of all those, both in the House and outside, who have promoted it? I ask her to do her very best to ensure that the Bill goes through, given that the official Opposition have always supported it.

**Ms Harman:** I was going to apologise for making perhaps waspish comments to the hon. Gentleman, but unfortunately I cannot remember at all the exchange that we had. However, he is right to say that the Bill is important, and he has played an important role in it. With the support of all sides of the House, it will become an Act of Parliament.

**Mr. Tom Watson** (West Bromwich, East) (Lab): I would have found the delegation to a Committee of controversial elements of the Digital Economy Bill more reassuring had I not seen item 12 on today's Order Paper. The Draft Conditional Fee Agreements (Amendment) Order 2010 was rejected by a Committee last Thursday but, less than a week later, it is being reintroduced by the Secretary of State for Justice. Even at this late stage, will my right hon. and learned Friend consider making representations to remove those controversial measures from the draft Bill?

**Ms Harman:** My hon. Friend can be reassured that the motion on the Order Paper to which he refers will not be moved today. It might be on the Order Paper now, but it is not going anywhere.

**Dr. Evan Harris** (Oxford, West and Abingdon) (LD): On 11 March, the right hon. and learned Lady said that “it is gratifying that there were very big majorities in the House last week to resolve this matter and move forward. We have the resolutions of the House. My task now is to make sure that the House is given an opportunity to endorse the Standing Orders that will give effect to them. My mandate is the will of the House as expressed in the resolutions. We need Standing Orders to give effect to them—nothing less.”—[*Official Report*, 11 March 2010; Vol. 507, c. 433.]

Through you, Mr. Speaker, may I urge the Leader of the House to explain why she is reneging on a commitment that she gave for two weeks running—that if there were objections to the Standing Orders, they could not go through on the nod and that she would make time for the will of the House to be made clear? In her own words, it is her duty and responsibility to ensure that that happens.

**Ms Harman:** First, we should remind ourselves that the overwhelming majority of the Wright Committee's important proposals have gone through. Secondly, we have drafted the Standing Orders that give effect to the will of the House, and it is disappointing that they are being blocked. However, the Standing Orders have been drafted and are available for the House, and there will be an opportunity when the House returns for them to be put into effect. The objections are there. If they are taken off the Order Paper, they can be dealt with and go through as remaining Orders of the Day. If they do not, the hon. Gentleman should not be alarmed. All is not lost. They will remain there; they represent the will of the House, as expressed by a large majority, and it can happen as soon as the new Parliament arrives.

**Mr. Ian Davidson** (Glasgow, South-West) (Lab/Co-op): Will there be an opportunity to discuss the business of Government during the election period? In particular, will subcontracts continue to be let for the aircraft carrier order in my constituency? Given that the Royal Navy and the aircraft carrier are under threat from the official Opposition, it is obviously something of great interest to many of my constituents.

**Mr. Speaker:** The relationship to the business motion is extremely tangential, but I am sure the Leader of the House will deal with it.

**Ms Harman:** My hon. Friend will be reassured, as all Members should be, that although this country, as we know, remains in a fragile economic situation, we are on the right path. Businesses are beginning to grow and unemployment is beginning to fall, but we will continue to make sure that we take the right decisions for the future of the economy. Businesses will be able to look to the Government to be sure that we stand beside them—we do not let the recession take its course, as the Opposition would.

**Mr. Nick Gibb** (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) (Con): In the very short time available before Parliament is dissolved, could the Leader of the House find time for a short debate on the decision by NHS West Sussex to close two very popular dental surgeries? One is at Maywood health centre in Bognor Regis and one is at Flansham Park. The decision has baffled the 4,000 patients who are registered with those dental surgeries. I have written to the Secretary of State for Health to enlist his support, but a debate would be helpful in

trying to persuade NHS West Sussex to reverse that wrong and unpopular decision.

**Ms Harman:** Obviously, as the hon. Gentleman will know, that is a matter for local decision making. He has written to my right hon. Friend and will await a reply. He will know that his constituents, like all our constituents, have benefited from the massive increase for NHS funding, including in primary care and dental services.

**Sir Patrick Cormack** (South Staffordshire) (Con): The Leader of the House has listed approximately a dozen measures to be discussed in the next two days. She did not tell my right hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House how much time she expected each measure to take. Will she now do so? Will she also allow the House to sit on Friday so that the Standing Orders can then be approved properly on that day?

**Ms Harman:** A programme motion will be tabled this afternoon and will be debatable tomorrow.

**Mr. Don Foster** (Bath) (LD): A few minutes ago, the Leader of the House told us that the controversial elements of the Digital Economy Bill, in relation to the application of technical measures, would be covered by the super-affirmative procedure. Can she confirm that it will apply to clause 11 as well as clause 18? She told the House that the Bill would go through only as a result of consensus. Can she define what she meant by “consensus”?

**Ms Harman:** There is plenty of opportunity to discuss all this in detail with the Secretary of State when he brings forward the Bill for its Second Reading.

## **Waste Recovery and Disposal Facilities (Public Consultation)**

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

4.18 pm

**Nadine Dorries** (Mid-Bedfordshire) (Con): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require planning authorities to conduct a local referendum before considering planning permission for new large-scale waste recovery or disposal facilities which involve the recovery or disposal of waste from more than one county area; to provide that planning authorities and the Secretary of State must not grant planning permission if the result of such a referendum indicates that local people do not wish a facility to be developed; and for connected purposes.

In the last 10 years society has dramatically altered. Twenty-four hour access to rolling news and media and widespread and easily available access to the internet mean that today's individual is far more enlightened in terms of information than ever before. People are more aware of what is happening within their own communities and where their money is being spent. If a community requires more homes, a school or a hospital, traditionally developers have worked with local councils and provided a solution.

One could argue that, via the process of democracy, local people have their views and concerns more or less met within the provision of the planning decision-making process, but that is not always the case. Often, despite extensive consultation, the wider community view may not necessarily reflect the opinions of those citizens whose lives and environment will be deeply affected and impacted upon by a decision that has been taken elsewhere and, ultimately, local people feel powerless to control their quality of life.

When we live with what is recognised as a broken society, it is important that the process is reversed and that local people are once again empowered. Local empowerment is vital when the objective of a Government is to roll back the boundaries of the state to reverse what we have today, which is a big state centralising power and local people who feel helpless. We need citizens to become more involved in how their communities function and are shaped, to become community shareholders by taking ownership for the residents of today and future families of tomorrow.

My party has already articulated the desire to establish local housing trusts, which will enable local people to get together, form a trust and dictate how local housing needs will be met. Local people will drive the local housing growth agenda. They will be empowered and in control. We have exciting new policies in education that will enable local parents to establish and run local schools. However, my Bill proposes a further approach when the need for larger infrastructural facilities is required in a local community.

An area of Mid-Bedfordshire, which incorporates the communities of Stewartby, Marston Moretaine, Brogbrough and Lidlington, has been targeted for some time by the Government for development and growth. Not surprisingly, people who live in that targeted area would like some say in how it grows. A proposed inappropriate eco-town has already been successfully fought off by engaged and active local residents. As a

result of European legislation and the need to cease using landfill and to create energy-from-waste facilities, Rookery Pit, within that growth area, has been designated as the preferred site for an energy-from-waste plant. That has raised a number of issues.

A large American company—Covanta—has maximised the opportunity to enter a sham process of local consultation and public relations, to try to convince local people that it has in some way advanced as a preferred developer and operator. The company has even indicated to me and other people that it is talking to local planners, which is not the case. The fact is that many organisations may tender, and probably will do so, to build the energy-from-waste plant at that location.

Bedfordshire has an excellent recycling record and already recycles 44 per cent. of its waste. I am sure that the majority of people in Bedfordshire understand the need to cease landfill and to burn what rubbish is not recycled, thereby creating clean energy in the process, but they do not understand why Bedfordshire should process the waste for Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Milton Keynes, Hertfordshire or anywhere else—counties that are quite capable of providing facilities to cater for their own waste.

It is time for the people who will be affected by such a proposal to be not only consulted but given a vote and the power to decide how and in what way their community and environment will alter. There is strong local opposition to the Covanta proposal, which in no real way benefits the local economy but aesthetically damages the local environment. From many of the beauty spots in Mid-Bedfordshire, the Millennium park, Amptill park and Houghton house and, indeed, the home of my hon. Friend the Member for North-East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), the Covanta proposal would blight the landscape, and all will be able to see the proposed development.

The hope of Mid-Bedfordshire's economic growth targets being attained via tourism would be dashed in one planning approval. The already congested M1 and A421 would become blocked with the congestion and fumes from lorries carrying waste from other counties. They would use the same motorway junction as the traffic for the proposed Center Parcs site, which has yet to be built, and the assessment of the traffic on that junction has yet to be carried out. The size and scale of the proposed Covanta site make landscaping and disguise almost an impossibility even after five years of established growth and screening. The building would be half the height of Big Ben, which stands at around 80 metres high, and the chimneys of the proposed plant would stand at 145 metres. Mid-Bedfordshire cannot boast many hills, so I hope that the comparison with Big Ben and our flattish landscape provides some perspective on the visual impact that such a facility will have.

Therefore, given the enormous negative impact that a waste facility catering for more than the requirements of Bedfordshire would have on people living in and around the designated area, those people should be given a greater say in what happens. The Bill proposes holding a local referendum—the results of which the Secretary of State would honour—that would genuinely harness local opinion and allow a yes-or-no decision to be taken on the size and capacity of such a facility.

Facilities of Covanta proportions can be disguised in the wonderful, large-scale USA, but England is a fairly small island that is already becoming over-populated.

[Nadine Dorries]

We have no capacity for a facility of the size of the Covanta proposal. We have no spare air in Bedfordshire for errors of toxic fumes, we have no vista or horizon large enough to accommodate a facility the size of the Covanta proposal, and local people are running out of patience. Residents not only will have to deal with fumes and pollution from backed-up lorries on the A421, but will experience light pollution as the area will be plunged into almost perpetual daylight.

Very few jobs will be created by the facility and there will be very little benefit to the economy. Overall, one can only envisage a damaging and negative effect on the daily life of local residents. Residents do not say that there should be no such facility; they believe that a facility is required to deal with Bedfordshire's waste, but not one of the size proposed, so they would like more say about what happens in their local area.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Ordered,*

That Nadine Dorries present the Bill.

Nadine Dorries accordingly presented the Bill.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 23 April, and to be printed (Bill 102).*

## Digital Economy Bill [Lords]

[*Relevant Documents: Third Report from the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, on Channel Four Annual Report, HC 415, and Fourth Report from the Committee, on Future for Local and Regional Media, HC 43; and Fourth Report from the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, on Broadband, HC 72.*]

*Second Reading*

4.27 pm

**The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Mr. Ben Bradshaw):** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

It is important to acknowledge at the outset that the timing of our Second Reading debate is unusual, as I think that we would all accept, and I shall set out more detail about that in a minute. The substance of what we are considering, however, is how we protect and build on the great British success stories that are our digital and creative sectors. The United Kingdom is now No. 1 in the world in those sectors, measured as a proportion of our gross domestic product. The creative industries have grown at twice the rate of the economy as a whole over the past 10 years, and they should do so again over the next 10, thus helping to create many of the jobs of the future. The speed of that growth has been more than matched by the speed of technological change. Many of us will be carrying communications devices that we could not have imagined even five years ago. Hon. Members might even be using them as I speak, given that the rules in this place were sensibly relaxed a few years ago.

**Mr. Edward Vaizey (Wantage) (Con):** What about pagers?

**Mr. Bradshaw:** Pagers are long obsolete, as the hon. Gentleman will know.

Most of us, and certainly our children, are consuming music, film, books and other creative content in ways that would have baffled previous generations. The digital revolution has brought huge benefits and opportunities for a country such as Britain that is creative, innovative and flexible, but such rapid change also brings challenges. The overriding challenge that the Bill tries to address is that of keeping the legal framework that applies to our digital and creative sectors up to date in such a fast-moving world.

**Mr. William Cash (Stone) (Con):** Will the Secretary of State be kind enough to explain why his name did not initially appear next to the statement on compatibility with the European convention on human rights? Is there a mysterious reason, was it an oversight, or did the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the right hon. Member for East Ham (Mr. Timms), who is sitting next to him, just get there slightly ahead of him?

**Mr. Bradshaw:** I am sure that there is an innocent explanation.

**Keith Vaz (Leicester, East) (Lab):** My right hon. Friend is right to mention the success of the creative industries. With reference to our children, the industry must act responsibly—with respect to video games, for example. Such responsibility must accompany the success of the digital revolution.

**Mr. Bradshaw:** Indeed, and there are important provisions in the Bill that will help strengthen the protection of children in respect of video games, about which I shall say a little in a moment.

It is not ideal that the Bill is not likely to enjoy full debate through its Committee stages in the House, but at the end of a Parliament there are always Bills to which that applies. This was the case in 2005 with a number of Bills, including the Gambling Act, the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act and the Disability Discrimination Act, none of which was completely uncontroversial.

**Mr. John Whittingdale** (Maldon and East Chelmsford) (Con): Will the Minister give way?

**Mr. Bradshaw:** I give way to the Chairman of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee.

**Mr. Whittingdale:** I am grateful to the Secretary of State. I was the shadow Secretary of State during the wash-up last time, when the Gambling Act was considered. That Bill had undergone full scrutiny in Committee of the House of Commons. Can the right hon. Gentleman give an example of a major Government Bill that generates substantial opposition that has a Second Reading one day and goes into wash-up for completion the next day?

**Mr. Bradshaw:** I do not want to read out the entire list of Bills. I have a much longer list, but I will let the hon. Gentleman have it and he can refer to it in his speech, if he wishes.

If the Bill gets on to the statute book, it will be with the co-operation of the main Opposition party and, I hope, the Liberal Democrats and others too. One of the Bill's strengths is that most, if not all, of it enjoys a good level of cross-party support. If it did not, its prospects of surviving the wash-up negotiations that will take place between now and Prorogation would be slim indeed.

**Mr. Tom Watson** (West Bromwich, East) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there might be a deal with the Tory Front-Bench and the Lib Dem Front-Bench teams, but that the 20,000 people who have taken the time to e-mail their MPs about the Bill in the past seven days are extremely upset that the Bill will not receive the scrutiny that it deserves and requires?

**Mr. Bradshaw:** We are all aware of the e-mails with which we have been inundated in recent days. I am sure my hon. Friend is also aware of the competing newspapers adverts today from the unions and trade organisations representing those who work in the creative sector who, with respect, probably number hundreds of thousands and feel it is important that the work that they create is not devalued by an issue that we will shortly discuss in more detail. They feel just as strongly that they need the legislation now as the people he mentioned think we should not pass it.

**John Hemming** (Birmingham, Yardley) (LD) *rose*—

**Peter Luff** (Mid-Worcestershire) (Con) *rose*—

**Mr. Bradshaw:** No. I shall make some progress. Many hon. Members want to speak in the debate, and if I take too many interventions, they will not get the chance to make their speeches.

It is not true to say, as some have claimed, that the provisions of the Bill have not already been the subject of considerable discussion. Many of them have been heralded for some time in the reports of Select Committees of both Houses, including our own Select Committee chaired by the hon. Member for Maldon and East Chelmsford (Mr. Whittingdale). Many of them were contained in the Government's "Digital Britain" White Paper published last summer after a year's meticulous work by my former ministerial colleague, Lord Carter.

That report was subject to a full public consultation and rigorous scrutiny by the relevant Select Committees of both Houses. More recently, the Bill passed through the other place which, as I am sure hon. Members will recognise, contains a large number of peers who show a great interest in these matters. That is perhaps why the Bill took a month longer than we would have hoped to complete its Lords progress. It was debated for 12 full days—more than 50 hours—on the Floor of the other House, during which some 700 amendments were tabled. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the House reminded colleagues in Business questions, it had more debating time in the other place than any other Bill in this parliamentary Session.

**Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State look back in history and see what happens to legislation that gets pushed through the House quickly, without consultation? It looks as though we could push some measure through—perhaps there will be a little stitch-up between the three Front-Bench teams—but out there, ordinary people, many of whom have only begun to realise the repercussions of the Bill, will feel totally let down by Parliament, just before a general election.

**Mr. Bradshaw:** With respect to my hon. Friend, I suggest that in her constituency many ordinary people, as she refers to them, who work in the film, TV and creative sectors desperately want this Bill, and their voices should be heard, too.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr. Bradshaw:** I give way to the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Peter Luff), the Chairman of the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee.

**Peter Luff:** Does the Secretary of State acknowledge also the role of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in this Bill and, in particular, the report that is tagged to this debate, the Committee's report on broadband, to which Ofcom has had the decency to reply in time for the debate, but to which sadly the Business Department, despite having a response ready, has not actually responded? It would have been good to have had this debate on the basis of the fullest available information, and I urge the right hon. Gentleman to reflect on the lack of detail available to Members in scrutinising the Bill.

**Mr. Bradshaw:** I am sure that the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my right hon. Friend the Member for East Ham (Mr. Timms), will want to respond to the hon. Gentleman's point when he sums up at the end of the debate.

**Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Bradshaw:** I shall give way one more time and then make some progress.

**Alun Michael:** Does my right hon. Friend accept that what is important in terms of this Bill is putting a framework into place, and that there needs to be a good deal of flexibility thereon? I heard one person this morning criticise the fact that Ofcom will produce guidance in consultation with the other parties, but I thought that that was a potential strength of the Bill.

**Mr. Bradshaw:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right about that.

During the Bill's passage through the other place, 700 amendments were tabled. The Government listened to the concerns that were raised, and we either accepted a number of amendments or made some of our own. I hope that those hon. Members who have followed this discussion for some time will agree that, for the most part, the Bill has arrived here in better shape as a result. I can understand the frustration felt by colleagues that the parliamentary timetable means it unlikely that they will have the chance to get their teeth into the detail of the legislation as they would have liked, but I hope that the House will support the Bill's Second Reading and recognise both the importance of passing many of these measures now and the potential damage to our digital economy and our creative industries if we fail to do so and there is further delay.

Let me turn to the contents of the Bill. I have already outlined to the House the importance of the digital economy and our creative industries to Britain's economy. But, hundreds of millions of pounds a year is haemorrhaging from our creative industries because of unlawful file sharing, and that is not a harmless or victimless activity. It deprives our musicians, writers, film makers, actors and other artists of their livelihood, and if we do not do something about such activity it will pose a serious threat to our creative sectors and Britain's leadership in them. We believe that the provisions in the Bill balance protection for our creative artists with a fair deal for consumers without trampling on the openness that makes the online world the gateway to new experiences and greater democratic freedoms.

The Bill introduces obligations on internet service providers—the ISPs—to send letters to subscribers who are linked to an alleged infringement, and to record the number of notifications with which each subscriber is associated. Copyright owners will be able to apply for a court order to access the names and addresses of alleged serious infringers and take targeted legal action. We expect that those initial measures will be effective and anticipate that, on receipt of such letters, the vast majority of subscribers will seek legal alternatives. There is research and real-world experience to back that up.

The Bill also introduces a power to impose on ISPs a further obligation to apply technical measures against the most serious infringers. To give the initial obligations time to work, those measures cannot be introduced for 12 months from when the code comes into effect. Any decision to introduce them would be based on a careful examination of the evidence, including an assessment and a progress report from Ofcom. That includes looking to see whether copyright owners have played their part in relation to education and developing legal offers.

**John Robertson** (Glasgow, North-West) (Lab): Although I accept everything that my right hon. Friend says, and accept everything behind those comments, my great fear is that we will turn children into criminals. The Bill is not supposed to do so, but there is nothing in it to protect the child in such cases.

**Mr. Bradshaw:** With respect, I must say that my hon. Friend is wrong. The Bill does not contain any provision that turns children into criminals. The safeguards that I have already outlined, and will continue to outline, ensure that that is not the case.

The measures to which I was referring would be introduced only after warnings to subscribers and in conjunction with a clear route of appeal. Although a technical measure might include temporary suspension of accounts, it will not involve permanent disconnection—as has so often been misrepresented.

**Mr. Mike Weir** (Angus) (SNP): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Bradshaw:** I shall not. I shall make some progress if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

I have focused on measures to tackle unlawful file sharing, but we have stressed all along the importance of developing legitimate paid-for downloading models. The problem, however, is that those will become widespread and sustainable only if there is a proper legal framework to tackle unlawful downloading.

**Mr. Brian Binley** (Northampton, South) (Con) *rose*—

**Mr. Weir** *rose*—

**John Hemming** *rose*—

**Mr. Bradshaw:** No, I shall not give way. Many people want to speak in this debate and I want to make progress so that they get the chance to do so.

Unlawful file sharing using peer-to-peer networks is not the only way in which copyright can be infringed online; according to industry estimates, about a third of current infringements are already carried out in other ways. Originally, the Government wished to future-proof the legislation with what used to be clause 17, which would have provided powers to take action against other forms of online infringement. That clause, however, was too much for Conservative and Liberal Democrat peers in the other place, who tabled a new clause 18 to allow site blocking. [*Interruption.*] The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) smiles, as well he might; he wrote the clause and has since disowned it. I shall come to that in a moment. The Government had problems with that clause for a number of reasons, as did both Opposition parties subsequently.

The hon. Member for Bath was so monstered at the Liberal Democrat spring conference for having proposed such a draconian measure that he did not even dare turn up—neither did his noble Friend in the House of Lords. They were both so monstered in their absence for having supported such a draconian measure that they now appear to have changed their whole position on the Bill. No doubt the hon. Gentleman will explain himself in due course.

To accommodate the changing positions of the Opposition parties, we have drafted the current clause 18, which is far more proportionate than what was suggested by the hon. Gentleman. It would require full consultation and the approval of both Houses by super-affirmative resolutions. I hope that that will meet the approval of the House.

One of the other big challenges that we face in the digital age is how to protect and guarantee television and radio content that the public want and value. As has been highlighted again today by the Select Committee report, the issue is most acute in the case of regional news on ITV in England and ITV news for the nations in Scotland, Wales and, to a lesser extent, Northern Ireland. The Bill will secure the future of quality news on ITV in the regions and nations of the UK.

Just before Easter, I was delighted to announce the three preferred bidders for pilots for these new independently funded news consortiums in Scotland, Wales, the north-east of England and Scottish borders. I deeply regret the position that the Conservative party has taken on the issue. I do not know anyone in the media world who believes that the market will secure the future of the quality TV news that the public expect. At this late hour, I appeal to the shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport to think again before he signs what could be the death warrant for plurality in the regions' and nations' news.

Other measures in the Bill are aimed at securing a healthy and diverse future media landscape and include an updated remit for Channel 4, ITV and Five, so that they can respond more flexibly to changes in the market and people's viewing habits.

The Bill not only deals with the creative and broadcasting content that we value; it also helps to modernise our digital infrastructure. The switchover to digital radio has probably aroused more interest than any other issue in the Bill except that of unlawful file sharing. The target date of 2015, set by the Government, is an incentive not an ultimatum. We have made it clear that a decision on digital switchover will not be made until national DAB coverage is comparable to that of FM, until local DAB reaches 90 per cent. of the population and all major roads and until 50 per cent. of listening is through digital means. Once all those criteria have been satisfied, there will be at least two years before switchover takes place, at which point we expect coverage and listening to reach nearly universal levels—that is, about 98.5 per cent. judged by television reach.

The Bill also implements the recommendations of Tanya Byron on the classification of video games, an issue referred to a little earlier. It enhances Ofcom's duties on investment in infrastructure and public service media content. It provides the regulator with additional powers to support the modernisation of the mobile network spectrum. It supports the efficient and effective management and distribution of internet domain names and updates the regulation of copyright licensing and public lending rights for the digital age. The Bill will ensure that Britain's digital economy and creative industries can build on their success, continue to thrive and lead the world. I commend it to the House.

4.44 pm

**Mr. Jeremy Hunt** (South-West Surrey) (Con): This afternoon, on the very day when time has finally been called on a weak, dithering and incompetent Government,

we are faced with a weak, dithering and incompetent attempt to breathe life into Britain's digital economy. One does have to admire the Government's chutzpah, because one of their five key election pledges is apparently to build a high-tech economy. This afternoon the country will be able to judge them by their record, because we have an entire parliamentary Bill setting out their vision—one of the very last that this Parliament will debate.

Instead of a big, ambitious vision for this country, we have a digital disappointment of colossal proportions. As well as the controversial measures it does contain, we should not forget what it does not contain, because it is a catalogue of ducked decisions. The Government have ducked sorting out digital radio switchover, which the Secretary of State has just talked about. They are giving Ministers the power to switch over in 2015, yes, but without taking any of the difficult measures necessary to make it practical or possible. They have ducked reforms to help our struggling local newspaper and radio sector, when local newspapers are closing every week and local radio stations are losing so much money that their very existence is being cast into doubt.

The Government have ducked reforms to give Britain a credible path towards super-fast broadband, leaving us languishing with one of the slowest broadband networks in the developed world. They have ducked public service broadcasting reform, failing both to clarify the limits to commercial activity by the BBC and to ensure that it has strong competition from an independent sector that will still be burdened by outdated regulation.

**David Cairns** (Inverclyde) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman take this opportunity, then, categorically to rule out the privatisation of Channel 4 if his party is returned to power?

**Mr. Hunt:** I am very happy to give that assurance, because we want Channel 4 to provide strong competition for the BBC for the type of programmes that the market will not provide. We are one of the few countries in the world that has such competition in the non-commercially viable parts of the sector. Channel 4 was set up by the last Conservative Government and we are proud to have done that.

One final thing that the Government have ducked, which is incredibly disappointing, is the possibility of giving the public a right to access Government data sets, which was mentioned in the "Digital Britain" White Paper, and which President Obama has successfully introduced in the United States. It would have been a huge leap forward for our digital economy for people to be able to access those data.

**John Hemming:** I refer the House to my declaration of interests, which refers to my rather minor activity as a music publisher, among other things.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that in allowing the copyright that local authorities often require for Freedom of Information Act purposes, the Government have gone one step worse? People can be cut off for looking up freedom of information on the net.

**Mr. Hunt:** I share the hon. Gentleman's concerns. The presumption should be that the public have a right to see Government data sets unless there is a very good reason why they should not. Allowing members of the public to mine those data has huge potential in all sorts of ways.

**Mr. Mark Lancaster** (North-East Milton Keynes) (Con): On the subject of the Government ducking issues, does my hon. Friend not feel that it is incumbent on them to outline exactly which elements of the Bill will be subject to the super-affirmative procedure that the Leader of the House referred to earlier?

**Mr. Hunt:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and there is another reason, which I shall come to in a minute, why we need to be clear about what safeguards the Government are going to put in place.

**Peter Luff:** I cannot resist the pun: another of the ducked decisions is on ducts. Is my hon. Friend aware that access to ducts other than BT's—for example, waterways and sewers—is currently outside Ofcom's powers? Its response tells us that

“regulatory intervention in relation to infrastructure beyond the telecommunications sector would be a matter for the Government.” The Bill should be explicit about that, to achieve the investment in broadband that we want.

**Mr. Hunt:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point, and indeed the Select Committee on Business, Innovation and Skills, which he chairs, wrote an excellent report on that very topic. If we are to stimulate investment in next-generation fibre networks, we need to break open all the infrastructure monopolies, whether on pylons, water mains or sewers, not just those on BT's ducts and pipes. That is the only way that we can stimulate such investment, and it could have been in the Bill, because it requires primary legislation. It is not: another opportunity has been missed.

All too often, where the Government have suggested change they have resorted to the Labour comfort zones of tax, regulation and subsidy as the answer to every problem. On tax, there is a phone tax to pay for next-generation broadband, which means that older people who do not use the internet will be paying for younger people who want faster connections. Even on the Government's own figures, such a tax would put 200,000 people off taking up a broadband connection. On regulation, the Government's reliance on Government levers is so heavy that Ofcom is mentioned 187 times in just 50 clauses of this Bill.

**Mr. Siôn Simon** (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab) *rose*—

**Mr. Hunt:** I shall give way in a moment. On subsidy, we find the misguided attempt to prop up ITV regional news by tapping into the BBC licence fee. As a former US President once said, the trouble with government is that it always thinks:

“If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidise it.”

We find the same thing in this Bill: New Labour, new taxes; new Labour, new regulation; and new Labour, new subsidies. New thinking this is not; nor is it a new economy.

**Mr. Watson:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would wish to acknowledge the great progress that has been made on data sets. Just last week, Ordnance Survey released its geo-spatial data, which are the jewel in the crown for the Free Our Data campaign; I know that he would wish to give credit for that. Even at this late stage, is he determined to collude with the Government in forcing through the copyright infringement parts of this Bill?

**Mr. Hunt:** First, I should say that I am prepared to concede that some progress has been made in opening up Government data sets, but the process needs to go much further. The law needs a presumption that the public can access those data, rather than a presumption that they cannot unless there is a very good reason for them to do so; a big psychological shift needs to take place.

There is no question of our party colluding with the Government. We have examined this Bill clause by clause, and we agree with the hon. Gentleman that it could have been massively improved had this House been able to give it proper scrutiny in Committee. The Government have had plenty of opportunities to allow such scrutiny, and it is a matter of huge regret that we have not been able to provide it. This concern is shared by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Watson), by my hon. Friends the Members for Maldon and East Chelmsford (Mr. Whittingdale) and for Mid-Worcestershire (Peter Luff)—the Chairs of the two Select Committees—and by many other Members in this House.

**Mr. James Arbuthnot** (North-East Hampshire) (Con): Is there not one other thing that the Secretary of State ducked: an explanation of why this Bill has been started so late in this parliamentary Session, which means that we have to rush it through? The Bill includes the stuff about orphan works, which for some reason the Secretary of State did not mention, and for which he has given no explanation whatsoever?

**Mr. Hunt:** As ever, my right hon. Friend makes an important point. Orphan works legislation is incredibly important, because there is a potentially huge benefit in being able to unlock for the public archives such as those of the British Library, the BBC and universities, but there is a big problem in establishing the ownership of the rights to those works. This Bill was an excellent opportunity to sort out that problem, but under its provisions as drafted, it would be possible for someone to remove an image and all its identifying marks, and for that image then to end up being pirated all over the world. Again, these provisions could have been sorted out and improved by proper scrutiny in Committee in the House of Commons.

**Dr. Julian Lewis** (New Forest, East) (Con): I am delighted that my hon. Friend has drawn attention to that matter. I know that the photographic industry is terribly concerned that there is no way in which a photograph on the internet can be protected from having its provenance removed. It seems that there is a culture of, “Use it now and pay later—if you're found out.” That will deter photographic agencies from putting their data on the internet in the first place.

**Mr. Hunt:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and that is why we cannot support clause 43. We would like to support the objectives of that clause on orphan works, but unintended consequences occur unless the wording is right, as the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) pointed out. The question is: why has a debate on such a crucial Bill been left to the very last minute? The Government could have brought this Bill before Parliament ages ago, because these issues have been in the public domain for years. Dr. Tanya Byron, whom the Secretary of State mentioned, told the Government two years ago that a new age-rating system

for video games was needed. The Gowers review of intellectual property is so old it is practically out of copyright. Ofcom wanted the Government to establish a new model for public service broadcasting regulation six years ago, but as the Government have progressively run out of steam, we have had a lighter and lighter parliamentary timetable, and instead of getting on with it, we have had endless dithering and prevarication.

**Mr. Roger Gale** (North Thanet) (Con): In business questions, I raised the point that the wash-up is supposed to be for non-contentious material. I do not for one moment believe that my hon. Friend has colluded with the Government; that is not his nature. A small—indeed, pitiful—amount of this very modest Bill is acceptable to probably everybody in the House. However, it is not satisfactory for a Bill to be effectively rewritten and subjected to a super-affirmative resolution. Would it not be better for him to resist the bad bits of the Bill in their entirety and let a new Conservative Government bring in a decent Bill?

**Mr. Hunt:** I share my hon. Friend's concerns, and the principles that he has outlined are, broadly speaking, the principles that we have been following. I think that he will understand, however—I have spoken to him about this—that we cannot reject the Bill in its entirety, because it contains some very important measures. However, I shall come on to talk about what we will do with some of the more contentious areas in the Bill.

**Mr. John Redwood** (Wokingham) (Con): I think what people outside the House want is an assurance that the good, as well as the bad, will be properly scrutinised. If this miserable Government cannot plan the timetable to give us that time, why can my hon. Friend not offer us that pledge, on the assumption of a Conservative victory in the election?

**Mr. Hunt:** We are stating categorically that we reserve the right to review anything that becomes law as a result of the wash-up, if we win the next election, and we will indeed review it, if it turns out that the legislation is flawed. However, the country and the digital industries that the Secretary of State talked about are in an invidious position. Legislation is urgently needed to protect jobs, and their competitive position. It has taken this Government 13 years to bring these issues before the House, and the industries are worried that if the whole thing is killed now, they might again have to wait a very long time, and that their competitive position will be eroded.

The Government have left industry in an extremely difficult position. My particular bugbear is their obsession with consultations and reviews. We have had two public service broadcasting reviews, and two consultations on community radio, two on the phone tax, two on product placement, one on video games, one on regional news, one on listed events and one on spectrum. When Stephen Carter took over the broadcasting and communications brief, we hoped that that might change, but when he published his "Digital Britain" final report we had another 12 consultations, and even he, despite having accepted a peerage, was not prepared to stay even 12 months to see his report turned into legislation.

We agree with the Secretary of State about the critical importance of the digital and creative industries—the largest independent television production sector in the world, the second largest music exporter in the world and, depending on how we measure them, the third largest film and video games industries in the world. When we desperately need to rebuild a broken economy in proven areas of British competitive advantage, what way is this to treat those industries, and what way is this to treat Parliament—denying us the chance to debate, scrutinise and amend this vital legislation?

**Mr. Binley:** My hon. Friend is a great supporter of the music industry, which at the moment is losing about £200 million a year from illegal downloads, but receiving very little help from the service providers. Will he give an undertaking that when he is the Secretary of State, he will ensure that the cost of informing infringers is shared more fairly—perhaps on a 50:50 basis—to protect artists' rights, and that we do more in that respect?

**Mr. Hunt:** My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the issue of costs, because that is very important. There is a need for responsibility on both sides of this debate. Internet service providers have to recognise that they have a critical role in tackling digital piracy, and it is not satisfactory for them just to say that they are a mere conduit and can have no responsibility for what is carried on their networks. On the other hand, however, the legal costs of securing court orders must be borne by the rights holders, whether in the music, film or sports industries, because they are the ones with the commercial interest in ensuring that digital piracy is stamped out. So getting that balance right is one of the areas of which it would have been good to have had much more scrutiny.

**Mr. Cash:** In relation to the clauses that deal with infrastructure, does my hon. Friend agree that there is a serious problem with the basic question of digging holes? All over the country, holes are being dug without the necessary degree of coherence to facilitate movement on our roads. Does he agree that if we had the chance, we would introduce measures to bring coherence to the public utilities' street works codes?

**Mr. Hunt:** My hon. Friend makes an important point, and I commend to him what the Mayor of London has done to try to bring order to that particular element of chaos.

I want to say plainly to the Government that, while we recognise that some parts of the Bill will have to be let through if we are to avoid serious damage to the economy, other parts of it are totally unacceptable, and we will use every parliamentary means at our disposal to remove them. They include the additional duties for Ofcom, which are at best unnecessary and at worst completely distorting. For example, the duty to promote investment in communications infrastructure is already covered by the Communications Act 2003. Indeed, following a year-long campaign by the Conservatives, with support from the Select Committee, Ofcom did precisely that by announcing a consultation to allow other people access to BT's ducts and poles in order to lay super-fast broadband fibre. However, there are no measures in the Bill to broaden that access to sewers, water mains and electricity pylons. Where are the measures to make it

[Mr. Hunt]

easier to get planning approval for fibre? Where are the proposals to regularise business rates so that they do not discourage investment in fibre? They are not in the Bill. For this Government, the answer is not to do something but to lay yet another regulatory duty on Ofcom. In this case, that duty is unnecessary, bureaucratic and costly, and it will go.

**John Robertson:** It is not for me to give the hon. Gentleman a history lesson, but he might perhaps remember what happened when the Conservative Government completely tore up the road works legislation so that the Clyde cables could be put into the ground. That played havoc with the streets of Glasgow, and even today we have roads that have never recovered from what his party did to the infrastructure of the area, thanks to all the cable and TV people.

**Mr. Hunt:** All I would say to the hon. Gentleman is that, thanks to the actions of the last Conservative Government, we now have a cable network covering half the country that has not cost the taxpayer a penny, a satellite network covering the whole country without any cost to the taxpayer, and a deregulated telecoms infrastructure that has made our international calls the cheapest in the world. That is all because we understand how proper regulation can work.

Another part of the Bill that is totally flawed covers the Government's plans for regional news. The Bill makes provision to subsidise ITV regional news by accessing the licence fee. Our starting point has to be, however, that our local media are in crisis, that newspaper and commercial radio groups are under severe pressure, and that we have never had proper local television in this country. London, Ontario has two local TV stations, despite being one twentieth the size of our London, which has none. Birmingham, Alabama has eight local TV stations, despite being only a quarter the size of our Birmingham, which has none. So will the Bill sort that out? No, it will not. Instead, Government subsidies will solidify the old, failed regional news model, encouraging media groups to put all their energy into lobbying Ministers for more subsidy, rather than finding models that attract viewers and listeners in the marketplace. Instead of measures to stimulate investment, innovation and change, the Bill proposes plans for regulation and subsidy that are so flawed that even ITV now thinks they will make a bad situation worse. ITV is right, and that clause will go.

We have already mentioned another fundamentally flawed proposal—clause 43, which deals with orphan works and extended licensing. These measures have the right intention, and with proper scrutiny could have yielded huge benefits for consumers and authors alike.

**Kate Hoey:** Will the shadow Secretary of State reiterate a point? He probably realises that the UK photography industry has got together, is well organised and is keen to work with the Government to secure legislation that is right; what they do not want is something to be pushed through. Will the hon. Gentleman reiterate what I thought I heard him say earlier—that the Conservative Front-Bench team would not allow clause 43 to go through?

**Mr. Hunt:** I am happy to reiterate my opposition to clause 43, and to say that we are not prepared to let it through as part of the wash-up process. What is needed is a proper reform of copyright law, and my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor (Adam Afriyie) has said that under a new Conservative Government he will ensure that such proposals are put before the House. Let me provide an example of where this is already going wrong. An image of none other than the great Lord Mandelson himself is apparently being used to market a Russian vodka, with the caption, “When only the best is good enough”. If ever we needed proof that captions to pirated images can be misleading, surely that is it. We cannot support these measures as they stand—but what an opportunity has been wasted.

**Fiona Mactaggart (Slough) (Lab):** The hon. Gentleman has been explicit in saying that his party will resist clause 43, and some other parts of the Bill, in the wash-up. He has not been explicit, however, about clauses 10 to 18. If I understood him correctly, he said that if they did not work he would change them when the Conservatives were in government. Can he therefore explain the difference?

**Mr. Hunt:** I absolutely can explain the difference. The measures to which the hon. Lady refers are so critical for the 2 million jobs of people employed in the digital and creative industries that there would be an economic cost if we were to delete all the relevant clauses there. I would not want to look those people in the eye and say that we had done nothing to help them. These measures are imperfect and I am concerned that they will not be effective, but I am satisfied that on the balance of our responsibilities to the people working in these industries, the sensible thing to do is to let them through but give a clear undertaking that if a Conservative Government are elected, we will amend, change or delete measures as necessary with the utmost speed, to ensure that they do not do the kind of damage about which I know hon. Members throughout the House are concerned.

**Mr. David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con):** I am full of admiration as my hon. Friend has striven to make the Bill workable, but I am still concerned about the unintended consequences highlighted by the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey). Is he saying that he is going to allow these elements of the Bill through, but then, if the Conservatives are in government, create a new parliamentary opportunity to review them, or is he going to take a chance on them not working? I have to say that if it is taking a chance on them not working, I will not vote in favour of the Bill.

**Mr. Hunt:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his intervention. I share his concerns about the process, but if he looks at the measures he will see that there are quite long time gaps before it will be possible for a Secretary of State to lay regulations before the House to allow, for example, for the suspension of internet accounts. There is a period of time during which we can come to understand the likely impact of these regulations and how they could be framed in order to avoid unintended consequences.

One thing that particularly concerned me about the drafting of the regulations at an earlier stage was the chilling possibility that a rights holder could contact an internet service provider directly and say, “We’re concerned

about this website. If you don't block access to it we'll get a court order, and you'll be lumbered with the costs because you haven't behaved reasonably." My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, South (Mr. Binley), who was here earlier but is no longer in his place, raised the issue of costs. It is very important to frame costs issues so that only where a court order has been properly obtained—in other words, where there has been due process—could access to a website be blocked. To answer my right hon. Friend's question, yes, we absolutely are making a commitment that if these regulations are flawed and have unintended consequences we will bring measures before the House as a matter of urgency; it is incredibly important to get them right.

**Mr. Don Foster (Bath) (LD):** I note the hon. Gentleman's point about ensuring that if these measures go ahead the regulations that follow will have to be absolutely right. Does he therefore agree that clause 11 should include a requirement for a super-affirmative resolution, not only stipulating that there must be more consultation but providing an amendable resolution for the new House then to be able to consider and, if necessary, amend?

**Mr. Hunt:** I would like to know whether the hon. Gentleman is asking for a super-affirmative resolution on the clause that his party proposed in the House of Lords but is now campaigning against, because I am not sure that the original intention behind super-affirmative resolutions was to clear up the mess caused by Liberal Democrat YouTube U-turns. However, we want proper safeguards for all these measures, and particularly measures involving copyright infringement, because we have to ensure that they are used only in extremis.

**Robert Key (Salisbury) (Con) rose—**

**Mr. Hunt:** I shall give way, but for the last time.

**Robert Key:** Is my hon. Friend content with clause 31, on the digital switchover? It is estimated that the costs to the consumer will be £800 million, and there is no sign of manufacturers of DAB radios producing cheap radios, no estimate of the cost of throwing away millions of existing FM sets, no sign that the motor car industry is going to come up with the goods—[*Interruption.*] A Labour Back Bencher says, "Yes there is," but I have read all the papers and although there are one or two pious hopes, there is nothing more than that. This will be extremely expensive, and the 2015 deadline is unattainable. Is my hon. Friend content, therefore, or will we make some further promises?

**Mr. Hunt:** I share my hon. Friend's concerns, because I think that clause is so weak that it is virtually meaningless, as it gives the Secretary of State the power to mandate switchover in 2015 but the Government have not taken the difficult steps that would have made that possible, such as ensuring that the car industry installs digital radios as standard, as my hon. Friend suggests, and that there is proper reception on all roads and highways. As a result, a lot of people are very concerned that 110 million analogue radios will have to be junked in 2015. In particular, I would have liked the Government to find out whether we could move from DAB to the DAB plus technology, which most people think will be far more effective. If they had done that, this measure would not threaten smaller local radio stations.

**Mr. Simon rose—**

**Mr. Hunt:** I will give way to the former Minister with responsibility for creative industries, and then I will make some progress.

**Mr. Simon:** Given the hon. Gentleman's desire to move to DAB plus, what does he suggest the 8 million people in this country who have bought very expensive DAB radios should do?

**Mr. Hunt:** First, let me say that when the hon. Gentleman stepped down as Minister for the creative industries, it was a great shame that he was not replaced. It would have helped in the sensible framing of the Bill if we had had a Minister with that responsibility now, but there is none. The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is simply this: when we migrate from one technology to another—whether analogue to DAB, or DAB to DAB plus—we need some kind of help scheme, as we have with TV digital switchover, but there is no mention of a help scheme in this Bill. That serves to highlight why the Government have ducked the important decisions.

I conclude by talking about what this Bill should have contained. It should have asked one simple question: what needs to be done to stimulate investment in Britain's digital and creative industries by both domestic and international companies? Companies that thrive in the digital world tend to be small, nimble and fleet of foot. They thrive on competition and deregulation, not subsidy and regulation. A Conservative Government will end the micro-regulation of the broadcasting sector. We will stimulate investment in a new generation of local television, radio and newspaper companies by removing the cross-media ownership rules at the local level. Because we want these companies to employ more people, we will reverse the tax on jobs—the national insurance increase—that the Government plan, and we will go further, encouraging job creation by ensuring that start-up companies need pay no national insurance at all on their first 10 employees for the first year.

We will reduce corporation tax by simplifying complicated allowances, aiming for Britain to have one of the most competitive tax rates in Europe. That will help all companies, but in the creative and digital space people need something more—a proper digital infrastructure. By considering some of the recommendations of the Select Committee on Business, Innovation and Skills, we will deregulate access to BT's ducts and pipes, as well as water mains, sewers and pylons, and stimulate investment in next-generation broadband by other players, not simply depend on BT. Where the market will provide, we will let it; where it will not, we have said we will continue the levy on the licence fee that is currently imposed for digital switchover, to ensure that no one is left out of the digital revolution, especially in rural areas.

In short, we could have had a proper Digital Economy Bill. We wanted an iPod, but we got an Amstrad. We wanted digital switchover, but we ended up with analogue switch-off. It is time to reboot Britain, and only the Conservatives can deliver that.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Sylvia Heal):** Order. I remind all right hon. and hon. Members that Mr. Speaker has imposed a 12-minute limit on Back-Bench contributions.

5.15 pm

**Alun Michael** (Cardiff, South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): The hon. Member for South-West Surrey (Mr. Hunt) ended his speech by referring to the fast-moving and nimble industry, and he is right in that. In my short speech I want to refer specifically to internet-related and people-related issues, and to what is and what is not in this Bill, as good governance of the internet and the part that legislation and regulation should play have been of great interest to me in recent years.

Perhaps I should explain that the word “interest” does not mean that I have any personal interest in these issues, but that some of the costs of travel in putting the British Parliament and the UK in general at the cutting edge of internet governance have been met by Nominet, the not-for-profit company that is the UK’s domain name registry, and by EURIM, the not-for-profit company that brings together parliamentarians and industry in large numbers to address the public and industry interests in information and communications technology issues and that works with other all-party groups for that purpose.

I welcome the framework for domain name registration offered in the Bill and I note specifically that an undertaking was given in the other place that the powers that are given to Government would be used only if necessary. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury will reinforce that undertaking when he sums up the debate.

My interest arises simply because the internet is now enormously important to every single one of us, whether we are technically minded or not and whether or not we use the internet. I want our children and grandchildren to be safe users of the internet and I want people to feel safe, which is essential if we are to overcome the growing digital divide. If we are to bring that about, we need standards of behaviour on the internet, just as we do in the real world.

Such standards need to be underpinned by legislation, which is why I welcome the Bill, but I also want to warn against the drift into overreliance on legislation which has bedevilled us in how we have dealt with bad behaviour in the real world for decades, if not centuries. That is not a new idea. Gibbon, in “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire”, told us that laws rarely prevent what they forbid. As a legislator, it seems to me that legislation is precious and should be used sparingly and flexibly. The internet is so fast, so pervasive and so international that firms are often making profits now from products that they had not even started to design only a few months ago. That means that legislation will find it extremely difficult to keep pace. We, as legislators, need to adopt a different approach to deal with those issues.

The Bill meets my criteria, because it includes necessary elements but demonstrates potential for flexibility. That is important because of the wide-ranging nature of activity. Ofcom has been very successful in working with industry, in working in the interests of the public and of business, and in teasing out ways of making changes over time.

The “Digital Britain” final report, last July, was an enormously ambitious project that sought to bring together a huge number of strands—indeed, some nine or 10 Government Departments—on a range of issues which are almost as broad as the whole statute book and not just a single Bill. When I dealt with the Company

Law Reform Bill—the biggest Bill in history—I thought that was complex, but the internet and the issues that are dealt with in “Digital Britain” are far more complex. In that regard, I am pleased that not all of that scope is being approached through legislation. We need flexibility and, I suggest to my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench, not so much consultation, but partnership. We need to bring together those who have a part in industry, users and those who are developing usage, to deal with complex issues in a speedy way that reflects change over time.

There are some enormously important matters of definition behind the Bill’s content. There is the question of how its measures will affect small businesses, hotels, community centres and libraries—the sort of organisations that provide internet access. Those places are vital to getting people connected, to bridging the digital divide and to people who travel and move around a great deal. They are sometimes a lifeline for internet users who cannot afford their own dedicated connection and equipment. What does the legislation mean? There are a number of technical measures that public access organisations can take to protect themselves partially, but they are expensive, difficult to manage, restrictive and not difficult to circumvent. Many places may simply withdraw access rather than risk going to court or having to spend a great deal of time, effort and money on restricting or modifying their networks. That is an important point, because the greater the restrictions and the limits on flexibility, the more we build in and continue the dangers of the digital divide. A Minister in the other place sought to reassure people regarding these issues, but they still cause great worries. I ask the Government to address that area, not necessarily through over-meticulous regulation, but by working with industry, users and the sorts of organisations I have mentioned—they could use the internet crime reduction partnership, which I chair—to design solutions. Let us have co-operative solutions. Let us do this together and recognise that too much legislation, and definitions that are too narrow, might produce obstructions.

That different model has been tried and tested. We saw in the blocking of child abuse sites—I do not use the word “pornography”, because we are talking about the abuse of children—the great danger of an impetus towards instant legislation. People get angry about that sort of issue and say that there ought to be a law against it. Why has there not been a law? It is partly because the activity itself is illegal and partly because people recognise the complexity of dealing with the internet in that regard. What we have seen in that area is a consensus that was achieved in partnership, going back to the very last days of the previous Conservative Government. It started with industry working with the Government; Parliament providing engagement across parties; children’s charities showing enormous leadership; and, particularly—not necessarily immediately, but after time—the full engagement of the industry. The conclusion that has been drawn from reviewing that activity is that we achieved far more together, in a year or so, than we could possibly have achieved in 10 years of simply using a legislative and regulatory approach. That is a good lesson.

It might be comparatively simple to get unity of purpose against child abuse, as it is one of the simplest things to deal with, but agreement on issues of regulation

and other aspects of internet use is far more complicated. However, that does not mean that we should not put our energies in that direction and seek to achieve an approach to regulation, legislation and good behaviour that depends on people working together co-operatively—in a consensus or coalition of the willing—against those who would damage industry, society and our infrastructure. We know that those people are out there and are acting in great numbers at the present time.

I support the Bill, but I call on the Government to reform the way that, going forward, its internal governance is undertaken. There is a tendency at the end of a piece of legislation to disband the Bill team and have new people writing the regulations. Instead, I hope that the Government, industry and users—wider civil society, as it might be called—will work together to ensure that we get something that matches the internet's speed of development and international reach.

In the internet's early days, there was a mythology that it would be characterised by absolute freedom, but that idea was as fragile and unrealistic as the talk of freedom of behaviour in the 1960s. An enormous amount of internet-related activity is based on trust and the quality of relationships. We need to interfere as little as possible with the energy, creativity and imagination that has driven the internet since its birth. My plea is for a light touch from the Government, and for careful work in the international dimension to achieve the necessary protections mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State when he introduced the Bill today, without slowing the speed of growth and development, or the development of imagination and creativity.

I heard one critic complain this morning that all the detail would not be in the primary legislation but would be left for Ofcom in developing guidance. That is true, and legislators are of course fearful when that is the case, but it is also a great reassurance. It offers a new way of doing things if we can avoid the temptation to fall back on Whitehall's traditional approach of definition from the centre, and look instead to securing greater engagement from the creative individuals across industry and business who have such a great part to play.

Ofcom has demonstrated a capacity to work in that way. I hope that the Minister who sums up the debate will indicate that expectation of how Ofcom and Government Departments will use the powers available to them under the Bill. If that is the case, I will be happy to support the Bill going through into legislation.

5.26 pm

**Mr. Don Foster** (Bath) (LD): It is totally inappropriate for a Bill as important as this to be given so little time for debate in this House. I should remind the House that it would have been possible to handle this rather differently. After all, there were lengthy deliberations in another place, but all stages were completed some three weeks ago, on 15 March. Since then, there have been many days when we could have debated the Bill, and I am particularly mindful of the fact that the business allocated by the Government's business managers collapsed early on a number of those days. Surely that is another reason why it would be a good idea to have a Back-Bench committee deciding the business of the House.

Notwithstanding my concern about that, I reject the view expressed by some that only a few elements of the Bill have universal support and are not especially contentious. In fact, I believe that large chunks of the Bill are important but not controversial, and that they should go through. An example would be the proposal, to which reference has already been made, to change the power of the Secretary of State in relation to internet domain registries. Another example, which has not been mentioned so far, is the proposal to extend the remit of Channel 4.

Another example that has been touched on but not developed is the proposal to adopt the pan-European games information classification system for video games, and another that has not been mentioned before is the proposal to change the definition of public lending rights to include audio books and e-books. All those important measures, and many others, are in the Bill. There is a great deal of support for them, and I hope that we will find a way to get them through.

I do not want to go into detail about any of those proposals, but the one to extend the remit of Channel 4 is particularly important. Clauses 22 and 23 are designed to update Channel 4's remit to reflect the changing nature of public service broadcasting in a digital age. The House should recall that, when it was launched, Channel 4 was a single, analogue, linear television channel, whereas today it has a suite of channels and services that includes E4, Film4 and channel4.com.

**Mr. Redwood:** Is it not an unprecedented discourtesy to the House of Commons for a Government to introduce the Second Reading of a substantial Bill after they have announced that we need a general election? What kind of treatment of the House of Commons is that?

**Mr. Foster:** I agree entirely with the right hon. Gentleman. As I pointed out earlier, given the enormity of the Bill and the important provisions it contains, it would have been perfectly possible to timetable it much earlier so that we were not in the difficult situation in which many of us now find ourselves. However, that does not prevent us from getting on with some of the important provisions, not least in relation to upgrading the remit of Channel 4.

It is worth reflecting that nothing commissioned by Film Four—from "My Beautiful Launderette" to "The Last King of Scotland"—has ever formally counted towards Channel 4's public service delivery, yet the channel has been a huge catalyst in developing the creative industries in this country and the Bill now makes it a formal requirement that the role be continued. It also makes it a requirement that Channel 4 make a contribution in the crucial area of children's broadcasting. I welcome that element of the Bill.

**Mr. Siôn Simon** (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab) *rose*—

**Mr. Foster:** I give way to the hon. Gentleman who served valiantly as a Minister for a brief period on this important issue.

**Mr. Simon:** Having spoken so eloquently and rightly about Channel 4, will the hon. Gentleman say a few words about the new powers for the Secretary of State to vary the public service licence obligations of Channels 3 and 5?

**Mr. Foster:** I will, in so far as to say that as we move into a digital era, updating all those things is crucial, which is why it is important that elements in the Bill covering such issues should be allowed to go ahead.

It is equally important to acknowledge the need to move forward in respect of radio services, and not just concentrate on television.

**Mr. Watson** *rose*—

**Mr. Foster:** I give way to another hon. Member who has worked hard in that area.

**Mr. Watson:** The hon. Gentleman is a great man. I find it ironic that I so often follow him these days. He says that there is a great deal of consensus on the Bill among the three parties. If so, what is the hurry? Why do we not just deal with it straight after the election? We could do it consensually and have a proper debate.

**Mr. Foster:** The hon. Gentleman would be right if I had total confidence that whoever formed the next Government would find time to start the whole process all over again. Where there is consensus—a word used by the Leader of the House earlier—it seems sensible to move forward and get those provisions on to the statute book. We could then have deliberation and debate about the controversial issues and how to progress with them. When there is consensus we should definitely be moving forward.

Notwithstanding the many concerns that have been raised over the past few months about the move from analogue to digital radio, broadly speaking there is now consensus about that measure. The Secretary of State has laid down clear criteria that have to be met on listenership and coverage before the two-year starting pistol can be fired. Of course, there have been concerns. For example, some people thought that FM would be dropped, but we know that it will not be dropped; indeed, FM could become a new vibrant platform for local and micro-local radio stations and given more power. Possibly, Ofcom could start to give them even longer licences. With all the conditions that have been inserted, that is another exciting provision that we should acknowledge and accept so that everyone can have the real benefits of the digital radio era, in terms of greater interactivity and so on.

The Government have done a disservice by failing to promote the real benefits of digital radio as effectively as they could. It is not surprising that the Committee in their lordships' House castigated the Government for their failure. The industry could have done more. It is a pity that it has taken so long for FM to be included in all the DAB radios now on sale. It is only very recently that we have heard of the launch of the mechanism that will ensure people can have a single tuner covering DAB and FM—a single EPG, or electronic programme guide. That is welcome, but the work could have been done sooner.

There is controversy about some aspects of the Bill, some of which relates to the independently funded news consortiums. On the Liberal Democrat Benches, we welcome the trials that are taking place to find new and imaginative ways of filling the gap that is being created on the ITV regional news platform.

Those who have bid to become involved in the trials have already made some imaginative proposals. However, the Bill will merely give a power to a future Secretary of State to roll that out more widely if, first, an acceptable source of funding can be found and, secondly, the Secretary of State agrees to do so. I fail to understand why the Conservative party is so adamant about deleting that part of the Bill, because it does not need to do so. It could let the trials roll on, and if it is not satisfied with their outcome, it need not have a wider roll out, so the Liberal Democrats will certainly do everything that we can to help that part of the Bill to pass. I hope that just because the Conservatives are unhappy with the proposal, the Secretary of State will not suddenly roll over and say that he will drop it, because I think that, together, we can get it through.

**David Cairns:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the Conservative party's position had some intellectual coherence when it was predicated on the notion that it would not touch the underspend in the digital switchover element of the licence fee, because that had to be returned to the licence fee payer? The Conservatives have now abandoned that principled position and will use that underspend for super-fast broadband roll out, which makes a complete mockery of their previous principled position.

**Mr. Foster:** There is a slight mockery in respect of the Conservative party's position on BBC funding. The House will recall that, not so long ago, the Conservatives proposed that the annual licence fee uplift be frozen, but a few months later they said they did not want to interfere in the long-term setting of the licence fee settlement. They then told us that they were not going to touch the underspend on the targeted assistance scheme, but now they are doing so. Finally, they said that no money would be needed to support the roll-out of broadband, but suddenly, having opposed the Government's use of top-slicing a licence for one project—in this case, independently funded news consortiums—they will use a top-slicing of the BBC licence fee to pay for the broadband roll-out. However, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Vaizey) is desperate to speak, so I shall happily give way to him.

**Mr. Edward Vaizey** (Wantage) (Con): I do not want to interfere in a discussion of Conservative policy that does not involve a Conservative, but at least we are not proposing an amendment in the other place and then opposing it in the House of Commons.

**Mr. Foster:** I am coming to that, so if the hon. Gentleman can be patient for a second, he will learn all about it.

Let me turn to copyright, which is one of the most controversial bits of the legislation. We have made it clear on numerous occasions that we are very keen to do all that we can to support the creative industries, which are developing faster than any other part of the economy. We genuinely believe that they will be one of the key drivers to get us out of the recession and to help this country's economy move forward. We are therefore deeply concerned about anything that will prevent that from happening.

We are well aware that a report was published only a few weeks ago, on 17 March, that predicted 250,000 jobs in the UK's creative industries could be lost by 2015 if current trends in online piracy continue. The

Secretary of State has already referred to the hundreds of millions of pounds that are being lost to our music, video games and film industries because of illegal activity on the internet. We do not share the view of those who believe that no action should be taken to address the problems caused by copyright infringements on the internet, but the problem is that the Government's solution is predominantly encompassed in clause 17—an all-embracing clause that gives huge new unfettered powers to a future Secretary of State to address such issues. We felt that that Henry VIII clause was a step too far. The Secretary of State rightly acknowledged that the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives in another place ensured that that clause was dropped, but that does not mean to say that something should not be done. The early clauses—those up to clause 17—contain measures to address the problem created by illegal peer-to-peer file sharing, which is responsible for about two thirds of the illegal activity currently taking place.

As a result of lengthy discussions in another place, several changes were made to the Government's original proposals. They mean that no so-called technical measures, such as bandwidth shaping or temporary account suspension, will be possible unless copyright infringers are notified by letter, without there being any risk of their internet connection being affected for at least a year—the Secretary of State rightly mentioned that—unless an evaluation of the effectiveness of soft measures is undertaken; unless an evaluation of the need for, and likely effectiveness of, technical measures has been completed; unless further consultation has taken place; unless proposed legislation is brought before the new Parliament for decision; and, crucially, unless the principle of innocence until proven guilty is maintained throughout the process, coupled with the right to appeal to an independent arbiter. There has therefore been significant progress, but even more needs to be done if this aspect of the Bill is to be acceptable, so I shall propose three additional measures.

**Eric Joyce** (Falkirk) (Lab): I accept that progress has been made, but does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is significant, to use his word, that it would still be possible for someone to be disconnected under the Bill without the matter going to a court?

**Mr. Foster:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for raising that point, and that is why I want to outline these three additional things that must be done. The first phase of the process is that Ofcom must draw up the initial obligations code. If the Bill is passed as it stands, it will be required to do that within six months, or in any period of time determined by the Secretary of State, so the time period could be very short or incredibly long. We believe that the six-month proposal is inappropriate, not least because in addition to the initial consultation, the preparation of the draft code, the consultation on the draft and the issuing of the final code, there must be three months' consultation with the European Union. All that cannot be done in just six months, so we propose the longer time period of nine months. However, given that there is urgency that action is taken—we cannot delay for ever—we propose deleting the Secretary of State's power to determine any length of time.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): The hon. Gentleman will understand my difficulty in trying to understand Liberal policy, given the number

of flip-flops that there have been. Will he be absolutely clear about his position in the light of several reports in the media in the past few days? Will clauses 4 to 17 have Liberal support as the Bill goes through the wash-up?

**Mr. Foster:** The Bill will have Liberal Democrat support as it goes through the wash-up, subject to the three conditions that I am outlining, each of which it would be easy for the Government to accede to.

I referred to the second condition in an intervention on the hon. Member for South-West Surrey (Mr. Hunt), as well as in a question to the Leader of the House. We believe that technical measures are a drastic step that should never be taken unless it proves absolutely necessary, so the next Parliament deserves to be given the maximum opportunity to scrutinise any such proposals. We also think that an amendable measure should come before the new House of Commons, which is why we suggest that clause 11 should provide for the super-affirmative procedure, as is proposed for clause 18.

The third point that needs to be dealt with—it was not adequately addressed in another place—relates to universities, libraries and small businesses. The networks set up by such organisations have limited control over their users. Such organisations, especially hotels and internet cafés, provide hundreds and thousands of wi-fi hot spots throughout the country, and they will be very vulnerable to the legislation. There is often only one IP address for many terminals, as is the case in the Houses of Parliament. We believe it is important that an amendment should be tabled to deal with these concerns. The Government said that they can be dealt with in the code, but we would prefer a clearer guarantee written into the Bill.

**Mr. Watson:** The hon. Gentleman is still a great man, but I have been around the houses a little bit in the past 10 years. What I am witnessing now are some tiny hurdles that the Minister is likely to jump over by 10 pm so that the hon. Gentleman can join the cabal of the Tory and Labour Front-Bench teams to support the Bill. I want to make it clear that he will not get away with it this time.

**Mr. Foster:** I am not trying to get away with anything. I hope the hon. Gentleman, who supports our creative industries, agrees that the illegal activity on the internet is costing them dear. To do nothing would be unacceptable. There has been lengthy discussion of the issue for many years, and if we can get over what he describes as small hurdles with the Government, we should proceed. We will support the necessary measures.

**Mr. Simon** *rose*—

**Mr. Foster:** I give way briefly, but I am keen to make progress as others want to speak.

**Mr. Simon:** The hon. Gentleman will have seen my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Watson) and his comrades shaking their heads when he asked whether they agreed that there was significant loss, which was damaging our economy.

**Mr. Watson:** I was not shaking my head.

**Mr. Simon:** Is not the bottom line that they do not agree, and do not accept that there is a problem?

**Mr. Foster:** If they do not accept there is a problem, I am not with them.

**Mr. Neil Gerrard** (Walthamstow) (Lab) *rose*—

**Mr. Foster:** I want to make progress and deal with the issue of site blocking. When we got rid of clause 17 in another place, we acknowledged that although two thirds of the illegal activity was peer to peer, one third involved people accessing illegal websites. We believe that action should be taken. In another place we proposed, at very short notice, an amendment that we thought would deal with that. [*Interruption.*] The Secretary of State laughs. The amendment became the subject of major debate, as he well knows and as he said—I acknowledge it—in my party at our party conference, and among many other people as well.

As a result, attempts were made to improve the amendment, but the Government assured us that they would introduce a new clause that would solve all the problems. I welcome the fact that it includes the super-affirmative resolution. However, if one looks at the details of the new clause 18, it is clear that it still contains many significant faults.

**Fiona Mactaggart:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Foster:** No.

Clause 18 penalises sites that facilitate access or that are used for or in connection with an activity that infringes copyright. That is far too wide-ranging and puts even sites such as Google at risk. There is no indication that rights holders must take reasonable steps to notify the site owner before seeking an injunction. The proposed injunction would be indefinite, which is inappropriate. Injunctions, it appears, do not cover all service providers, allowing infringing customers to move to different providers.

The key fault is that there has not been enough time, as there was in relation to peer to peer, for consultation on such an important measure. Having made an effort to deal with the problem, we do not believe that it is appropriate, in the short time allowed by the wash-up, to go ahead with that clause—I am glad the hon. Member for Wantage is clear about that.

The last area of controversy is orphan works. The vast majority of the people to whom I, and no doubt other hon. Members, have spoken recognise that it is crazy that so much material with no known copyright owners—so-called orphan works—cannot be digitalised and made available online, with the proviso that if the copyright owner were traced, he or she would be rewarded for the work. Some estimates suggest that there are 50 million orphan works, such as oral histories, personal letters, films and drawings, held by libraries, museums and archives which have no right to make them accessible. We welcomed clause 43 when it first appeared, as it seemed a sensible way forward.

Then, as everyone knows, our attention was drawn to the real problems that affected one group of people—photographers—and the clause became far from uncontroversial. They have given many compelling reasons why clause 43, as it stands, should not proceed. The hon. Member for South-West Surrey went through many of them, so I shall not repeat them, but if the

clause is allowed to proceed we will have to find a solution to the problems and concerns of photographers. Simply deleting it would not solve the problem, because that would prevent many good things from going ahead, so in the limited time available we hope—although it might not be possible—to produce a series of amendments that would remove certain types of photography from the Bill.

The amendments would exclude all photographs taken since 1950, allowing for the cultural use of works that are historic or of cultural value, without drawing later commercial or amateur work into the scheme. The measure would not be foolproof, but for the purposes of exclusion it would be easier to identify post-1950 photography than commercial photography. Post-1950 is a clearer definition than contemporary photography, and such an approach would help to prevent the commercial exploitation of amateur photography found online.

We believe that it is possible to develop such an amendment, and we hope to produce it this evening for debate tomorrow, but I make it clear that if that approach, or something similar, cannot be found to address the concerns of photographers we will be forced to join the moves to delete the clause.

**Derek Wyatt** (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Lab): One problem with the hon. Gentleman's proposal is that many big libraries photograph original photos out of copyright in order to claim a new copyright. Unfortunately, his suggestion would only increase such practice; it would not represent a solution.

**Mr. Foster:** I do not want to take up the House's time, because we can discuss that issue during our debate about the amendment tomorrow. However, I hope that we have found a way of solving the problem.

**Fiona Mactaggart:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr. Foster:** No, I must finish. It is crucial that we find a solution to the concerns of photographers before we allow clause 43 to proceed.

In this legislation there is a great deal of good stuff to support our creative industries, but regrettably we have a totally inadequate amount of time for deliberation in this House, and in fairness we could not allow the controversial elements that I and others have raised to proceed either today or in the future.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I remind the House that Mr. Speaker had imposed a time limit of 12 minutes on Back Benchers' contributions. In the past half hour or so, a number of Members have decided to withdraw from the debate. I am therefore using the powers under Standing Order No. (47)(1), which allows for the variation of speaking time, so, if Back-Bench Members now wish to, they may speak for up to 15 minutes. My apologies to the Back-Bench Member who has already spoken.

5.53 pm

**Derek Wyatt** (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow my great friend, the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster). Judging by what Opposition

Front-Benchers said, I thought for one moment that he was going to be the MP for Bath and Munster, but perhaps not.

I pay great thanks to the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my right hon. Friend the Member for East Ham (Mr. Timms), who is on the Treasury Bench before me. During the past 13 years, he has been most civil and courteous about all IT matters on which I have gone to see him, and he even had time last week at 9 o'clock to fit me in and go through the Bill, so I thank him.

I thank also Lord Carter, now Lord Carter of Paris—not just in another place but in another country—for having had the vision to write the original White Paper. However, I sense that the Bill has not captured all of its contents, and I agree with everyone working in the digital UK marketplace: the Bill ought to have had a Committee stage and a Third Reading. Indeed, I am mystified as to why it did not start its parliamentary journey in this House, but we are where we are, as we often say.

Let me note four things that concern me most about the overall vision. I cannot see how the Bill takes on India or China; I simply cannot see a single provision that does so. They are not going to settle for 2 megabytes; they are going to settle for 100—and much, much more. If one talks to Tata and Reliance in India, one finds that the major cities in India aim to be far more ambitious. The situation is much easier in China: they can insist on such development, and they will deliver it, as they are doing in Shanghai, Guangdong province, parts of Hong Kong and in Beijing. If our creative industry is so important to us over the next 10 years, we should be far more ambitious. If we were having this debate in 2020 and looking back, we would say that it was pretty poor just to settle for as little as 2 megabytes.

**Mr. Simon:** Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

**Derek Wyatt:** No, not yet.

In January this year, Google had a problem in China, and it forgot to think about where it would take its problem. It decided then that it did not need to talk to the State Department in Washington, but it certainly is now, and the one good thing about Google's demise in China was a brilliant speech by Hillary Clinton about what the internet is and what it stands for. Her vision of what can be delivered through the internet is what is lacking from this Bill.

The issue is more perplexing when we think that the Treasury gave Google a two-year moratorium on paying tax in the United Kingdom. That is staggering, and it is made more staggering when we read what ITV sent us this morning, which said:

“Google will take more advertising revenue this year in the UK than the whole of commercial television.”

I wonder where it will pay its tax. I doubt that it is in the United Kingdom.

We should adopt a much tougher approach to the internet, so, given that we have established Ofcom, which is one of the leading communication organisations in the work, naturally my instincts were to say that the Bill ought to provide for it to have the legislative feel for the internet. Then I started to think, “Hang on, how big could Ofcom get?” However, it has started that journey,

given that it already has some responsibilities for the internet, so it is quite hard to take those away. However, I feel that the British Library has the most fantastic sense of what the internet is and what it can do. I also feel that the Oxford Internet Institute could also be a stakeholder—I am bound to say that because I founded it. What we are lacking, and what was missing from the Google-State Department debate in January, is the forum in which today's discussion about the internet could be considered. What is more, we are not expert enough to have that discussion, so we need to find a *via media* of groups and stakeholders, some of whom I have outlined, with whom we could trial such a proposal and ask them to debate those issues with us.

Last year was the 20th anniversary of the UN convention on the rights of the child, but that convention is about offline rights, not online ones. What a good thing it would have been if the Bill had insisted that the convention cover online rights, too. I am certain that if it had, we would have been able to persuade if not Barack Obama, at least Michelle Obama to get the United States finally to sign the convention. In that sense, I do not feel that the Bill has the overarching vision that the White Paper cogently expressed to begin with.

Let me turn to the more controversial aspects of the Bill, especially clause 18. I am a writer and a former publisher who has produced television programmes and is mad on music, so of course it cannot be right to steal other people's intellectual property. I debated my view with the Under-Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for East Ham, and pointed out that we give Ofcom the right to look after radio, spectrum, mobile and television matters, but not internet service providers. Would things not be much simpler if there was a charter between ISPs and Ofcom, outlining the conditions that enable people to hold a licence in the United Kingdom? If that were to include all that we have discussed today about stealing copyright, the Bill would not be so contentious. However, it is contentious because we do not think that anything will come from it.

I was opposed to legislation on file sharing, but I was in Washington with my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, North-West (John Robertson), who gave a very great speech there, and I am persuaded that we should at least trial some legislation on file sharing and copyright. We have been inundated by creative people in Britain, who are desperate for us to try it. The solution is not perfect, but we should try it.

The hon. Member for Bath mentioned clause 43. Listen, if we want the smartest, most creative industry, we have to tackle intellectual property and copyright together. They cannot just be shunted in as a couple of paragraphs; they are so fundamental to the reason why people write music, sing or create whatever they do. I wish that we did not have to go forward with clause 43. What we need is a brand new intellectual property Act, but we are not going to get that from this debate. I hope that the next Government, whoever they are, will see that we have to build bricks into the wall if we are going to be the best in the world in 2020. I have mentioned one of those bricks.

On photography, people accessing the Getty collection, for example, get a low res, so they cannot steal the intellectual property—well, they can, but it would be no good for reproduction. I am mystified about why photographers do not do that unilaterally. If a cost

[Derek Wyatt]

element is involved, we could say to Ofcom, “Listen, deliver us a piece of software that would do that for them.” That is a bit over the top, I know, but there is a way of solving the issue from a software point of view.

I turn to the issue of orphan works. Extraordinarily, the simplest thing is to charge people for the use of anything, even if the copyright owner cannot be found. The money can then be put into an orphan fund, and young musicians from school, older musicians from elsewhere or writers who need help could access that fund. If and when the original copyright holder is found—that is pretty unlikely—the money would still be there and they could still claim for it. I wish that we had done that, too.

I will not rehearse every argument about the future of Channel 4 and public sector broadcasting. We have really missed an opportunity with Channel 4 by not giving its online activities a public sector role. For instance, why was it not given the opportunity to run *direct.gov.uk*? The channel would have made it spankingly brand new and sexy, attracting hugely greater numbers of people—although the numbers are not bad as they are. We in Government always think that we have to do such things, but if we had given a public sector broadcaster such as Channel 4 a substantial part of the online world, that would have been such a challenge to the BBC; it would have sharpened its reflexes. I am sorry that that chance has been missed.

In 1997-98, we were trying to persuade Chris Smith, the then Secretary of State, to bring forward the digital switchover. Everyone said that it would be a nightmare, and we fudged it over seven years. By the opening year, however, 90 per cent. of the population already had a digital TV set, so we did not need the £600 million that we are arguing about now. We are early adopters in this country—the car industry is evidence of that, as digital radios are installed in cars. Digital radio prices are down. As has been said, we can use FM for something else. I do not think that there would be problem if we went for digital radio in 2015, and I congratulate Andrew Harrison, Lisa Kerr and Darren Henley for making a cause of the issue. Radio used to be a Friday afternoon activity for any bit of policy, and it is nice to see that digital radio is now discussed on a Tuesday.

This will probably be my last speech here, and I wish the House well. Thank you.

6.3 pm

**Mr. John Whittingdale** (Maldon and East Chelmsford) (Con): I rise with some sadness to speak about the Bill. There is an awful lot in it that I support and that I think is important for the future of the creative industries. However, in almost every case there are still big questions, potential flaws and probably unintended consequences. In each case we might have been able to discover some of those issues and put them right, had we had the opportunity.

I entirely agree with those who have spoken: there is no reason why this Bill suddenly has to have its Second Reading the day the general election is called. The Secretary of State says that there are precedents for that, but I simply do not believe that a controversial major Government Bill, which will have huge implications

for so many industries, has ever had its Second Reading the day before wash-up, so that it has no Committee stage whatever.

Part of the problem is that the Bill does not command complete support. There are people out there who are profoundly unhappy and will try to resist some of its provisions. The fact that it will not have had full scrutiny by Parliament will mean that they will argue that it does not command full legitimacy; they will feel that that gives them more cause to oppose it and circumvent its provisions. That is sad and worrying because the measures in the Bill to protect the creative industries are important. Furthermore, for reasons that I shall come to, I have concerns that the provisions can be circumvented.

It is true that the Bill has had lengthy scrutiny in the House of Lords, and some amendments passed there have improved it. However, there are profound constitutional concerns about how we have handled this matter. Lord Puttnam has described the timetable as “almost insane”. Our approach should be to ask ourselves what in the Bill is absolutely necessary—what is really urgent that we have to pass now. I am not sure that we should pass any provision that does not meet that test.

As my hon. Friend the Member for South-West Surrey (Mr. Hunt) said, the first few clauses of the Bill, which give new powers to Ofcom, are not necessary. They could also be confusing. Ofcom is primarily an economic regulator. If we give it other duties, that will cause confusion about what its priorities should be. My hon. Friend is right to say that we should not proceed with that particular element of the Bill.

The measures on file sharing are in a different category. There is no question but that piracy of creative content is doing huge damage to our music, film, television and games industries. It is already undermining the economic viability of those industries, yet we are still only in the early stages of the broadband revolution. We all share a desire to move to a world in which broadband speeds are much faster. The hon. Member for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (Derek Wyatt) suggested that 100 megabits would be involved, but we are some way short of that. Clearly, however, it is going to get faster, so the potential for piracy will increase dramatically.

At the moment, it takes a long time to download an HD movie, but when we move to a world in which such a movie can be downloaded in a matter of minutes, we will see real problems with piracy. It is terribly important that we take measures to deal with that. However, there are real problems with each of the measures proposed. On file sharing, culprits are to be identified by asking internet service providers to identify their customers through their internet protocol, or IP, addresses. Nobody has yet explained to me how we will deal with university halls of residence; one has to suspect that a large proportion of the occupants of those are likely to be involved in illegal file sharing. Nobody has explained how we are to deal with internet cafés and wi-fi zones, all of which are proliferating. It cannot be right for us to cut off the whole of Starbucks just because one person went in for a cup of coffee and illegally shared files.

The second provision, on site blocking, was introduced at a very late stage. Again, there is no question but that piracy is taking place not only through file sharing but through the accessing of illegal websites. The provisions that have now been introduced, which I assume will also

pass, still raise serious questions. Is it proposed that a rights holder will have to take out individual injunctions against every single internet service provider? Unless they do, as soon as one ISP blocks access, the people who want to obtain illegal content will simply transfer their business to the next ISP. It is very simple to set up a proxy server. If access to a website is blocked, those in the business of distributing illegal content will set up a proxy server somewhere else; instead of going through the front door, everybody will simply come in through the back door. If that proxy server is cut off, another will follow.

I support the measures because we need to send a signal that we take the issue of piracy seriously and we want to tackle it. However, let us not think that they will put an end to it. Those who are technically literate will very quickly find a way around them. I hope that the Secretary of State is right and the vast majority of people will mend their ways on receipt of a warning that they are doing something illegal, but I am not wholly confident. In the long term, we will have to look for other solutions. There may be technical means—technology such as content ID, which can identify the individual data coming down the network, might be a way forward. However, the real way forward is to educate people that they should not be doing something, and one has to say that we are failing in that challenge at the moment. We have to get the message across that pirating created content is not only illegal but will put businesses in real jeopardy unless people desist. I support the proposals, but I am not at all convinced that they will achieve the objective that the Government have set.

I now turn to DAB radio. Commercial radio and the BBC have invested huge amounts in moving to DAB, and commercial radio in particular is now in real economic difficulties, as the report that my Select Committee—the Culture, Media and Sport Committee—issued this morning explains. There is no doubt that one burden on it is having to broadcast in analogue and digital simultaneously, and it would provide some help if it had a firm pathway to a future in which it need only broadcast in DAB.

I believe that the 2015 date, which I know is not in the Bill, is unrealistic. It is sensible to set a date, but most people believe that that is probably too ambitious, because of the single problem of car radios. Yes, some manufacturers are beginning to fit DAB radios in cars, but there is a huge reservoir of cars that will not have them for a very long time. We must get to a point at which an in-car radio can easily be converted to DAB. The device that is on the market at the moment, which I have in my car, has so many wires, antennae and bits of equipment that I do not believe it will be taken up with great enthusiasm.

My hon. Friend the Member for South-West Surrey is quite right to hope that one day we will have local television news services. That is the objective, but we are still some way off. The Government brought forward the proposal for independently funded news consortiums, in which my Select Committee saw some attraction, but clearly that is not going to get through this week. There is, perhaps, an alternative way now. The new chairman of ITV has indicated that he might be willing to continue to provide regional news, which is a welcome development, but he will need some help if he is to do that. It is clear that the public service obligations and regulatory burdens of contract rights renewal are imposing real costs on

ITV. If we are to help it continue to provide the public service programming that we want to see, such as regional news, one way we can help is to lift those regulatory burdens, including CRR.

I share the enthusiasm for Channel 4 and welcome the fact that its remit is being updated. The Culture, Media and Sport Committee drew attention to the lack of accountability in the current structure of Channel 4, and I welcome the provisions that will require it to give greater detail to Ofcom about how it is meeting its public service remit. I am concerned that it is not subject to the same provisions as the BBC, for instance, on the potential impact of its activities on commercial competitors. Although it does not receive public subsidy, it is nevertheless owned by the state and needs to look carefully before moving into areas in which commercial competitors are already present. I should like there to be at least some recognition of that.

There are provisions in the Bill relating to video games classification. Many Members who are currently in the Chamber will have participated in long debates about whether that should be responsibility of the British Board of Film Classification or whether the pan-European game information system should be used. That has now been resolved, although there are still one or two issues of some concern. I would be grateful if the Minister confirmed the Government's intention to recognise the potential loophole that exists in the case of sport and music videos, which are a method by which wholly inappropriate content can sometimes be viewed by people who are under age. The Government have suggested that they are willing to address that. In general, I will be pleased if the important provisions on video game classification pass on to the statute book.

Clause 43, on orphan works, and the subsequent clauses dealing with extended collective licensing, have been mentioned. That is another terribly sad subject, because the wish to use some of the creative content currently locked in libraries, museums and the BBC is absolutely right. The motivation behind clause 43 is entirely admirable, but again, it was not properly thought through and there are genuine concerns about the conditions in which it will operate. There is supposed to be a market rate, but what is the market rate for a photograph that has never been used? Photographs have hugely varying costs depending on who took them, their content and their age, yet it is suggested simply that there should be a market rate. There is also concern about the so-called "diligent search" that the collecting agency is supposed to carry out, and how diligent it will actually be.

Photographers have also expressed concerns to us about how metadata can fall off a photograph accidentally, or perhaps even deliberately through the actions of those who want to exploit it. It is sad, but there is no question but that clause 43 in its current form is not fit for purpose. In the circumstances in which we find ourselves today, without any ability to consider properly how the clause can be amended, my hon. Friend the Member for South-West Surrey is right to say that it should not be passed. That is a missed opportunity, because we have not had time to go through the Bill properly.

I welcome the provisions to extend public lending right into the area of e-books, which may become much more popular in the near future. The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) is quite right to say that they will be universally supported.

[*Mr. John Whittingdale*]

The final clause about which I have some concern is clause 46, which has not been mentioned this afternoon. In the House of Lords my party rightly identified what was then clause 17 as giving the Secretary of State sweeping powers to amend legislation by order and, essentially, bring in whole new areas of copyright law without proper debate. Clause 46 appears remarkably similar in that it provides the Secretary of State with general powers to amend legislation by order. I hope that that is not right, and that it is not a Henry VIII clause. I would be grateful if the Minister could confirm that, because if it is a Henry VIII clause, providing such wide powers, we should not pass it.

Although there is a great deal in the Bill that I support, I still fear that some measures that will go through have considerable flaws, and that we may well have to revisit them in future. There are other clauses, which my hon. Friend the Member for South-West Surrey identified, that we should not be prepared to pass.

6.17 pm

**Mr. Austin Mitchell** (Great Grimsby) (Lab): It is rather sad that we should devote one of the last major debates of this Parliament to such a sprawling rag-bag of a Bill. It is difficult to get a solid core to bite on and a solid argument to put, because it is very much like the curate's television. It is good in parts, but has large areas of dross and boredom and is bad in other parts. It is therefore difficult to come to any conclusion other than the one that a number of Labour Members have argued—that we should delay consideration until a better time when we can give the Bill more serious concern and preoccupation.

I heard all the Secretary of State's answers about how the House of Lords has devoted its usual frenzied, hectic consideration to the Bill, full-time, for months and months, and how the Government have conducted a full consultation with all the outside interests. However, I am suspicious, because if it has had such full consideration, why are so many of my hon. Friends upset at the speed at which it is going through? Why am I getting more e-mails than I can competently deal with now that I am in half-campaigning mode, saying, "This is a bad Bill. Stop it. We don't want it and we are threatened", from people more active and interested in the internet than I am?

The e-mails are mainly from young people, who feel threatened by the Bill. They may be wrong, they may not be threatened by it and the procedures for cutting off their access through the service provider may be fair, just, wholesome and very effective, but they still feel threatened. It will take time to explain things to them, and to examine their worries and discuss them. When I have replied to their e-mails, their answer has always been, "This is a Bill on which the big boys, the big corporations and the big businesses, which are now involved in the internet, have all been well consulted. Their voices have been well heard and they have dominated the consideration of the Bill. It is far too favourable to them and far too unfavourable to the little guy." The little guy—in particular, the people indulging in harmless file sharing out of interest—is how the people writing to me see themselves.

That is a complex argument, but it is true that the big corporations and big business have loud voices and that the House of Lords is a natural forum for the expression of those loud voices and opinions. When discussing the Bill we have talked about peer-to-peer transfers, but peer-to-vested-interest transfers are a major part of the process.

**Pete Wishart:** I am following the hon. Gentleman's remarks with great interest. Does he actually believe that there is a problem with illegal file sharing, as has been outlined by the Secretary of State? If we do not take the measures in the Bill, what would the hon. Gentleman do to try to tackle it?

**Mr. Mitchell:** My answer is simple: I do not know. That is why I do not want the Bill to be rushed through; my education is involved here, as well as the education of all the people who are concerned about this throughout the country. The House will often find it difficult to come to a verdict on these issues without hearing further explanation and having further discussion, without the Committee work that is involved and without the hearings involved in pre-legislative scrutiny, which Lord Puttnam has told us that we should have had on this Bill. So I am not going to propose an alternative solution, but I am worried that the one proposed in the Bill frightens a lot of people in the country. I want to allay their concerns and to be able to explain to them that it is not damaging and it is not dangerous—if that is indeed the case. I do not know whether it is.

So another argument for having further consideration of the Bill is that the voice of the young is saying, "This threatens us." These people may be nerds, fanatics or zealots for all I know, but they are concerned and worried, and they will not be bullied into accepting the Bill. We have to weigh their voices, listen to what they are saying and discuss their concerns. I cannot do that and the House cannot do it if we are half in campaigning mode, if most Members' minds are back in their constituencies and if most Members are worrying about what will happen to them or are thinking about the coming joys of retirement—that is a pleasant occupation, which I hope I shall not be enjoying. We cannot give full consideration to the Bill in that state of mind. Logic says to the Government and the precautionary principle says to me, "If it is doubtful, if you are not sure, if you have not consulted and if there are voices that need to be heard, do not rush into doing anything. In particular, do not rush into legislation."

What would a delay of another three months or so in order to discuss the Bill properly and give it full consideration do? There would be no danger in taking such an approach. A delay of three months would not produce the collapse of the creative industries, which has been held up as the threat hanging over us. This needs to be settled and discussed by the Commons through its full procedures; this should not be a rushed Bill, carried on the basis of the half attention of a discredited, dying and distracted Parliament. If the Bill is passed in that form, it will not have legitimacy and consent, and it will not be accepted in the way that it needs to be. There is, thus, a strong argument for delay. The Government say that they are going to provide for all this in regulations, but regulations do not receive the full discussion. Thus, they do not carry the full confidence of the people on whom they are imposed that having a full discussion in this House would.

I can best voice the concerns that have been put to me by quoting from an e-mail from a woman, who cites the words of Charles Stross. The e-mail states:

“This seems to be a draconian and heavy handed bill aimed at appeasing big business and I do not believe its being granted royal assent is in the best interests of British citizens.”

Why is that? Well, Mr. Stross has said:

“I’m a self-employed media professional working in the entertainment industry, who earns his living by creating intellectual property and licensing it to publishers. You might think I’d be one of the beneficiaries of this proposed law: but you’d be dead wrong. This is going to cripple the long tail of the creative sector—it plays entirely to the interests of large corporate media organizations and”—

messes—

“on the plate of us ordinary working artists.”

I was selectively quoting there. Mr. Stross continues:

“Want to write a casual game for the iPhone and sell it for 99 pence? Good luck with that—first you’ll have to cough up £50,000 to get it certified as child-friendly...Want to publish a piece of shareware over BitTorrent? You’re”—

up against it there, mate—

“all it takes is a malicious accusation and your ISP (who are required to snitch on p2p users on pain of heavy fines) will be ordered to cut off the internet connection to you and everyone else in your household. (A really draconian punishment in an age where it’s increasingly normal to conduct business correspondence via email and to manage bank accounts and gas or electricity bills or tax returns via the web.) Oh, you don’t get the right to confront your accuser in court, either”.

Nobody can be happy with legislation passed on that basis.

I wish to comment on other aspects of the Bill that concern me and I would like these to be discussed at some length. I cannot agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (Derek Wyatt) in his analysis of the digital radio switchover. Clearly the industry, in the main, supports digital switchover, but of course a switchover to DAB radio by 2015 is wholly impractical and out of the question because that is too soon. It will be much more difficult to switch over to digital radio than it was to switch over to digital TV, because that process was helped by the mass subscription to Sky and by the development of Freeserve. Such provision does not exist in respect of radio, because there are 120 million radios in this country and sales of digital radio have not taken off. Digital radio is quite expensive and if we make it compulsory, that will be a heavy tax on the consumer. One of the lower prices for a digital radio is about £85, and that price has increased with devaluation. So this would be a heavy burden to impose on the consumer, and if we require switchover, it would leave about 120 stations still on FM and locked out in the cold. We do not have to switch over at this speed and we do not have to switch over to DAB because we could move to DAB plus, which would allow both services to be run concurrently.

I am worried about the digital switchover for radio, because the crucial factor here is car radios, for which the technology is never sold effectively. Like the hon. Member for Maldon and East Chelmsford (Mr. Whittingdale), my experience with DAB in the car has been totally unsatisfactory. Not only is it messy, but it is difficult to pick up a station, and the signal cuts in and out and fades away, so one is constantly having to switch back to FM. Digital car radio sales are crucial, but such sales have been low and there is no sign of their taking off.

Only 1 per cent. of cars are fitted with a digital radio, and until there is a mass fitting of digital car radios we shall not be able to have an effective switch-off. I am worried about that provision.

The photo provisions have been well dealt with. The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) mentioned the access to orphan works, which we all welcome, but let us not forget that that can be a threat to existing photographers, for whom their photography is a living and who thus need the royalties to be paid. As Tom Stoddart, a well respected and well known photographer, has said in submissions to us, the metadata that are attached to the photograph can be simply cut off, junked and lost, so there is no attribution to an author. There is no definition of the search that the photograph user has to make. It could be totally perfunctory, and used in undesirable situations and without payment to the author of the photography. That problem with so-called orphan works is not satisfactorily dealt with in the Bill.

My last point concerns regional television. I grew up in regional television and I am a strong supporter of it, and the way that ITV has been treating its regional commitment is outrageous. It should have been held more firmly to the contract pledges that it submitted when it got the contracts in the first place. Ofcom has given it an easy option, and so has failed in that respect. The experiment with three new providers is a brave and effective one, and I am glad to see it going ahead in Tyne Tees, Scotland and Wales—I hope it is successful—but it does not have a firm financial base. The original hope was to cream something off the licence fee, but that has not happened. There will be a substantial cost to the operation, and an even bigger one if it is extended to other companies, as it should be if ITV is going to wriggle out of its regional commitments.

The Conservative party’s hope that the market will provide is laughable. The market certainly will not provide regional television; it is a regulatory requirement. It is ridiculous to argue that the ITV companies are so overregulated that they cannot provide regional television, because it is regulation that is keeping regional television there—and we want to keep it. I wish the experiment success. It is a brave idea on the part of Ministers, but it needs a firm financial base if it is to be extended to other companies and organisations, as it should be. ITV’s roots have to be in the regions, because that is how it builds up its audience in the early part of the evening. Only an ITV that provides effective regional television can compete with the BBC. Regional television has increased and improved enormously over the past few years, and is now leading the field. ITV needs to fight back, and if we can help it with these sorts of provider experiments and by providing a new financial basis, we should do so.

I do not want to continue at length sorting through this rag-bag—one never knows what kind of smelly garments one will find when sorting through such a rag-bag—but it is unsatisfactory that we are putting this rag-bag into the wash-up. I know that hands that do dishes can be as soft as your brain, with bright, green Fairy liquid, but a wash-up is not a satisfactory way of dealing with measures as important as this to the future of radio, television, the internet, and the music and film industries. We should not be considering this at this hectic, break-neck pace; we should be postponing it for

[*Mr. Austin Mitchell*]

three months and giving it full and proper consideration in the next Parliament, when Labour can reintroduce the Bill and we can get back to it.

6.33 pm

**Peter Luff** (Mid-Worcestershire) (Con): It is a great pleasure to speak after the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). His optimism will ultimately prove to be misplaced, I hope, but I found myself in total agreement with the broad thrust of his remarks. The hon. Member for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (Derek Wyatt) talked in his interesting remarks about the lack of vision in the Bill. Legislation is not always the best place to find vision, as a general rule; the nearest we get to it in this legislation is the title—the Digital Economy Bill. As the hon. Member for Great Grimsby said, it is a rag-bag of measures that do not live up to that relatively grand-sounding title.

I cannot overestimate the importance of the Bill—or, at least, of the things that it deals with—to the future of the British economy, society and culture. The internet has already transformed our lives—even now, as I speak, I see hon. Members tweeting and taking text messages. I welcome that, but the transformation has only just begun, and getting this right is hugely important. I have some sympathy with the Government. I was a special adviser at the Department of Trade and Industry when the then Government produced the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, and even then we were discussing, at official level, how to cope with legislation that can keep pace with environments as fast changing as those we are dealing with in this Bill. That was before the digital revolution, and the rate of change has been transformed.

Nevertheless, this is the most profoundly unsatisfactory constitutional process I have engaged with in my 18 years in the House. In his opening remarks the Secretary of State promised my hon. Friend the Member for Maldon and East Chelmsford (Mr. Whittingdale) that he would write up a list of precedents, but I do not believe—I could be proved wrong—that there is a single precedent for giving a major and controversial Bill a Second Reading once a general election has been announced. It is a scandal that the House is being asked to agree that tonight.

I have given the matter careful consideration and I make this commitment: if there is a Division, I will support the Bill because, under a true constitutional process, it deserves a Second Reading; it does not, though, deserve what will happen to it thereafter. However, I broadly support the aims and objectives of the Bill and will vote for its Second Reading should there be a Division—but I shall do so under duress and protest, because I hate and loathe the process in which I am forced to participate.

I was disappointed even by the length of the Secretary of State's opening speech. He rattled through whole sections of the Bill in sentences and phrases, when the normal process is to explain what each clause or group of clauses will do. He gave us an 18-minute tour d'horizon rather than a serious analysis of the Bill, which denied many hon. Members the opportunity to cross-examine him on details. That cross-examination matters. It matters also that my hon. Friend the Member for South-West

Surrey (Mr. Hunt), the shadow Secretary of State, was so responsive to interventions, because I hope that he will be responsible for implementing the provisions of the Bill when it becomes an Act. Things he says from the Dispatch Box are important for the assurance they provide to the outside world. I would have liked many more opportunities to get such assurances from the Secretary of State, but because of the nature of his speech they were not forthcoming.

The following is extraordinary. On 23 March, I received a letter from Lord Young of Norwood Green, the Minister with responsibility for postal affairs and employment relations. I do not think that my hon. Friend the Member for Maldon and East Chelmsford, who is the Chairman of the other relevant Select Committee—the Culture, Media and Sport Committee—has received such a letter. It lists 22 letters of clarification and explanatory notes made available after the House of Lords debates. I have not had the opportunity to examine all 22 notes and letters of clarification, although I have examined one or two of those on issues of particular concern to me. Nevertheless, here is a level of detail still being explained in correspondence to the House.

I have a particular concern that I believe I can drop—given the limited time of my speech, I will do so—about the requirement on Ofcom to have a health check on the nation's communications infrastructure and services. The directory inquiries service providers were worried that the current wording fails to consider barriers faced by consumers accessing third-party services. I understand that a Minister—I do not know which one—has corresponded with the directory inquiries providers and given them reassurances. I hope that that letter will be put on the public record, although it would have been much better to have won those reassurances before the Committee, so that the internet and business communities could have known what was being said, rather than their being provided in back letters between Ministers and special interest groups.

Having said all that—I have said already that I will support the Bill—I believe that the Government are right, at the end of the day, to choose creativity over internet freedom. I believe that that fundamental choice, which is made in the Bill, is the right one to make. I will not labour the points made by the Creative Coalition Campaign, which I agree with strongly, about the importance of the creative arts and industries to the UK; I say simply that every industry operating in the UK is creative, and I do not particularly like the phrase “creative industries”. In the modern world, Rolls-Royce has to be as creative as video games providers. The creativity that the Bill seeks to protect lies at the heart of Britain's future economic success, so the Government's basic choice is right.

**Mr. Simon:** I suspect that the hon. Gentleman may agree with me. Does he not think that the choice between creativity and internet freedom is a false one? The freedom to take other people's content is not real freedom.

**Peter Luff:** I agree absolutely with the hon. Gentleman, whom I wish had had the tenacity to see this Bill through to the end of the Parliament, rather than giving up halfway through. However, he is right, and I shall come back to that in a moment. Some of the fears of

the internet community are misplaced. He is also right that in a responsible society, we respect other people's rights.

I would have liked to speak on many areas, but in my brief time I shall concentrate on just four: Ofcom, file sharing, spectrum and orphan works. On Ofcom, I am personally disappointed that there is no provision in the Bill for the transfer of Postcomm's services to Ofcom. That could, and should, have been part of the Bill. The transfer is logical given the convergence of technology and the fact that postal services compete with internet and broadcast technologies. That has no relationship to the privatisation or part-privatisation of Royal Mail Group. Those changes could have been made in the Bill, giving Postcomm and Ofcom the regulatory certainty that they need to plan their futures.

The Bill is weak on investment in broadband. My Committee produced a lengthy report, which is tagged to this debate. As I said, the Minister indicated that the Government's response was ready, but sadly he has not been able to publish it as a Command Paper yet; I wish he had. My report deals with a range of controversial issues, one of which is not covered by the Bill at all—it is in the Finance Bill—and that is the 50p monthly levy on telephones. I shall let out a small secret from my Committee's deliberations: it was the Labour members of the Committee who were particularly exercised by what they saw as a regressive and poorly targeted tax. We are to have no opportunity to debate that provision on the Floor of the House, because the Finance Bill is also going into the wash-up, which is quite extraordinary.

I would like to see in the Bill a definition of what constitutes 2 megabits per second. I know that the hon. Member for Sittingbourne and Sheppey was rather dismissive of 2 megabits per second, but for many small businesses and rural dwellers, getting reliable access to a minimum of 2 megabits per second would transform their lives. It is enough for BBC iPlayer, after all, and most commercial transactions can easily be done using that speed, but it is often not available. Putting an emphasis on the universal service obligation could really unleash the creative energies and commercial opportunities that many people are currently denied. So my message to the Government is this: let us not deride the Mini, even though we all aspire to the Rolls-Royce.

I am worried about the provisions relating to Ofcom in clauses 1 to 3. I am not convinced that they will not dilute its focus on consumers and competition. Sky has told us in its briefing on this debate that

“the new duties represent an unwarranted, ill defined and unnecessary intervention that is likely to distort the balance of Ofcom's priorities to the detriment of competition and consumers and result in unforeseen consequences.”

There is that phrase again: unforeseen consequences. The Bill will have so many of them, and that is why it needed a Committee stage.

I am pleased to have had Ofcom's response to many of these proposals. It appears to welcome the investment role that it will be given under the new powers, but it has also expressed a clear concern about the lack of broader powers to achieve the greater duct access necessary for the more commercial role in next-generation access that could be achieved by the market, given the right regulatory framework.

I turn next to file sharing. My hon. Friend the Member for Maldon and East Chelmsford, the Chairman of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, made a fine speech, and I have little to add to that, except to say that the provisions of the Bill have been misunderstood by many campaigners. They really are far less draconian than people think. A year of warning letters will precede any technical action, and such action will begin with throttling access rather than cutting it off. The cut-off will come later. There are also to be rights of appeal. I ask the campaigners to balance their interests against those of the creative industries, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) rightly suggested.

I am always struck by what Sky has to say, and I was certainly struck by its evidence to the Committee. It has a foot in both camps, as an internet service provider and a creative content provider. I know that it had a big internal debate about where the balance of its interests lay, and it concluded that it was with the Bill, with creativity and with protecting content. Frankly, if Sky, as a big ISP, can manage that, I am sure that everyone can. However, I note its concern that

“measures need to be widely applied which is why the notification obligations must apply to all ISPs and that in the apportionment of costs Ofcom should have regard to the principle of ‘beneficiary pays’, which in this case is content owners—Sky as a content owner will expect to pay the full cost of participating.”

There is still a debate to be had about the details of those provisions.

I accept the concerns that my hon. Friend the Member for Maldon and East Chelmsford expressed about student halls of residence, although I have no idea why he should pick on students as illegal file sharers. Concerns have also been expressed by the Federation of Small Businesses, which points out that many of the problems occur

“on communal computers, such as those in internet cafés, and various other small business outlets that could include pubs, shops, hotels and even home offices—in short a significant proportion of our members.”

It is no exaggeration to say that, unless those concerns about illegal file sharing in public places are properly addressed, this could be the end of public wi-fi, which would be very serious indeed. There could be technical solutions to those concerns, but we need to have them spelled out. Unfortunately, we do not have time to do that in this debate; nor will we have time in the Bill's short Committee stage tomorrow. A full Committee stage would have enabled that issue to have the attention that it deserves.

I am largely unsympathetic to the concerns of the big ISPs, but BT has made some important points in its representations, particularly that

“the rights holder must show the court that he has taken all reasonable steps to enforce his rights”.

That, too, is something that we should have had an opportunity to look at in detail, but that opportunity has been denied.

I shall turn briefly to spectrum—[*Interruption.*] I hear cheers from my Front Bench. I am gaining a certain reputation for speaking up for radio microphones, so it will not surprise the Financial Secretary to the Treasury or the Minister with responsibility for Digital Britain to learn that I want to talk about that today. A massive windfall is coming the Treasury's way, and I am told that it is not included in the Red Book figures, so it

[Peter Luff]

is extra money to help to pay down the debt in a year as yet unspecified. There are still, however, big questions about the future of radio microphones.

As the digital dividend rolls out, some people are losing out. They did not ask to move, and they get no benefit from moving. They include those in the programme making and special events sector, which brings huge social, economic and cultural benefits to citizens and consumers in the UK through a wide range of activities including film production, musical theatre, news gathering, television, sports events, live music and even church ceremonies. Indeed, I have the whole of the Church of England on my side in relation to early-day motion 323. It is still not too late to sign that motion, and I thank the 164 hon. Members who have already done so.

I am confused by the Bill. The Government say that decisions must be made about spectrum allocation under the powers laid out for Ofcom by Parliament, but Ofcom has said that

“the final decision on the level and basis of this funding is entirely a matter for Government”.

There is confusion, and I wonder whether the Minister will maintain that the decision must be made under Ofcom’s powers, rather than by the Government—and, if so, why.

The Government claim that they do not need to provide funding because good notice has been given, but even now they do not know what the spectrum is going to be. In Ofcom’s recent annual plan, it suggested that the details for the alternative spectrum will be provided only in the third quarter of this year, some five years after the eviction of the programme making and special events sector was announced.

I have spoken to the Minister about the Government’s pledge that no one would be better or worse off, and I will not weary him by going over the details again today. I repeat, however, that if residual value compensation does not cover the cost of replacing existing equipment with alternatives that do the same job, recipients will be left worse off. The Government have indicated that they want to take that issue seriously, and I hope that they will.

Turning to the time scales involved, why has all this taken so long? Here we are, right at the end of the process, and we still do not have answers to the really important questions. Small businesses and freelancers need to make significant investments running into many millions of pounds, but they are being left in considerable uncertainty. There is a real risk that there could be a big hiccup in the provision of radio microphone services. When they go, we will realise how much we miss them.

My fourth area of concern is orphan works. The rest of the Bill seems to get it right on property rights, and it is therefore surprising that clause 43 seems to get it so badly wrong. I am an amateur photographer, although I have never made a penny from any photograph that I have taken. I am Mr. May in the *House* magazine calendar; I was photographed in front of Caerhays castle. I might be the election month pin-up, but I am getting no money for that photograph. I declare my interest, however.

Many photographers rely on the exploitation of the intellectual property rights that flow from their work. As the campaign group to stop clause 43 points out, the clause says that

“if someone finds your photograph, wants to use it and decides that they can’t trace you, they can do whatever they like with it after paying an arbitrary fee to a UK Government-appointed ‘licensing body’. You’ll never know unless you happen to find it being used in this way”.

We have seen graphic examples in our post and e-mail of images being used in ways never before seen. Those practices have resulted in the people who took the photographs losing money.

Ironically, there has been a spectacular demonstration of that only in the last few days. I am indebted to Jeremy Nicholl, whose blog I shall quote from—or, perhaps, paraphrase; I do not want to be accused of plagiarism on this of all occasions. About last weekend’s now famous “Ashes to Ashes” Gene Hunt poster featuring the actor Philip Glenister, the blog states:

“But for those in the UK creative industry there is a far more interesting question: how did the Labour party get permission to use the Glenister image? The answer is: they didn’t. In the clause 43 spirit of log on, go everywhere, steal everything, the image was apparently downloaded by a Labour party activist, adapted by advertising company Saatchi & Saatchi, then approved by government ministers David and Ed Miliband. Alarm bells, anyone?”

The poster manages to break just about every rule in the intellectual property handbook, and with entirely predictable results. Glenister has apparently said he is unhappy about the use of his image for political purposes. Doubtless lawyers for German car maker Audi will be interested in how one of their products came to be used to promote a British political party. And BBC chiefs are reportedly ‘furious’ at the misuse: ‘We would never have given permission for any political use of one of our programmes’, one senior executive is reported as saying. Quick, define irony”.

**Mr. Watson** *rose*—

**Peter Luff:** I will give way to the hon. Gentleman. I ought to give him a chance to speak up for his party.

**Mr. Watson:** I admire the hon. Gentleman’s point. That message was mixed by Labour spin doctors, then remixed by Conservative spin doctors. He is proving the point that mixing culture and the power of sharing are new in the internet age. That is precisely why the Bill is so incompetent. We are not going to stop people sharing content with each other and using it creatively to create new things. He should be proud that young people are mixing up these images to engage in political debate.

**Peter Luff:** Ah, that is a very interesting point. I was with the hon. Gentleman for quite a lot of that intervention, although, as a Select Committee Chairman, I try to be neutral and impartial on these matters. I thought that the reference to the Audi was a reference to my party, rather than to his. His last comment really worried me, however. I am not proud that our two great political parties are exploiting intellectual property inappropriately and without permission. I am ashamed of that, and he should be ashamed of it, too. He should not give any succour to those who abuse intellectual property. We should not forget that the BBC, as this blog says, is one of the main proponents of a Bill to allow use of other people’s images in ways they did not envisage without permission or payment, yet it is furious that without permission or payment someone has taken a BBC image and used it in a way that the BBC did not envisage.

What is interesting is that this guy has done some research. He says that—

“a quick search of the internet reveals the original photograph hosted here”—

he has the hyperlink on his blog—

“complete with all the BBC copyright information: it even very helpfully has a contact number for those who wish to use the picture legally.”

It concludes:

“For any other purpose whatsoever, including advertising and commercial prior written approval from the copyright holder will be required.”

It ends with reference to “Caption writer: Greg King” and provides the telephone number 0208 225 8543. Anyone up for this, gentlemen or ladies, can get retrospective permission and pay a fee to the provider of the photograph.

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington, North) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Peter Luff**: No, I have already given way twice and I have no more time.

I have considerable sympathy with those who believe in the need for a new intellectual property Act, but we do not have time for that. This Bill is the best of a bad job; it can be improved in the wash-up, but not enough. It is a shame, but we have to support it.

6.50 pm

**Mr. Siôn Simon** (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): In common with my hon. Friend the Member for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (Derek Wyatt), this will be the last time I speak in the House. It would be fair to describe my feelings as bitter-sweet.

When I was a Minister, I had some input into some aspects of the Bill, but I largely inherited it from Stephen Carter. The “Digital Britain” White Paper was published in the week I became a Minister. I would like to spend a few minutes paying tribute to Stephen Carter and the work he did on that White Paper. It is unusual in government for any measure, particularly one so wide ranging and cross cutting, to be so clearly and singularly the work of one man. This one cuts across super-fast broadband, mobile telecoms, anti-piracy, radio, public service broadcasting and Ofcom. In the months I have spent on the Bill since last summer, it has become apparent to me what an extremely impressive piece of work it was.

Good government consists in surveying the scene, analysing the information, making a policy, taking decisions and implementing them clearly. I agree that the Bill, as amended, partly by me, is not so visionary a work. Given its more practical nature, that is perhaps inevitable. The White Paper, however, in the way it built coalitions, found consensus and struck balances from sector to sector, was a really outstanding and visionary piece of work. Great credit accrues to Stephen Carter for what he did.

The most obviously fractured coalition in the Carter consensus revolves around the contentious and controversial issue of illegal downloading. The advocates of illegal downloading—for that is what it is—have succeeded in painting a picture that is very seductive, but very misleading. The best way to illustrate this is by means of an old-tech linear-medium metaphor. In this metaphorical world that they have constructed, my hon. Friend the Member

for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Watson), who is in his place but not paying attention, is Luke Skywalker. He is the little guy, the plucky loner fighting the machine. Clay Shirky is Obi Wan Kenobi, the wise, broad, almost mystical guru figure. Peter Mandelson is obviously Darth Vader. Rather more counter-intuitively, however—this is where the metaphor begins to fracture—the evil Sith Chancellor Palpatine, the most evil universally bad figure of all, turns out to be Steven Spielberg. That is who Luke Skywalker is fighting—the ultimate rights holder, the acme of creative content ownership. When Spielberg turns out to be the ultimate evil, we know that the metaphor—otherwise quite cleverly constructed by the freedom fighters—is not just flawed, but misleading, damaging and dangerous. When Spielberg is the ultimate evil, it turns out that creativity is the enemy. It is creativity that Luke and his pals are after.

**Mr. Watson**: Will my hon. Friend provide me with any example of Steven Spielberg being described as the ultimate evil in this debate? I have not read a single such piece, even though I revere Clay Shirky.

**Mr. Simon**: It is not those people who couch the metaphor in these terms; I am articulating the metaphor, but the underlying truth is exactly how they seek to characterise the debate. It is very misleading, although it serves them very well. It is Spielberg and George Lucas who are the enemy, along with Andrea Arnold, Shane Meadows and talented, not rich, low-budget British film makers. Yes, the Beatles and the Stones are also the enemy, as are young unsigned bands. I am not talking about super-rich rock stars and film producers, but about struggling young musicians, ordinary jobbing and grafting musicians and film makers—[*Interruption.*] When I mentioned ordinary, jobbing and grafting musicians, the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) was bouncing around in his seat in what I take to be agreement.

The 6.4 per cent. of GVA—gross value added—that we derive from these industries is not all about big corporate fat cats, as we are talking about measures to deal with illegal downloading, which are supported vehemently by all the creative unions, indeed all the major unions. We are talking about hundreds of thousands of highly skilled, high-value and high-quality jobs. It is not as simple as “Luke against the evil Sith Lord Spielberg”.

Having constructed a fantasy metaphor for themselves to inhabit, the young Skywalker and his wrong-headed pals set up a completely false association of two completely separate issues. In respect of the first, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Higher Education and Intellectual Property will not agree with everything I am going to say, although I suspect he knows that I am right.

Copyright and licensing in this country and in the world need fundamental reform. We are in a new age, and we need completely new paradigms; the likes of creative licensing need to be extended and institutionalised; and we need a much wider, broader and more flexible system of collective licensing across the board in this country. The content industries also need to find completely new distribution models and need to work much harder at new business models. Fundamentally, they need to accept that in the future they will have to work on lower margins; they will make less money and will have to

[Mr. Simon]

work harder and do more for less. They need to get that into their heads and re-evaluate the business models. They can still survive; they can still exist; we still need them; we still need to lead the world in what we do, but they have to change radically and do it differently. I agree with all that and I believe that Luke and his pals agree with it, too. All those things are true, but it does not follow from this that it is no longer appropriate to enforce the law as it stands.

**Michael Connarty** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (Lab): I am listening with great interest to my hon. Friend and I am a great follower of Star Wars. I realise now, however, that my hon. Friend has identified himself as Yoda.

**Mr. Simon:** It would be un-humble for me to comment on that, but I shall take it as the compliment I assume to have been intended.

It does not follow from the great need we have for reform that it is wrong to enforce the current law. Unlawful downloading is already illegal and has been for a long time. Copyright is not dead just because of the internet. Ownership is not old hat. Regulating the internet is not Luddite or immoral or stupid. It is technically possible, morally right and economically necessary. The fundamental issue here is the correct response to widespread lawbreaking. The answer is not to abrogate the law; the answer is to enforce the law, and that is what these measures do.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** I understand the point my hon. Friend is making, but does he not think there is a danger that the Bill will criminalise large numbers of imaginative young people and education establishments who frequently share material on the internet and use the medium as a form of creative expression? Are we going to kill all that off and cut people off as a result of this Bill?

**Mr. Simon:** No, it does not criminalise anybody; all it does is simply seek to enforce the existing law. We should, however, be very careful that the Bill does not have the unintended consequence of bringing about the end of public wi-fi. I was assured by the experts in the various Departments involved in this legislation that there were clearly existing technical measures that made it perfectly possible to run public wi-fi with these measures.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** How?

**Mr. Simon:** Obviously, I do not claim to know what the technical measures are, but when I am told that they exist, I take it in good faith that they do exist, and unless my hon. Friend can prove to me that they do not exist—

**Jeremy Corbyn** *rose*—

**Mr. Simon:** My hon. Friend cannot prove that to me, however, as I am not going to give way to him again because I have not got the time.

**Alun Michael:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr. Simon:** Very briefly.

**Alun Michael:** On the point about the only answer being to enforce the law, may I repeat what I said earlier, which is that finding more co-operative ways of doing things that create an environment in which people are less likely to break the law is how to bring all parties together, and that that is how we need to address the governance of the internet? Does my hon. Friend agree that that is the approach we should adopt, rather than an old-fashioned enforcement approach, with legislation and enforcement being seen as the only ways to deal with any problem?

**Mr. Simon:** I agree, but my point is that it is not an either/or choice. We need fundamental reform and a whole new system of licensing. We need to legislate for sharing, and in future we need to do things in a different way that allows people to reshape, reuse and remix content.

**Alun Michael:** And share in the way that we legislate.

**Mr. Simon:** Yes, and we need to share in the way that we legislate, but that does not mean that we abrogate the existing law as if copyright and ownership all of a sudden mean nothing in this country.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** Will my hon. Friend give way for 30 seconds?

**Mr. Simon:** I will give way for 10 seconds.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** Is it really right to contemplate cutting people off from access to the internet at the same time as the Government are spending oodles of money persuading people to get on to the internet and to be accessible?

**Mr. Simon:** This Bill is not about cutting people off from the internet. There is a very long process for that, which takes at least a year—probably more, in fact. People get letter after letter, then there are two appeals, the second of which is to a judicial tribunal. It is very unlikely that anybody will be cut off as a result of this legislation. If they are cut off, they will be the most recidivistic and unreasonable people who, frankly, deserve to be cut off. Millions of ordinary people who are currently doing something that is unlawful will stop because a new mechanism will educate and inform them about this thing they are doing that they should not be doing.

This is a big Bill and I do not want to talk only about that issue, which has become very controversial. It is also very important to touch on the provisions to do with public service broadcasting. The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) is no longer in his place, but he mentioned the changes to the Channel 4 remit. I agree with everything he said. Currently, only core channel linear content counts towards Channel 4's public service remit, but this Bill changes that. Under the current remit, Film4 commissioning "Slumdog Millionaire" did not count, and neither did E4 commissioning "Skins". The new remit gives Channel 4 an obligation to commission and acquire original British film. That is incredibly important for the British film industry. It gives Channel 4 an obligation to operate in the digital sphere, which is obviously important, and it gives it obligations with respect to commissioning content for older children—something in which we have a great history but where we are lagging sadly behind at present.

The radio provisions are one of the best examples of the Carter success. From a starting point of great knowledge and expertise, he took a position and plotted a course to drive it forward. I think that digital switchover for radio will happen by 2015, and I think it will happen as successfully and relatively painlessly as—touch wood—the transition to digital television is happening and has already happened.

As for video, in respect of the Bill's embracing of the pan-European game information—PEGI—standards, it is important that we in this House and the Government recognise more than ever that the video games industry is already very important to our national economy. Given the right support and value, it can be a fundamental driver of economic growth in this country over the next couple of decades. We have already done a lot through measures such as the tax incentives in the Budget, and a lot of work and investment has gone into skills and the research and development of video games. This measure in the Bill is widely welcomed as well, but we need to do more and keep driving things forward because other countries are driving harder and harder every month.

**Mr. Vaizey:** As I am not summing up for the Opposition Front-Bench team, I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman will indulge me if I simply say how much I have enjoyed his speech, what great affection and respect I have for him, and that I wish him well in his retirement.

**Mr. Simon:** The hon. Gentleman is very kind; I do not deserve such kindness, but he is a very old friend of mine, and I can only imagine that that is the explanation for it.

In conclusion, let me just say to Stephen Carter, "Respec"—Members will note that I did not pronounce the "t", as I believe one is not supposed to do so—on an outstanding piece of work. Obviously, this is not the perfect Bill, but it is a good Bill.

**The Minister for Higher Education and Intellectual Property (Mr. David Lammy):** As my hon. Friend mentioned me, I just want to associate myself with his remarks on copyright and also refer him to the copyright strategy, because he suggested there might be some distance between us, and I wanted to say that there is not. The Government accept that copyright is here to stay but is subject to further reform, and I wish my hon. Friend well in Birmingham.

**Mr. Simon:** On all counts, I am very grateful and stand roundly corrected.

Let me just say in conclusion that this is a big and important Bill that addresses a massive part of our economy—it is a bigger part of our economy than of any other major economy in the world. Some of the Bill's provisions are about people's moral rights, but others are about people's jobs and livelihoods, our national prosperity and the ability of our citizens to live in a country where they can do the kind of things world citizens should in future be able to do. This is a good and important Bill, which I am proud to support by speaking in this Chamber now, for the last time.

7.8 pm

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) on making such a fine final speech, and I am sure the force will be with him as he goes off to fight the mayoralty in Birmingham. He will probably go

down in the record books as the last Labour creative industries Minister, given that he was not subsequently replaced in that post. I also refer to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

I want to take you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a perfect Saturday afternoon shopping trip. You have had a fantastic fix of retail therapy and you cannot wait to try out all the new goods you have legitimately bought. Then you come across your local record store and you cannot believe what you see, because hanging in the window is a sign saying, "Everything inside absolutely free." Being the music fan that I know you are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are in there like a shot, helping yourself to the top 10 albums. You also take the opportunity to fill some of the gaps in your back-catalogue of favourite artists. You might even think about acquiring the fantastic new album by MP4, the world's only, and best, Parliamentary rock band. In another aisle in the shop there are all the blockbuster releases from the cinema, and you help yourself to them, too, and on the way out there is a shelf with items by the cream of the UK's games industry, and you take a couple of them as well. As you leave, the very nice young man behind the counter says, "Come back any time, sir, you know we're open all hours." That would be patently absurd and ridiculous, but that is what happens online every second of every day. Goods, digital services, films, computer games and music are simply given away for nothing—fantastic works of art, reduced to commodities and products of no value at all.

Nobody refers to such activity as giving things away, or, heaven forbid, as stealing—let us not even go there! It is simply sharing, or peer-to-peer file sharing, to give it its proper name. You might be thinking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is a fantastic idea, and asking why hon. Members are not rushing down to their manufacturing sector or retail outlets to demand that their goods should be shared, too. If it is good enough for the online world, surely it is good enough for these more tangible products—for the electronic goods and furniture that these small businesses make. No, that would be even more ridiculous, because it would ruin any notion of a functional, rational economy.

It seems that it is all right for that to happen online and what we are doing has ruined any notion of a functioning, rational digital economy. If we are serious about trying to grow our digital economy and about ensuring that we have the best creative economy in the world, we must ensure that artists, writers and creators are rewarded for the work that they do. If we do not, we will go nowhere.

One group of people is totally overlooked in this debate. It is not the powerful and influential internet service providers, nor the rights holders, nor, bless them, the consumers, but the artist—the creator, the designer, the inventor. They seem to be totally ignored and forgotten about in this debate. There is no digital economy without the content and no creative industry without the creator—they should be at the heart of all our consideration about the digital economy and the creative industries. It is their imagination that fires it. They must be rewarded for the works that they produce.

So, how does this Bill intend to address that problem? I have seen the hyperbole given by the ISPs and their digital rights friends. I have seen the lightsabers brought out by the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East

[Pete Wishart]

(Mr. Watson) and his merry bunch of friends. It is almost impossible to reconcile what they are saying with what has been proposed. If people were to listen to them, they would think that the Government were going to a big switch and turning the internet off—Armageddon online. I have read clauses 5 to 17, and all they say is that people will get a letter—a notification—that will ask them, ever so politely, to stop what they have been doing. It will just say, “Stop. What you are doing is illegal. Please don’t do it anymore.”

If they ignore that letter, a second letter will come through. It will perhaps be a little sterner. It will probably outline some of the damage that their illegal activity is doing, tell them that there are alternative sites that they might use and say that they are taking products for nothing.

**Mr. Simon:** Has the hon. Gentleman noticed that the people who argue that these measures are far too draconian are the ones who, when we say that we are just going to send letters, say, “Oh, that won’t work—just sending them letters. They won’t take any notice”?

**Pete Wishart:** That is the thing. All the e-mails that I have received keep on telling me that the Government’s proposals will never work, so, if it is never going to work, why are they getting so upset about it? It is ludicrous and I do not understand it. I know that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East will get to his feet soon and perhaps he will explain that one to me—I have no idea. If this is not going to work and does not concern them, what are they all getting upset about?

Of course, if there is going to be online infringement and serious abuse of other people’s property, it is right, proper and appropriate that some sanction should be applied. Even the serial abusers of other people’s work would expect that. Of course they should expect it. It is illegal. If someone takes something for nothing—if they steal the works of other people—they should expect a sanction at the end of it. However, the process is lengthy. People will receive letter after letter saying, “Please stop now.” Then, possibly, they will be given some sort of sanction. An appeals process will be available if they feel that they have been wrongly identified, but surely it is right that some sanction should be applied.

There is a solution. If people are carrying out this activity, they should not do it anymore. They should just stop. That is the way to solve this. It works both ways. They know that they are doing something wrong; these serial abusers who take so much music and so many films and games for nothing know that. Those who wilfully continue to abuse the property of others must face some sort of sanction.

**Michael Connarty:** I am grateful to another vice-chairman of the Performers Alliance group in this House for giving way. Is it not a myth that co-operation, as we have heard, could somehow solve this? People are not talking about co-operating and sharing their own thoughts and content, but are stealing someone else’s content and sharing that. There is an Armageddon, which has partially arrived in Sweden, where the Pirate party, whose leader is in jail, won seats in the European Parliament on the basis that everybody’s work—including MP4’s—should be free.

**Pete Wishart:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and I pay tribute to the work that he does as chair of the all-party jazz appreciation group—I know that that is something that he particularly enjoys. He is absolutely right—it is not sharing, but taking. Nothing is shared by the people who take this for absolutely nothing. They are not giving anything back in return.

Who opposes these measures? Of course, the powerful internet service providers and their digital rights friends do not like them. The ISPs are the pipes that allow such activity to take place, but they have to accept their responsibility for what is provided by their hugely lucrative infrastructure. To try to solve this problem, they have been encouraged, persuaded and asked to come to the table to try to deal with it. However, apart from Sky and Virgin—who are content rights holders themselves—they have wilfully refused to co-operate or participate, so they must now be obliged to do so by legislation. They have had their chance to come to the table.

Mr. TalkTalk and Mr. BT have been sending me all these briefings about freedom and human rights, but the only people in the disconnection business are TalkTalk, BT and the other ISPs, when they do not get their share. It is all right for the rights holders to give their stuff away for nothing. Mr. TalkTalk and Mr. BT should lead by example and let access be allowed for nothing. Somehow, I do not think that they will be taking up that particular offer. This is where we are in the debate. It is all right for somebody else to give something away for nothing, but if they are asked to give something away, they will not be interested at all. We should be careful in the lessons that we take from TalkTalk, BT and the rest of the ISPs.

**Mr. Simon:** If someone has a relationship with BT and does not pay their bill, what happens? What is the process, as a rule?

**Pete Wishart:** As I understand it, if someone does not pay their bill to BT or TalkTalk for their internet service provision, they get cut off. That is what happens. This is the key point—it is all right for everybody else to give their works away for nothing, but they are not prepared to do that themselves.

Of course, we are preached to about human rights and proportionality. What about the human rights of the artists? What about their interests? What about the proportionality of getting a crust for what they produce? Surely that is important, too. These powerful vested interests have objected to any and every measure to tackle illegal file sharing. Every proposal has its faults, every suggestion is a suggestion too far. Fault must be and will be found in every method of trying to tackle this. Those with vested interests simply do not want a solution to illegal file sharing and they will never agree to any proposal to address these problems.

I accept that there are issues with the Bill. There are certain things that we have to reconsider and that have to be addressed. It is not the most elegant solution for the internet account holder to be targeted, but there is no other way to do it. I have not heard any other way of trying to find out how to bring these infringers to task. There is no good way. Being an internet account holder should come with the responsibility to ensure that no illegal activity is conducted in their name or under their contract. There are issues to do with wi-fi hot spots and with universities and colleges, but it takes good faith to fix this. I take for granted everything that the hon.

Member for Birmingham, Erdington said when he argued that there are solutions. Some people do not want to know about the solutions—they only want to highlight the problems and the difficulties. Of course there are solutions. If people of good faith are prepared to work together, we can, of course, ensure that they are solved, but some are not interested in working together to solve this because they do not want to solve it at all.

The Musicians' Union reminds us that the average musician earns less than £14,000. Losing royalties makes the day-to-day struggle even harder. We have heard from the rich, powerful musicians—those who have already made their fortunes from selling their records. If they want to give their music away for nothing and use it as a loss leader to sell other products, that is fine. No one is stopping them from doing that. If they want to give their work away for nothing, they can, but they should not make the rest of the music community and musicians who are finding it tough to make some sort of living subscribe to that. I spent 17 years in the music industry and I made a reasonable living out of being a musician and plying my trade, but I saw people who did not. The vast majority of musicians who I know do not earn that kind of money. When they get a hit single—when they get that lucky break from producing a fantastic song—they are entitled to absolutely every penny that comes from the work that they have produced.

The Musicians Union is hand in hand with all the other unions that are involved in this debate and want to see the aims of the Bill realised. I was grateful to see the letter today in *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*, I think, from the head of the TUC. The unions and the creative industries have united to ensure that this legislation will happen. Millions of jobs are involved. If we do not deal with this issue, it will have an impact on jobs and prosperity in every constituency. That is why it must be addressed. We have to recognise that our international competitors are moving to protect their digital economies and their creators to ensure that their creative economies keep growing. If we do not act now, there is a strong chance that we will be left behind. If we are to realise our ambition to be a worldwide hub for the creative industries, we have to protect our artists, designers, inventors and creators.

I want to speak briefly about some of the other issues in the Bill. I welcome the DAB radio switchover, which is a good measure, but I ask the Minister to have some sort of respect for all the analogue equipment, such as microphones, that was previously used. We have to find something to do with all that.

I, too, have great reservations about clause 43. As I have already said, everyone should be rewarded and valued for the work they produce, so I am totally with the photographers. We should ensure that they are similarly rewarded. The orphan works idea is a fantastic one, and it is right that those pieces should be brought back into public use, but we have to be very careful about the impact that will have on photographers. I support the measures in relation to Channels 4 and 3 and Five, and I think that what is proposed for Ofcom is a reasonable, workable and sensible solution for the future.

I must say that I feel thoroughly let down by the Government's Business, Innovation and Skills team on this Bill. The way that the Bill has worked its way through Parliament has been an utter disgrace. The Bill should have started in this House; it should have been the business of democratically elected Members of

Parliament, not of unelected appointees, cronies and donors. It should have been debated in this place. There is absolutely no reason whatever why the Bill could not have been initiated in this House. I am a Scottish National party Member, and my party does not have any peers in the House of Lords. This is the first time that my party and Plaid Cymru have had a chance to look at the Bill. Surely, it is not right that political parties in this House cannot get proper scrutiny of Bills when unelected peers, appointees, cronies and donors can. Surely, it is our business, and the opportunity for us to have a say on such important measures, especially those that have so exercised our constituents, must be ensured. It is an absolute disgrace that we have not been able to consider the legislation properly. I hope that the Minister will make sure that all of us are included in any wash-up discussions and procedures. It will not be good enough simply to allow us one Second Reading: we have to be centrally, critically and crucially involved in all wash-up discussions. It is not on for the Minister to think that he can casually exclude this House's parties from exercising democratic scrutiny.

The process has been a mess and a disgrace, but we need the measures in the Bill. We do not have any more time; we are bleeding money, jobs and industry from creative endeavours; we need this legislation now, and that is why I will support the Bill this evening. Our creators, artists, inventors and designers—the cream of the UK's creative industries—want this Bill, so that we can continue to have the best creative industry and digital economy. I urge all hon. Members to support the Bill, but I ask that we should, please, never do things this way again.

7.24 pm

**Mr. Tom Watson** (West Bromwich, East) (Lab): It is of great personal amusement to me that I happen to be following the previous two speakers. My very good friend the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) made an impassioned plea for his trade, and I understand his arguments even though they were slightly angry and vexatious at times. You might not know this Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I am something of a rock hero myself, having been a guest lead singer with the hon. Gentleman's band. I sang "Teenage Kicks" at another Member's 50th birthday, and I know that the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire would have cleared the copyright and intellectual property licence and all that, because he would not have let me perform live unless he had.

May I also spend some time thanking my very good friend, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon), for his contribution and for his friendship over the years that he has been in this House? He has made a huge difference and has cheered us all up. I have had a few drinks with him in bars similar to those in Star Wars, and I forgive him, because I think he has just referred to me as the estranged child of Peter Mandelson. If that is the case, he has used his uncanny political antennae to be, once again, ahead of the game. We shall miss you, Siôn.

This week marks the tercentenary of the Statute of Anne, 1710, which was the world's first copyright law. It opens with the words:

"Whereas Printers, Booksellers, and other Persons have of late frequently taken the Liberty of Printing, Reprinting, and Publishing...without the Consent of the Authors or Proprietors

[Mr. Tom Watson]

of such Books and Writings, to their very great Detriment, and too often to the Ruin of them and their families: for Preventing therefore such Practices for the future, and for the Encouragement of Learned Men to Compose and Write useful Books”.

So the whole copyright settlement—I cannot be the only one to see the irony of this—came about because the British publishing industry was exploiting our creators and not giving them adequate remuneration for their work. Some 300 years on, a central question for any Government to ask themselves is how they can encourage more people to express themselves by using their creative talents to strengthen our society. Another central question for modern Governments to ask is how they will contend with the disruptive force of the internet. That is a question that we should be answering when we are framing legislation in this House.

I do not believe that this discussion will end today. It will dominate debates in this House for years to come. The next generation of MPs will have to contend with the direct implications that our regulatory moves in the internet sphere will have for the kind of society that we want to live in, and how they will impact on the rights that we all expect to have. How do we promote freedom of speech and balance it against rights to privacy? How do we contend with issues of centralised data gathering and storage by Governments versus rights of control over our own personal information? How do we balance the right to protect intellectual property that the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire has talked about against rights of fair use? How do we balance people’s right to express their views freely against the need to protect individuals from obscene forms of cyberbullying, for example?

There is an emerging recognition that we need to break down the digital divide in this country, so that there is a right to access the world wide web through universal broadband access. Politicians on both sides of the House have talked about access to the internet as an emerging right. That is why, at the higher end of the debate, people are extremely concerned that on one level we are talking about access to the internet being a right and that, on another, we are talking about practical measures such as removing people’s access to knowledge—albeit after sending a letter—and removing the ability to share knowledge using the internet.

It is a very great pity that the Bill cannot be tested in Committee in the light of some of those questions. As a twice ex-Whip, I am rather embarrassed by the fact that the Bill is being railroaded through in the wash-up. Frankly, there has been a squalid deal between the three Front Benches, and they should be ashamed of themselves. The people who care about this Bill—and there are many out there—will see that for what it is.

Before I concentrate on the parts of the Bill that particularly concern me, I want to list the commendable elements that deserve very great praise. First, the proposal on video games classification is long overdue and will give clarity to many families around the country about what content of video games is appropriate for their children to consume. The video games industry in this country has a very big future. It currently employs something like 28,000 people, but with the right Government intervention, there is no reason why we could not have quadruple or quintuple that number of people working in the industry in years to come.

Britain dominates the world when it comes to creativity, and any measure that will help consumers to accept that is to be welcomed. If the PEGI—pan-European game information—classification system is adopted, I know that the industry will engage in a public education campaign, and we should commend it for that.

The proposed new remit for Channel 4 to produce high-quality digital content is also a good idea, although, like my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (Derek Wyatt), I would have liked it to go further. Channel 4 is this country’s digital pioneer: it does amazing things on very small budgets, and I had hoped that the regulatory regime offered in the Bill could have harnessed its creative endeavours a little more. We have talked already about the new powers for Ofcom to regulate the electromagnetic spectrum, and I am especially pleased that the Bill will extend public lending right to e-books and spoken-word books.

There are some very good measures in the Bill and, unlike some other contributors, I believe that the Government have much to be proud of in the digital space. Just last week, in an inspired move, we made 1:10,000 geo-spatial mapping data free for reuse through the Ordnance Survey. Ordnance Survey geo-spatial data is the jewel in the crown for data mashers up and down the country, and the move will foster a great sense of innovation and an explosion of creativity in the digital space. Freeing up data, liberating talent and catalysing creativity: these are the elements that we should be exploring in the Bill.

Earlier, I said that this debate was not new. We have been contending with ways to manage our collective intellectual capital since the Sumerian merchants of 5,000 BC made small marks on clay tablets to show their daily trades. The difference today, of course, is the sheer scale of the task.

How do we contend with what Richard Saul Wurman describes as a “tsunami” of data? Human beings produce five exabytes of recorded information in a year; that is 40,000 times the number of words stored in the British Library.

Kryder’s law is the almost mystical formula that says that digital capacity will double every 13 months. It means that we can now super-process acres of data that could not be digested even 10 years ago. If the law remains accurate, we will be able to store all the content ever created in history on a single iPod by 2025. Given the level of technological advance and the pace of change, is it any wonder that many people believe that the current measures for policing file sharing are simply pointless?

Cheaper computing has created an industry and new thinking on information technology. In his book “We-think”, Charles Leadbeater makes the point that “thanks to rising educational attainment, spreading communications and cheaper technology, innovation and creativity are becoming increasingly distributed”.

I think that the measures in this Bill will make it harder, not easier, for people to share knowledge and ideas through the internet and I am, frankly, baffled as to why any political party, on left or right, would want to go down that route.

I know that the worthy intention of those on all three Front Benches is to defend our creative industries. Everyone in this Chamber wants to do that, even though

my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington has comically parodied my position, to the amusement of all. However, more enlightened members of both main parties privately tell me that they know that the copyright measures in this Bill are nonsensical. They say that they will give the big publishing interests that dominate the debate in this country a period of respite, during which they can compose themselves while they consider their next moves in the internet age.

I admire the Bill's motives in respect of copyright, but there is an opportunity cost associated with defending old publishing interests. Innovations will not stop in our competitor countries while we give the UK record industry time to think.

There is a less charitable, more sinister view of this Bill. I readily admit that it might play into the conspiracy theories so ably portrayed by the previous two speakers, but the attempts to create artificial scarcity with information goods represent a second enclosure movement in this country. The intangible assets of our society are being packaged up in a contemporary expansion of intellectual property.

As the Bill's supporters and critics make claim and counterclaim about the economic benefits of the measures contained in it, one thing has been abundantly clear to me throughout the debate. It is that there has been a huge and unprecedented lobbying operation by the old publishing interests. They are the beneficiaries of enclosure, and they have dominated the argument for months.

**Michael Connarty:** I respect my hon. Friend's forward thinking, but he obviously has not studied his history. The enclosure movement took away the enclosures around small fields to make larger fields so that larger technologies could be used. When all enclosures were taken away in America, the ultimate result was that the wind blew the topsoil off the land and the people starved. I think that he has got his analogy entirely wrong.

**Mr. Watson:** My hon. Friend and I could debate the historical complexities of the enclosure movement, but I have only four minutes left. Perhaps we could have that discussion afterwards.

The big publishing industries tell us that an expansion of property rights and enforcement are essential to fuelling progress and continuing innovation in this sector. They believe that we need more copyright laws, a scaling up of enforcement, more policing of the internet, and a greater intolerance of that most human of traits—sharing.

This Bill, outrageously in my view, is going to be forced through in the wash-up. When it is passed, however, there will remain some unpalatable truths that the next Government, and advocates for the position of big publishing in Government, must deal with. The internet exists, and it is not going away. Whatever technical measures are taken to enforce scarcity will fail. Even in China, where there are 30,000 internet police, people are sharing ideas, information, news, music and art at an ever increasing rate.

It is hard to describe to colleagues how our digital natives—the people who entered the world of work without thinking of the internet as a “new” technology—think about the anachronistic ideas that underpin the thinking behind this Bill. They understand the power and the beauty of the serendipitous hypertext link, and

believe that it is part of human nature to take an idea and use it—to play with it and remix it into something new, as the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Peter Luff) described.

If hon. Members are beginning to think that I have taken leave of my senses with that comment, they should think about the Gene Hunt poster. What are the barriers to entry for young people who want to make a political statement? To take control of two images, they would have to sign a cumbersome licensing deal so that they could remix them and thus spark a debate, but in fact the remix event that took place caused thousands of young people to talk about the future. If we do not accept that that represents a cultural change in Britain, we will be forever doomed to holding debates that will appear merely futile to those young people.

The hon. Member for Maldon and East Chelmsford (Mr. Whittingdale)—the Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee—and I often look in different directions on policy, but we agree solidly that making legislation on the hoof, as we are doing now, lets the law of unintended consequences kick in. The hon. Gentleman talked about legitimacy. I shall quote from one of the great copyright debates of 1841. Talking about reform of the then law, the great Lord Macaulay said:

“At present the holder of copyright has the public feeling on his side.”

That might be true.

“Those who invade copyright are regarded as knaves who take the bread out of the mouth of deserving men. Everybody is well pleased to see them restrained by the law, and compelled to refund their ill-gotten gains. No tradesman of good repute will have anything to do with such disgraceful transactions. Pass this law: and that feeling is at an end. Men of a character very different from that of the present race of piratical book-sellers will soon infringe this intolerable monopoly. Great masses of capital will be constantly employed in the violation of the law. Every art will be employed to evade legal pursuit; and the whole nation will be in the plot. On which side indeed should the public sympathy be when the question is whether some book as popular as *Robinson Crusoe*”—[*Official Report*, 5 February 1841; Vol. 56, c. 356-7.]

I end there, because I am nearly out of time. There is no legitimacy in these measures, and the Bill will be honoured in the breach.

7.41 pm

**Mr. John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con):** It is a disgrace that the House is not treated with courtesy by the Government. It is quite wrong that a Bill of such importance and magnitude was not tabled earlier. It is quite wrong that there is an attempt to rush through all parts of the Bill without proper scrutiny and debate.

Not so long ago there was general agreement on both sides of the House that the House had not done a serious enough job of scrutinising legislation and providing the kind of commentary and critique of draft legislation that it should. The House was right to understand that there is a concern out in the country that this Parliament, of all Parliaments that I have had anything to do with, has let down the public by not getting sufficiently involved, and not finding a way of making the Government give it enough time to do the job properly.

We have heard from Members on both sides of the House why we need time to discuss the Bill. There may be quite a lot of agreement about some of the important

[*Mr. John Redwood*]

things in the Bill. I am sure that no one in the House begrudges a great artist or creator of music or words fair return for their labour, but many complicated issues are involved in determining how we secure that return without impeding too much on everyone else's freedoms. It is difficult to do it in the rather clumsy way that the Government have come up with so far in the relevant early clauses of the Bill.

We need scrutiny not just of the things that cause disagreement across the Chamber—there are several of those, as we heard from Front-Bench speakers on both sides of the House at the opening of the debate. We also need scrutiny of the things that the Chamber largely agrees about, because it is in those areas that it is more likely that mistakes will be made—that the language will be wrong and that the Bill will not carry into effect what the House wishes, because the Bill will have got through without the challenge that we need.

It was for good reason that our predecessors in this place said that there should be a Second Reading of Bills to discuss the principles—“Is it a good idea to have a Bill on this at all?” “Broadly, how do we go about doing it?”—then a little pause to reflect on the Bill, and then a Committee stage, on the Floor of the House for important Bills or upstairs for others. Members of the House most interested in the legislation could go through the Bill line by line, mainly asking the question, “Will this particular phrase, clause or line help us achieve the aim of the Government?”—or the common aim where there is general agreement.

This Government have had 13 years to introduce important legislation on the digital revolution. I cannot believe that any previous Government dared to hold a Second Reading of an extremely important Bill after they had announced the intent to dissolve the House as quickly as possible. It beggars belief that this Government could insult the Commons, and the public we represent, in that way so shortly after it was a matter of common agreement that we needed to do a better job of scrutinising, debating and discussing legislation for the sake of enacting legislation that works.

The legislation has 11 principal areas and themes. The debate in this shortened time available for Second Reading may discuss only three or four of them in detail; most will go unremarked, or will be mentioned en passant by speakers mainly interested in something else, because there is not even proper time for a full Second Reading debate, because there were questions, statements and so on before we got to Second Reading and we are all under time pressures to limit our speeches as a result. Naturally, Members are concentrating on the things that are most difficult or that matter most to them, so those of us concerned enough to be in the Chamber will only be able to discuss some elements. It is quite understandable that, now that an election has been called, some Members feel they have duties elsewhere. If they feel that they are not immediately required for a vote, they may be tidying up their affairs or communicating with their constituents. This is not a good time to be discussing something so technical, difficult and important.

One of the big issues that we have heard about so far relates to the powers that the Secretary of State should take under the legislation and the powers that should be delegated to Ofcom to tackle copyright infringement.

The House will know that I am the author of johnredwood.com. Members may know that I do not seek to charge anyone for using that wonderful resource about modern British politics, and they may also know that I have received several offers from people wishing to advertise on my site for a reasonable fee and I have always turned them down because I do not want it to be a commercial site.

Like me, many people see the web as a wonderful means for creating a community of people interested in a subject that matters to them. It can create argument, discussion and debate, and provoke ideas, viewpoints and discussion, which is entirely helpful to the democratic process or whatever interest has led people to set up a site. As has been said, even under this rather crude legislation, there is nothing to stop people such as me continuing to offer a free service without worrying about infringement of copyright. I should be happy for anyone to reproduce anything I have written on the site as long as they do not libel me or lampoon it too much. It is perfectly good for people to use the site; it shows that the site is of interest and of use.

However, there are people who are trying to make a living from their creative work and they naturally want a sensible legal framework that enables them to protect their legitimate intellectual property and to continue to make a living. We know that the internet has brought great good. It has involved many more people in many more activities. It informs people much better and enables them to research much more quickly and easily topics of interest to them. It allows communities to communicate one with another and allows events to be publicised. It brings all sorts of goods to local society. I hope Members share the perception that there is much good in the internet and would not want the legislation to damage in any way the good that the internet can do.

Let us think about the comparison with protecting the copyright of an author who chooses to publish their written words not on the web but in the form of a newspaper or magazine article, or a book. In the past, many of us in the House have written articles or books for which we may have been paid small sums. We have some protection in the copyright under existing copyright laws. The House should remember, however, that there is no comprehensive protection in copyright law for the written word published in those ways. If I publish an article or a book, I am sure that people may lend the book or article to others for free, and I have no right to say, “You must not do this. I demand a royalty every time that book or article is lent to somebody.” We do not go that far. We feel that it is part of a free society to allow people to lend books or articles to their friends, family, neighbours or whoever.

It is also probably the case that, quite often in the furtherance of education, the better articles—one hopes—and the better chapters or sections of books are reproduced on copying machines and used as teaching materials that are provided to pupils and students in schools and universities. I am sure that very often the school or university does not bother to contact the author to seek permission and does not bother to ask the author whether they would like a token payment to allow them to reproduce such material. It would be a pretty odd author who got really hot under the collar about that and started to sue the schools, although they could, because they would understand that such activities are

quite helpful to them in building their reputation and name in some ways—again, assuming that their work is not lampooned or completely shredded—and one has to live in a free society and we want people to be educated. We should approach any suggestion that we need tighter regulation of the internet with that in mind. We are not looking for something completely comprehensive. We need to live and let live.

Quite a large number of people outside the House are worried about our rushing through, for example, clauses 10 to 18 tonight—if that is a serious proposition between the two Front-Bench teams—because although if many of those people were challenged they would probably say, “Yes, of course, someone who has sung or written a great song should get some money for its reproduction,” they are very worried that we will criminalise people who are doing very minor things that are quite normal to do with, for example, copies of magazines and newspapers, that we will get the wrong people, or that the person who has a series of internet facilities in an organisation will be picked on when they cannot control the use of such material or cannot even establish who used it or whether it was a persistent offence.

A lot of this could be sorted out if we had time to go into the detail and if we had time to examine the language that the Government propose, to discover whether they have got the balance right. All hon. Members would agree, from whichever direction they approach this argument, that we need a balance. No one says that there should be no copyright at all for anything. No one would take the opposite extreme and say that, every time that anyone says, does, sings or whatever anything, that creates an important copyright that they should be able to defend against everyone. That would be ludicrous, and it would greatly extend our traditional copyright law on newspapers and books. We need a workable compromise.

I will not have time to consider these clauses in any detail, I am afraid, because my time will be artificially restricted by the guillotine and the proposals for today, although they are wide-ranging enabling clauses. If people are worried, such clauses lead to greater suspicion. We are invited to believe that, under the orders that will implement these wide-ranging clauses, provisions will be made that will produce such a judicious balance. We are being asked to buy a pig in a poke, or to sign a rushed cheque against an invoice that we have not been sent. That is not good practice. We need more from Ministers to persuade us that they have thought through these complicated issues about balance and that they have in mind practical orders that would not make unreasonable intrusions into the freedom of those who provide such web and internet services and would not restrict the rather minor examples of freesharing that are common in a free society and that one needs to be able to enjoy.

**Richard Younger-Ross** (Teignbridge) (LD): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that any draft orders under the Bill, if it goes forward, should be amendable? My hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) intends to make that proposal, and we hope that the Secretary of State will take it on board.

**Mr. Redwood**: That would be most unusual. I have served on a good many order-making Committees in my time, and one of the most unsatisfactory things is

that it is a take-it-or-leave-it process and the Government always say to vote to take it. So we can argue an extremely fine case and say that sentence 3 should be rephrased in the Government’s interest, and they will still do absolutely nothing about it because the junior Minister does not have the power or the interest and intends to ram the order through in its current form. That naturally leads to suspicion, most obviously among hon. Members, but also outside the House. If we leave all the big judgment calls on the censorship of the web—this is really about censorship—to a set of orders that we cannot see and do not know about, it is asking too much, this close to a general election. This is extremely sloppy work, which we all find very worrying.

I am glad that my hon. Friends who sit on the Front Bench find some things in the Bill with which they profoundly disagree. I am tempted to say that the Government should take the whole thing back and do their homework properly, and it would be for the new Government to sort all this out when they are chosen by the British people on 6 May, but I understand that the mood of the House is to try to reach some kind of accommodation. I urge my hon. Friends to be extremely firm, because we have absolutely no need to take half-baked and ill thought-out legislation from the Government this late in the day, when it is their fault that we are in this position, as they had five years and a thumping great majority to put any sensible proposals through the House that could have come to the relief of the creative industries. They chose not to do that, and they are now attempting to bounce us at 5 minutes after midnight, when it is already well known that the House is closing down with the current management and all will be put out to the electorate to decide who should run it in the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for South-West Surrey (Mr. Hunt), who initiated the debate for the Opposition, very wisely said that the Government are showing their true socialist colours and that all they ever believe in is more taxes, and there is more tax in this legislation, more regulation, and there is tons more regulation for Ofcom of a kind to be specified later in orders, and more subsidy, when all else fails or when they are trying to do something that the market and the general public are not sufficiently interested in for it to be a commercial proposition. The Bill has all three elements. That is surely another reason why my hon. Friends who sit on the Front Bench should be extremely sceptical about allowing great chunks of the legislation through, when there is concern outside and a lack of precision in the legislation, when these unwelcome features will intrude into an area of business and social life that is a great success in this country under the current regime, which is perhaps a little chaotic, and when we should be proud of so much achievement in the world of the web and in the creative industries that we see outside.

Unfortunately, my time is up. I wanted to speak about half a dozen other important elements of the Bill, but I am not allowed to do so, only because the Government, once again, so hate the House of Commons that they will not give us time to consider these measures properly.

7.57 pm

**John Robertson** (Glasgow, North-West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood), because that means that he has finished.

[John Robertson]

He adds to the point scoring of the hon. Members for Maldon and East Chelmsford (Mr. Whittingdale) and for Mid-Worcestershire (Peter Luff) against the Government and the Bill, but they then turned around and said that they will support it. It would appear that, as my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Watson) would say, they have capitulated to Ministers. I am quite happy for them to do so; I know that my hon. Friend will not be, but there we go. Regrettably, I agree with much of what was said by the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), but I am sure that I can find something that I do not agree with in what he said. He will also support the Government tonight, which obviously makes a pleasant change—not something that he does very often.

Sadly, now that the election has been called, my hon. Friend the Member for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (Derek Wyatt) will be leaving us. He and I have been joint chairs of the all-party parliamentary group on communications. He is a great man who has great ideas, and I certainly listen to him. I hope that he will go on to greater things in the years to come. I will miss him in the group, and I am sure that the House will be a poorer place for his having passed on to other things.

I agree with a lot of Opposition Members and some of my hon. Friends in that I regret the fact that the Bill did not start in this House. I have always felt that we, as Members elected by the people, should have the first say on any Bill and that the other place should scrutinise what we do. That is particularly the case for a Bill such as this, which will have a great impact on many of my constituents. The number of e-mails that I have received over the past month or so shows that more people are interested in the Bill than I had thought, so we should have proceeded in that way. However, as we heard earlier, we are where we are and we have to move on; I just wanted to put that on record.

I want to touch on some aspects of the Bill relating to broadband that have perhaps not been discussed. I should declare an interest: I worked for BT for 31 years and my wife still works for the company, which explains why I might be nicer to BT than the loyal Opposition. The Opposition still have hang-ups about British Telecom and the BBC. It is a bit like the attitude of the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) towards Europe—unfortunately he is no longer in the Chamber. He cannot get his head around normal things when talking about anything to do with Europe and, sadly, the same applies to the Conservative party when it talks about BT and the BBC.

**Mr. Tobias Ellwood** (Bournemouth, East) (Con): The hon. Gentleman has declared his interest in BT, but he also came out with some interesting remarks about the Conservatives' position. I shall put a straightforward question to him: is it right or wrong that BT should be able to keep control of its ducts? Why cannot we open up those ducts so that other competitors can use them? Surely that is a much cheaper way to allow broadband to be shared than that which the Government propose.

**John Robertson:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments; funnily enough, that is where my speech is going.

Part of my job in the industry related to the people who maintained the ducts and put cables down them. When the law was changed around the time of privatisation, cable companies were allowed to dig up our streets. They destroyed our pipes, ducts, pavements and roads, especially in my constituency—Old Drumchapel and Blairdardie were a nightmare afterwards—but did not reinstate everything as it was. I have a great fear that the Conservative party wants to give free access to the ducts, as well as to water, the sewers and electricity pylons, but I do not believe that that access can be free. Not just anyone can be allowed to interfere with the infrastructure of our water and electricity—or any form of our utility and communications networks—without someone overseeing the process.

I would not have a problem with Ofcom, Ofgem or Ofwat carrying out such oversight but, in this instance, the company that has carried out the role is BT. It must be more open by allowing other companies to use its facilities and equipment, and I think that it is going down that road, but I do not believe in a free and open market in the way that the hon. Gentleman does that would allow companies to come along with cowboys who would destroy our infrastructure. I can tell him from first-hand experience that that was exactly what happened, and I had to pick up the mess and talk to the customers who blamed BT for it, although it was not the company's fault.

The points that the hon. Member for South-West Surrey (Mr. Hunt) made about BT showed that he had no idea about how to maintain an infrastructure of such size. Whether one is dealing with ducts, pylons, or water and sewerage, there must be someone who knows exactly how they are maintained. If companies are then allowed to carry out work, they must do so according to that person's rules.

We hope to roll out 2 megabits per second broadband to everyone, which is quite ambitious, as other countries' provision does not go as high as that. However, that means absolutely nothing if it is not possible to achieve that speed. The Bill does not address in any way, shape or form the great problem of bit rates for uploading and downloading. Broadband equipment is sold that will allow someone to get 8 megabits per second, but that is a maximum figure. If Ministers were to guarantee the people of this country a minimum of 2 megabits per second, I would say, "Wow! That would be some feat." However, saying that everyone will get 2 megabits per second means absolutely nothing if the majority of people end up with only 1 megabit or even 0.5 megabits per second.

The companies that sell on broadband need to be brought into line. There is talk of speeds of 100 megabits per second, and then we will talk about 200, but that will mean nothing if it is impossible to achieve that speed. The Bill should set out a "minimum of" figure, rather than a maximum. The maximum figure means nothing if everyone in an area is using broadband at the same time, because they all suffer and are no better off than when they used the modems in their computers. I fully support Ministers in what they are trying to achieve, but we should be a bit more on top of the companies in question.

My right hon. Friend the Financial Secretary knows how I feel about the 50p levy. People in my city of Glasgow can get broadband, but the uptake is between

30 and 40 per cent., which is well below the British average of 60 per cent. I do not know how take-up can be encouraged when a 50p levy is being introduced on the poorest people who will not have broadband or any thoughts of getting it, but will be stuck with paying an extra £6 a year. That will drive people on to cheap pay-as-you-go mobiles, which is the way in which most poor people in my constituency communicate. People using those mobiles will be asked to pay nothing, or at least very little, so we must look at the proposal again.

As has been said, I spoke about file sharing at a conference in Washington. If it is any consolation to hon. Members, there might be the same problem there as here, as there was no consensus on whether file sharing should be allowed. I would say to my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East and others who feel that the Bill should be thrown out that we need to start somewhere—doing nothing is not an option. It is not the Elton Johns and Paul McCartneys of this world but the small people we have never heard of—the Joe Bloggs of the music world—who need some kind of protection as they try to make their living. They cannot have people stealing their endeavours and taking away their hard-earned rights to money that could make a difference to them and their families.

**Eric Joyce:** I completely sympathise with what my hon. Friend says about the much needed earnings of Joe Bloggs, but does he agree that enacting flawed legislation is the wrong way to proceed?

**John Robertson:** I understand what my hon. Friend is saying, but it is a little like my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) who, when asked what he would do, said he did not know. I know that we have to do something. Identifying people and writing to them is a long process, but my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) made a good point. By the time people are at risk of being cut off, they probably deserve to be cut off.

The problem arises when young people are involved. I go back to an intervention that I made on my own Front-Bench team, about whether we should criminalise young people for doing something that all their friends are doing. I may own a computer and have access to the internet, but my child is using it to download material and put it on their iPod, MP3 player or whatever they have, and I get the blame for it because access was granted to me. I hope it would be possible to make that clear in response to letters telling me that I was doing something illegal. Children are not always great at telling their parents everything they do. What are we going to do to safeguard the child who is doing only what their friends at school are doing? They do not believe they are doing anything wrong. We need to educate them.

The other problem is how we educate the parents. Children now know a lot more about the internet and how to use it than their parents. There does not seem to be anything in the Bill to cover a parent who, by accident, falls foul of an ISP because of their child's downloads.

**Mr. Watson:** To stretch the metaphor used by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon), I feel the force in this one. I sense that my

hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, North-West (John Robertson) has doubts about the practical enforcement of the measures in the Bill. Does he believe that we are walking down a road that we might later regret?

**John Robertson:** I understand what my hon. Friend says. I will not go back to the Star Wars reference, because it might be said that I look more like Chewbacca than Obi-Wan. However, it was a good metaphor for thinking that we are doing the right thing when we are not. I believe that that is what my hon. Friend is doing. His ideals are correct, but by saying that we should do nothing, all he is doing is encouraging illegal downloading.

If, after all the time and effort that has been expended discussing the issue in this place, we come to the conclusion that we should do nothing, we are, in effect, telling the public that that is legal and they can do what they want. That is not right.

**Michael Connarty:** I compliment my hon. Friend on the part of his speech that I heard earlier. This is a fringe discussion. As boasted in the e-mails that we receive, 17,000 people have written in on the issue over the past week. As my hon. Friend pointed out, 50 per cent. of Glasgow city do not have access to the internet. That is the great problem. People cannot get on to the internet and get access to the new technology. That, surely, must be the priority for the Government and every other Government.

**John Robertson:** That needs no answer from me. My hon. Friend is spot on.

In conclusion, doing nothing is not an option. If we do nothing, we send out a bad message—that I can download anybody's work, anybody's films, anybody's music, I can steal any photograph I like or do anything else I want, and Parliament has told me that is okay. The politicians in the House will have said that today, by not backing the Bill. I do not want to go down that road. There is much work to be done. No matter who wins the next election, they will have to pick up the issue and run with it. I believe that will be us; I hope it is, because we will do it justice, whereas the Opposition parties will act in their own self-interest. The important thing is to make sure that the people are looked after, but that if they take somebody's work or somebody's livelihood, they pay for it.

8.14 pm

**Fiona Mactaggart (Slough) (Lab):** In my maiden speech, I spoke about the human right to read, because it seemed to me that access to the printed word ought to be treated as a human right. One of the interesting aspects of the debate about the internet is the growing recognition that in exactly the same way, because it gives access to information, we should treat the right to access to the internet as a human right, and that if we recognise it as such, we will create a better, more equal, more informed, more educated, better connected society.

I represent a town that generates a huge amount of wealth in the creative industries, and I am very concerned to ensure that creative individuals are properly rewarded for their talent and their contribution. The Secretary of State referred to the growth of the creative industries in the UK compared with that in other countries over the past decade. I was proud to act as Parliamentary Private

[*Fiona Mactaggart*]

Secretary to the first ever Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport who, I believe, played a critical role in recognising the strength of the creative industries.

We are about to make a mistake, not because of mala fides or bad faith on the part of the Government or the Opposition, but in the way that Parliament often makes its biggest mistakes, which is when all parties agree. In those circumstances, we take short cuts, make mistakes for good reasons—in this case, to protect creative professionals—and end up with bad laws. Many of us can quote examples of bad laws that have been passed. Sometimes they are bad in their execution—the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 is frequently cited—and sometimes they are bad because, even though we keep trying to get the legislation right, we do not succeed, even though it is right in theory, such as making fathers pay properly for their children. I do not know why I still have so many such cases turning up at my advice surgery, but I know I am not alone in that regard.

The parts of the Bill which are designed to protect copyright on the internet, to prevent file sharing and so on are hugely at risk of going down that road. I was rather entertained by the comments of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) who, at one point, drafted an amendment and within a few hours was campaigning against said amendment. That illustrated the point very well, because he was trying to deal with what he saw as a wrong. It turned out that that was not very popular in his party and the amendment did not do what he wanted it to do, so he tried to amend it again. That is what the Committee stage of a Bill is for.

I am deeply concerned that what we are about—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Bath might agree, but he will be part of the Front-Bench conspiracy that makes us end up with an unamended Bill and without the scrutiny that we need. This Parliament has shown itself to be utterly feeble in so many ways, and in our dying days we really should not continue to be utterly feeble.

**Mr. Don Foster:** Will the hon. Lady give way?

**Fiona Mactaggart:** I shall give way—although the hon. Gentleman did not give way to me.

**Mr. Foster:** I gave way to Members on numerous occasions, and I am therefore particularly grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. May I make it absolutely clear that if clause 18 remains in the Bill, we will vote against the Bill on Third Reading? I do not think anything could be clearer than that.

**Fiona Mactaggart:** The hon. Gentleman has an advantage over me, as does BT, because they have seen a new version of that clause, but I have been to the Vote Office and I am not aware of what the clause says. I speak as a parliamentarian, within hours of the Bill's Committee stage, and I am unable to see that new version, so I do not know what is going to be proposed. He might well know, but I do not. I went to the Vote Office to ask for a copy, as is usual for a Back Bencher, and I spent quite a long time standing there, but there is a simple reason why the Vote Office cannot provide me with one: we have not yet given the Bill a Second Reading, and the Vote Office does not provide amendments to a Bill until it has had its Second Reading.

Right now our debate is closer to that which we would expect in Committee. People are focusing on little bits of the Bill and talking about potential amendments; they are not talking about the principles, because interestingly the pretty much shared view—with some tensions—is that we need to address certain principles. I found myself, scarily for the second time in two weeks, strongly agreeing with the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood)—not a man with whom I have frequently agreed. However, his point is that sharing can sometimes enhance understanding and knowledge.

I discovered the work of Christopher Brookmyre because Waterstone's published some free chapters of his books. I read them and then bought all his books, and that is not unusual. I was completely unaware of "Ashes to Ashes" and Gene Hunt, so when I saw the advertisement that everyone was going on about I had no idea why it was clever because I had never watched that programme. However, one thing about shared intellectual property is that it can create a market for that property, and I am frightened that the Bill does not address that issue with enough subtlety. We are not creating the opportunities to make the most of the internet and commercial exploitation. As I understand copyright law, it bites not when somebody copies a chapter of a book for their own interest, or borrows a book from a friend, but when someone tries to make a profit out of somebody else's intellectual property. That has traditionally been the area in which copyright law bites.

On the Bill's approach to that issue, there will be mums throughout the country running internet micro-businesses, booking nannies or finding cleaners, for example, and I am anxious that if their sons illegally file share, those mums will end up having their businesses closed down. The parliamentary scrutiny process is designed to eliminate such risky consequences, but I predict that unless we properly scrutinise this legislation such businesses throughout the country will be closed down. The hon. Member for Bath said, "Is it all right if it is a special super-scrutiny system that has to be amended?" and so on. I have not seen one of those systems. We should do more through secondary legislation, but he and I have sat on secondary legislation Committees and they are not places where scrutiny occurs; they are another example of pathetic oversight by Parliament.

I said earlier that this Parliament has let itself down. If we allow this Bill to go through in this way, with a Second Reading after the election has been called, we will demonstrate that the public are right to think that we are pretty pointless, and that we do not have the courage of our convictions. Every single Member will demonstrate it. Every single Member who argued for parliamentary reform—I see some present, including the hon. Member for Bath—will shame themselves if they consent to this process. However important the Bill is, it will be just as easy for a new Government to say, "We will put in place these building blocks" if they are so essential. It is just not acceptable for the Opposition Front Benchers to say, "Whoops! If it doesn't work, we'll come back with something a month later." They are actually saying, "We're not prepared to do our job."

However, I am prepared to do my job. I do not believe that this is the right way to proceed, and unless the Minister says in summing up something utterly compelling about how those issues will be dealt with, I will not be able to find it in me to support the Bill.

8.25 pm

**Mr. Neil Gerrard** (Walthamstow) (Lab): I shall try to be brief, because many of the issues that I wanted to discuss have been covered. This is probably the last time I will speak in the House, so I am glad to be discussing an important Bill.

Most of the comments have been about file sharing and internet access, and there have been a few about orphan works. Other important aspects that most of us think worth while have also been mentioned. Only two clauses deal with video games, but absolutely everybody thinks them worth having. Perhaps the clauses dealing with the future of Channel 4 do not go as far as they should, but they are worth while. There are also clauses dealing with public lending rights, and most in the radio industry say that they favour the provisions on local radio, although a minority do not want them. A lot of the Bill might not be perfect and could have gone a lot further—some Members have mentioned wider issues that should have been looked at—but much of it is good and worth having.

From my point of view, the real problem with the Bill is what my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Fiona Mactaggart) has just been discussing—the process that we are using to deal with it. Obviously, the clauses that deal with copyright infringement are the really controversial ones. In his opening speech, the Secretary of State mentioned the length of time taken in the Lords to consider the provisions on that issue, and the fact that the Bill arrived back in the Commons, from the Lords, a month later than expected. He seemed to use that as a justification for not spending much time on it in the Commons. I would come to exactly the opposite conclusion: if a Bill has spent so long in the Lords that it has ended up coming back here a month later than expected, that tells me that it involves complex and controversial issues and needs some real scrutiny in this place. It is not going to get that, and that is the problem.

I probably agree with a lot more of the Bill than some of my colleagues who spoke earlier and some who have yet to speak. I have not pleased some of the people who have sent me e-mails about the subject and seem to argue that we should not do anything about illegal file sharing. That is not because I am particularly concerned about the profits of the big players in the music and film industries. Like some others who have spoken, however, I am concerned about the effects on the livelihoods of individual performers and artists. They are not necessarily high earners and they do not necessarily get huge royalties. Furthermore, it is not anachronistic to support the trade unions that represent those people and say that they think something needs to be done about illegal file sharing.

Some of the arguments put by those who sent e-mails and lobbied about the Bill seem completely spurious. For instance, to suggest that a little research somewhere that says that people who illegally download also spend more, and that that somehow justifies the illegal downloading, seems total nonsense. If I went into a book shop or record shop and stole a CD or book, it would hardly be acceptable for me to say in my defence, “Well, actually I spend more than average in this shop.” I would be laughed out of court. It is theft to do that, and it is theft knowingly to download something illegally.

Of course, if an artist wants to make their work freely available on the internet in the hope that it will encourage someone who listens to it or reads it to go and buy more

of their stuff, that is fine, but it should be under the artist’s control. They should make the decision and have control of their own work. The problem is how we can ensure that and whether the detail in the Bill does so in the right way.

The “Digital Britain” White Paper rightly contained a lot of discussion about educating people. I suspect that often, people who download illegally do not really attribute any value to what they are downloading. That is not surprising considering the price that DVDs are often sold for in the shops now. Pretty well every Sunday of the year, one can pick up a newspaper that has a free DVD with it. To some degree, people thus get a false idea of the value of what they download. There should be education, and perhaps the warnings suggested in the Bill will work, but I am not convinced—they may work on some individuals, but not on those who create the websites that generate illegal downloads and offer the software that allows people to overcome DVD encryption and the like.

The problem is quite clear. As has already been said, we will not have the time to deal with the Bill properly, work through the detail and get it right. As my hon. Friend the Member for Slough rightly said, when Bills are rushed through with agreements between the Front Benchers, that is often a bad sign. It often means that the detail has not been examined, which proves to be a problem later. We have not seen what the new clause 18 will mean, or at least those of us on the Back Benches have not. It seems from what was said earlier that there will be a deal between the Front-Bench teams.

**Mr. Don Foster** *indicated dissent.*

**Mr. Gerrard:** I notice the Liberal Democrats are still denying that there might be one. I am interested in their position on clause 18—having proposed it, they later decided that it was a dreadful thing and had to be opposed.

**Mr. Foster:** Not enough consultation.

**Mr. Gerrard:** The hon. Gentleman may say that, but I suspect that it had rather more to do with a campaign that came rumbling along, with a lot of e-mails being sent, and in typical Liberal Democrat fashion they jumped on the campaign, no doubt thinking that it would get them one or two votes. The serious point is that we will not have enough time tomorrow. We should not be rushing through a Bill that could have serious effects on individuals.

We have heard in earlier comments that the provisions on orphan works might not end up in the Bill. They started as a discussion about opening up the use of archives at the British Library, photograph libraries and so on, where there is a lot of interesting stuff whose copyright holder nobody knows. The Bill now seems to have moved a long way from that. One or two professional photographers who have approached me about it are worried what the effect on their work may be. Although the Bill states that people are supposed to search for the copyright holder, will they actually do so or will it provide an opportunity to exploit the work of someone who will then have the problem of tracking down their work and getting it taken off the register? Again, the problem is the detail of the provisions and the process that we are going through. I do not know, because I have not seen the timetable motion, but I suspect that we will have no more than two hours to deal with the

[Mr. Gerrard]

Committee stage, Report and Third Reading. That is not how we should be going about legislation such as this, although I must say that I have a lot of support for the principles of the Bill.

**Mr. Foster:** My understanding of what the Leader of the House said is that there will be two hours in total for the Committee stage, Report and Third Reading. Given that we have a timetable motion before us tonight that says that an hour will be given to Third Reading, we will therefore have one hour in total for the Committee and Report stages.

**Mr. Gerrard:** If that is the case—I have not seen the motion—it illustrates exactly the point that I am making and that other hon. Members have made, which is that that is a totally inadequate amount of time in which to debate this. We will end up with something going through on the basis of a deal done by the two Front-Bench teams. It will be a deal whereby nobody else will have had any input, we will not be able to debate it properly and we will not be able to get to the detail. Irrespective of however much I agree with the principles behind the Bill, that is way to go about our business and it will not inspire the confidence of people outside this place that we have produced legislation that should be respected.

8.36 pm

**David Cairns (Inverclyde) (Lab):** So many hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard), began their speeches by saying that it was likely to be their last speech in the Chamber. I fervently hope that this is not my last speech in the Chamber, as I sincerely hope to be returned on 6 May. If I am not and the good people of Inverclyde elect someone else, so be it and good luck to them, because it has been a blast.

The casual observer of today's debate and of the whole process of this debate could be forgiven for thinking that the Bill contained one big measure and lots of piddling little things that do not really matter. That has been reflected in the content of many of the speeches, and I hope to buck that trend by devoting the bulk of my comments to things other than illegal file sharing or downloading. I have become a bit frustrated at some of the extreme language being used by those on both sides of this debate. It seems that the Bill either protects vital creative industries people, living from hand to mouth in garrets, from rapacious internet service providers who will not get off their backsides to do anything about theft or is a draconian attack on the very fabric of the internet itself by fat-cat record company bosses hellbent on protecting their interests and so on.

My hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Watson), who is not in his place, rejected the analogy or metaphor suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) relating to the Sith and Darth Vader. He is back in his place now—I was just referring to him as he appeared—so I can tell him that he is right to take issue with a metaphor with which he does not agree. He may intervene if he wishes, but I wonder what he would say to a constituent of mine from whom I received a e-mail today saying that he was not going to vote for me or anyone else in my constituency in the general election because he thought that what the Government were doing was the

same as what the ayatollahs in Iran and the geriatric dictatorship in China do to curtail internet freedom. That is clearly bonkers—I could be insulting my constituent here, but he has already said that he is not going to vote for me—and profoundly unhelpful. Those of us who may have doubts or reservations about the efficacy of the particular method that the Government are adopting to deal with the issue are not enticed to support those efforts by being told that if we support the Government, we are akin to the ayatollahs or the despots of Beijing. Such language is particularly unhelpful.

I happen to think that the Government are on the right track here, although I do not know whether the proposed measures will work. I tend toward the view that they will probably be less efficacious than draconian or dictatorial, but I am happy to be persuaded of all the necessary safeguards that have been suggested. I join the consensus in expressing regret at the lack of a Committee stage when we could have tested some of the proposals with probing amendments and so on. Having said all that, I do not wish to say more about illegal file sharing or downloading because I wish to discuss other parts of the Bill that have not been adequately addressed so far in this debate.

I want to focus my remarks on the parts of the Bill dealing with broadcasting policy and issues, especially the role of Channel 4 and the future of regional news on channel 3. I shall declare a couple of non-pecuniary interests: First, I am the chair of the all-party group on Scottish broadcasting and, secondly, I am most of the way through an Industry and Parliament Trust fellowship with the broadcasters. I have been hosted by STV, Channel 4 and now the BBC.

The Bill contains very important measures for Channel 4, but the one thing it does not contain is a proposal to privatise the channel, which I warmly welcome. I also genuinely warmly welcome the clear, unequivocal commitment from the shadow Secretary of State, in response to an intervention from me, that a future Conservative Government will rule out privatising Channel 4. That is an important and clear commitment, and it means that we can now afford Channel 4 the comfort and security of knowing that its unique structure—essentially, it is the first public-private partnership—will be guaranteed. That will afford Channel 4 a degree of comfort as it makes its plans for the future. However, I must say to the Opposition Front-Bench team that when the shadow Secretary of State gave that firm commitment not to privatise Channel 4, the looks on the faces of some Conservative Back-Back Members did not betray uniform happiness and delight, although personally I welcome the commitment.

I am also a political realist, however, and I know that after the election, whoever wins, the beady eyes of the Treasury will be scanning the entirety of the public sector, looking for savings, cuts, efficiencies—or whatever language we use—and I absolutely guarantee that, during that process, some bright spark in the Treasury will come up with a plan to privatise Channel 4. It is inevitable. In parenthesis, I add that I am pleased that Channel 4 has recruited its own set of beady eyes from the Treasury in the form of its new chairman, who hopefully will see off this encroaching threat. However, that proposal will be made, so I am pleased that we have a clear political steer from all the parties that it will not see the light of day in this place.

The Bill gives us a very good opportunity to restate the importance and significance of Channel 4 to the UK's broadcasting environment. It has made an outstanding contribution over nearly 30 years through its original, vibrant, creative, groundbreaking, sometimes irritating and often controversial content. However, it has also made an incredibly important contribution to the industry. It has fostered and helped to develop a thriving and vibrant independent television production sector in this country, but it does not always get the credit for that.

As I said, Channel 4's structure is unique. It is a publicly owned company and does not have shareholders, but has to make its living in the marketplace. That dynamic is very important and explains why, along with the BBC and purely commercial channels, there is room for Channel 4. I am happy, in a rare moment of cross-party consensus—not some underhand conspiracy—to say to the Conservative Front-Bench team that that success is testimony to the work of the previous Conservative Government who set it up as public-private partnership. Long may it continue.

We have heard that the Bill proposes to update Channel 4's remit, and as the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) pointed out—presumably because he read the same Channel 4 briefing as I did—in 1982, when it was founded, Channel 4 was a single linear television channel delivering all of its public service broadcasting content through one outlet. It was a single television station. That situation is unrecognisable today, with E4, More4, 4Music, Film4 and all the online content, none of which counts towards Channel 4's remit. We need to refresh the remit for the 21st century. More and more of Channel 4's PSB content will be delivered away from the core channel, and much of it will be online and will never actually be broadcast on the core channel. That is why it is important that we refresh the remit.

Brief mention has been made in passing to the importance of the remit embracing Film4. That is extremely important. Until I did my Industry and Parliament Trust fellowship placement with Channel 4, I imagined that Film4 was a huge entity, with lots of people working for it and a budget of tens of millions of pounds, but it is not. It consists of a handful of people—incredibly dedicated and inspired individuals—with a budget somewhere south of £10 million. They have made an astonishing contribution to the UK film industry, with the success of "Slumdog Millionaire" and "The Last King of Scotland", among others. The Film4 people have told me that they wanted film to be included in the remit because they have seen their budgets shrinking and they know that what they have done so far does not count in regard to the current remit. They feel that film's inclusion in the remit would protect them from further cuts, and I think that that is right.

One important thing that the Government have not included in Channel 4's new remit certainly merits an airing here tonight. There is no mention of the channel's obligations to the nations and regions of the United Kingdom. That is a source of extreme annoyance and controversy in the independent production sector throughout the UK. I know from my dealings with those in the independent production sector in Scotland, for example, that they do not feel that they get a fair crack of the whip from Channel 4.

Channel 4's response would probably be that it had never been told that part of its remit was to foster independent TV production sectors on a quota basis throughout the nations and regions of the UK. Channel 4's nations and regions supremo—the redoubtable Stuart Cosgrove, who is based in Glasgow—would probably also point out that the channel commissions 35 per cent. of its original production outside London, involving some £120 million in a good year.

Channel 4 is not the BBC, however. It does not employ lots of programme makers that it can move around the country, so it cannot meet those targets easily unless there is a vibrant, thriving creative industry sector coming forward with commissions in the nations and regions. We therefore have a bit of a chicken and egg situation. I am passionately committed to increasing TV production outside London, and I believe that Channel 4 has a role to play in that regard. I hoped that the Bill would have a Committee stage because we could have kicked around some of these ideas at that point. We are not going to have an opportunity to do that, however.

Having said that, it is incredibly important that the BBC has made a commitment to out-of-London broadcasting. It has made commitments in Cardiff, and through Media City in Salford. It has also made a commitment through the £188 million of investment in Pacific Quay in Glasgow. That is an incredibly important commitment that will do a great deal to foster an independent TV production sector in Scotland, and perhaps we will see more commissions from Channel 4 as a result.

I want to turn to the proposals for the independently funded news consortiums—the IFNC project—on channel 3. This is a thorny issue, and the Conservatives have indicated their staunch opposition to the policy again this afternoon. It is important to remember how we reached this point. We reached it because ITV stated categorically to the Government that it was not prepared to continue to make regional news at a loss. Ofcom has allowed ITV in England and Wales to reduce its regional news output and massively to extend the geographical scope of the regions. In my view—and in the view of many others—this has led to a dilution of the quality of regional news on ITV.

The Government believe passionately that there is a democratic imperative to ensure that people throughout the country are not solely reliant on the BBC for the provision of regional news, and they are right. When Michael Grade was chief executive and chair of ITV, he set his face against any public subsidy for ITV in this area. He said, "We want out of this. We'll give you a half-hour slot in our schedule, and you can put in it whatever you want." That is where the whole IFNC project had its genesis. However, we now hear from ITV's new chairman that ITV is not entirely convinced that that was the right thing to do. It does not want to give up a valuable half-hour slot in its schedules with no guarantees about the quality or the revenue involved, and it now wants to come back into the business.

If IFNCs are to be ditched as part of what is going on behind closed doors between those on the Front Benches as part of the wash-up, it is imperative that all the parties say how they intend to fund regional news on channel 3. There could be a market solution to this question. Perhaps if the contract rights renewal regime

[David Cairns]

were to be scrapped—as I think it should be; its regulation has long since served its purpose—that revenue could be used to help channel 3. Perhaps product placement could also help. The Government are going somewhat in that direction, although I think that they are being too timid. None the less, product placement on ITV would be an innovation, and perhaps caution would be wise. It may be that if we address the issue of advertising minutage, all these things together will bring increased revenue to ITV. That is well and good, but ITV must then fulfil its side of the bargain and say that it will use that money to invest in original content in the UK and to support and sustain regional news on ITV. If that is the deal, fine. I can live with it, but what we cannot live with is independently funded news consortiums being ditched with absolutely no understanding of how channel 3—ITV, and I include STV and UTV—are to be funded.

As I have said, the Bill deals with incredibly important broadcasting issues. Everyone has a view on the telly, and 99 per cent. of our constituents have at least one telly. The Bill will have an important effect on ITV news and Channel 4, which is why I hope that, whatever deal is done on illegal file sharing, the whole Bill does not get derailed. It is vital to refresh and update Channel 4's remit and it is vital to have some clarity on how ITV is to proceed in the crucial continuation of regional programming and news in the devolved nations as well.

8.51 pm

**Mr. John Grogan** (Selby) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Inverclyde (David Cairns), who made a powerful speech. I think he may have instituted a parliamentary first by referring to one of his constituents as “bonkers”. Certainly none of my constituents in Selby are bonkers—well, perhaps just a few. My hon. Friend did the House a service in clarifying the position on Channel 4, which can now plan for the future with certainty, given the assurances from both Front-Bench teams this evening. I shall not repeat his litany of the great achievements of Channel 4. An important feature of the Bill is to widen its remit and recognise its multifarious activities. My hon. Friend missed out “Channel 4 News”, “Dispatches” and also Channel 4 racing, which I would like to mention as another of its great contributions to the life of the nation.

My hon. Friend was perhaps the first in the debate to talk seriously at length about regional news. A year ago everyone was doing that; there is now a hiatus and it looks as if the clauses on regional news are going to be lost. He is quite right that if that is going to happen, there must be something to replace them.

I always thought that under the previous chairman of ITV, Michael Grade, the case that ITV regional news must necessarily collapse was overstated. There is a residual value in the licence—not least the third place on the EPG, or electronic programme guide. If deregulatory measures can be introduced, an economic model can stack up to fund the future of ITV regional news. That question is particularly relevant in Scotland, as Scottish Television has to be considered separately. If independently funded news consortiums are not going to appear, all parties have to think about how to keep regional news

on the air. Part of the contribution should come from the residual value of the licence that ITV already has, and perhaps ITV can gain some assistance from other measures.

There have been some magnificent speeches in this debate. A number of right hon. and hon. Members have pointed out that it is completely unprecedented for a controversial Bill to appear in this House after the Prime Minister has gone to the palace to ask for a Dissolution, and to be dealt with in the wash-up the next day. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport did his best at the beginning of the debate to try to find some precedents, but all those he mentioned, including the Gambling Act 2005, had already had a Committee stage.

I looked at all the Bills that received a Second Reading after a Prime Minister had gone to the palace—I went back as far as 1987—so I challenge the Financial Secretary to consider what he regards as the most controversial non-Finance Bill to go through the House in this way. I managed to find the Diplomatic and Consular Premises Bill in 1987, the Architects Bill in 1997, the Lieutenancies Bill in 1997 and the International Organisations Bill in 2005. What they all shared in common was that there was no dispute between hon. Members in respect of them. It really is shameful that we are proceeding in this way. Some hon. Members have said that it is a price worth paying, or that it has to be done now and we are where we are. Well, it does not have to be done now. This House is alive and kicking for another 48 hours.

I always take great notice of what Chief Whips say, and the Liberal Democrat Chief Whip inspired the following headline in *The Guardian* newspaper last week:

“Liberal Democrats say Digital Economy bill should wait for next government.”

The Liberal Democrat Chief Whip was reported to have

“hoped that the arguments being put forward—that the issues needed more debate than has been possible—might sway one of the other parties into delaying its passage.”

He was reported to have said that he hoped

“that the government and the Conservatives will agree that it shouldn't proceed at this stage”.

I had great hopes of the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), therefore, but that did not quite seem to be his message today, so there has been a slight shift in position—and not the first one. I have great admiration for the hon. Gentleman, however, and I know he has to accommodate different members of his own party, as we all do. The position that he has now come to is an interesting one, and I shall return to it.

Two great debates on this Bill, with commercial interests on both sides, have been referred to tonight. I will not rehearse all the arguments, but one of the debates is on digital radio. The Opposition Front-Bench team seems to be saying that it opposes the current model the Government are suggesting. The Opposition spokesman suggested that he was now in favour of DAB plus. It is interesting that hundreds of radio stations listened to by our constituents throughout the land, such as Minster FM, are being offered no digital future whatever in this Bill. What they are being offered, at best, is a place on a joint FM and digital electronic programme guide that is still being developed, and even if they get on that device, they will still not have all the advantages of

being a digital station in terms of extra advertising potential and so forth, and they will be very much second-class stations. Under the Bill as currently drafted, that is the future.

Helpful amendments were tabled by the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats in the House of Lords suggesting that before any switchover there should be full consideration of all local and community stations. I will retable those amendments today; I hope that the hon. Member for Bath will support them, and that they might tempt the Conservative Front Bench, too, in the negotiations for the wash-up. There is another side to the debate, to do with the BBC and some other digital radio interests. This reinforces the point that we should still have a full Committee stage—and if we cannot have that, we should pass the Bill on to our successors.

Many Members have mentioned activities by those in another place, saying that they have sat up through the night and considered these measures in great detail, so we need not trouble our little democratic heads with them too much, because they have done the business for us—but an awful lot has been happening down there in the other place. The hon. Member for Bath has been accused of writing new clause 18. He is not its author, however. I was at a reception where five separate lobbyists all claimed to be its author. Indeed, a gentleman who goes under the name of Richard Mollet is one of the lobbyists on one side of the debate, and a memo of his was exposed to the world. He wrote:

“Some of the amendments I distributed yesterday were ruled out of order by the Public Bill Office, on the grounds that they were introducing too dramatic a change.”

Apparently, amendments were being handed out by both sides.

**Mr. Don Foster:** We are greatly enjoying the hon. Gentleman’s speech, but I should gently point out to him that Richard Mollet is none other than the Labour party candidate for South-West Surrey.

**Mr. Grogan:** Exactly, and if I go any further I will be accused of being a conspiracy theorist, because Mr. Mollet will, no doubt, have many happy hours talking to the hon. Member for South-West Surrey (Mr. Hunt). Mr. Mollet also wrote:

“As for the House of Commons—which will be sent the Bill next week—there is a strange sense of detachment. MPs with whom we spoke back in Autumn are already resigned to the fact that they will have minimum input into the provisions from this point on, given the lack of detailed scrutiny.”

We should not take our orders from such a lobbyist, even if he is a Labour parliamentary candidate.

The influence of lobbyists—I acknowledge that they have come from both sides, and they should be doing their job and putting forward their ideas to Front Benchers and Back Benchers in the Lords—makes it even more important, given all that has happened in the past few weeks and in the past year, that this House should say, “No, we’re not going to pass this Bill by means of a thinly attended debate tonight, and the wash-up tomorrow.”

Yes, the Bill deals with important issues to do with the future of our digital economy. We have heard some impassioned speeches tonight from many hon. Members. Some Members missed the extremely powerful speech made by the right hon. Member for Wokingham

(Mr. Redwood), who acknowledged the rights of rights holders and the need for copyright. He also said that this was a question of balance, and pointed out the benefits of sharing ideas and the creative impact that it can have. There are some bands whose whole profile has been generated by sharing, and they are now making an awful lot of money from live gigs and so on. Such ideas can challenge some people’s business models, but because they are complicated it is even more important that the Bill should not be rushed through in a massive hurry.

**Pete Wishart:** We have heard about the views of all the lobbyists who have been making an impact, but what is the hon. Gentleman’s view? Should file sharing be addressed? If these measures are not sufficient, what would he do?

**Mr. Grogan:** We have to address the issue of illegal file sharing. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) mentioned Lord Carter, and I would go back to Lord Carter’s original ideas, which involved strong letters, education, the possibility of further action and the encouragement of new economic models. Those ideas have now been chilled. People like Virgin Media were doing deals with creative companies, but now some of the old-style companies are saying, “Perhaps we don’t need to do these deals with the ISPs, because we’ll have more administrative measures and the cutting-off will happen much earlier than Lord Carter envisaged.” We all know what happened: I do not want to be accused of being a conspiracy theorist, but we all know that Lord Mandelson had one of his meetings in Corfu with some people who were very prominent in the Hollywood industry and—

**Mr. Vaizey:** Name them.

**Mr. Grogan:** There is a whole list. Lord Mandelson is a very important figure and he shifted the Government’s policy on this issue. It is not a question of doing nothing. There was the Lord Carter White Paper, which this House could have united behind. That has been massively changed, largely through the influence of Lord Mandelson and those who ably advise him. If we proceed in this way, we in this House will be abrogating our responsibilities. As we were reminded earlier, when we were elected to this House we were elected to scrutinise, to debate and to challenge the assumptions of those outside who lobby us. We cannot possibly do that properly with this Bill.

At least we have heard a concrete Liberal Democrat position: the Liberal Democrats are saying that they will not vote for Third Reading unless clause 18, which is so complicated and mired in controversy, and involves the blocking of websites and so on, is dropped—

**Mr. Vaizey:** They put it in.

**Mr. Grogan:** I know that they put it in, but there is joy in heaven when a sinner repenteth. At the very least, I hope that the House will back the minimalist position—whatever the electoral reasons that inspired it may be.

I can tell those on the Front Bench that when that moment is reached—at 10 or 11 o’clock tomorrow night—there might not be that many people around. I hope that all those who are listening to the debate on BBC Parliament or following it on the internet will urge their MPs who are around to remember that if the Bill gets a Second Reading today, there is still Third Reading, and the question of clause 18. This fight is not over yet.

9.3 pm

**Eric Joyce** (Falkirk) (Lab): I am very pleased to be able to follow a number of high-quality speeches. It seems to me that everyone said more or less the same thing, which is that this is much-needed legislation and that it is flawed. Some people think it should go through anyway and that if it is flawed, we will fix it later, whereas other people think that it should not. I belong to the latter group. The right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) encapsulated much of what I think. I could almost splice what he said with what my hon. Friends the Members for Selby (Mr. Grogan) and for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Watson) said and sit down. However, I will not, as everybody will be pleased to hear.

I want to reflect on a couple of points made by those on the Front Benches. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State started out by saying, “We have not had much time. What a pity; I wish we could have had more.” That strikes me as being a bit like the referee at a Celtic-Rangers football match watching Celtic score a goal in the first minute and then promptly blowing the whistle for full time and saying, “Sorry guys, I wish we had a bit longer, but there it is. It’s getting a bit dark. Maybe we should have started the match a little earlier.” Much as every Celtic supporter at the moment would probably like that to be the case, I do not think that would work.

The Conservative Front-Bench spokesman made a perfectly logical and correct point about the problem that photographers have with clause 43. That problem is widely known about; indeed, I think that the Government have probably already accepted it. They are then going to railroad the whole thing through.

The Liberal Democrats’ Front-Bench position is a little more opaque. I am not exactly sure what they are saying because their excellent hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) raised what seemed to be countervailing points of his own. They seem to have left things at saying that it is still possible for clause 43 to be amended in some way, although nobody else agrees with that now that it has gone, but the Lib Dems seem to want to keep it alive. I say the Lib Dems as a plural, but only one person from the Lib Dems has spoken tonight—their Front-Bench spokesman. The massed ranks of the Lib Dems on Twitter have not bothered to come along to support him. Instead, they are saying the opposite all over the internet.

The Liberal Democrats also seem to have left open the possibility of people being disconnected from the internet without their having access to any kind of court proceedings. I know that I have been the beneficiary of some crowdsourcing about this on the internet. The HADOPI case in France, of 10 June 2009, has been raised by the Law Society of Scotland in this regard. That case led the French to amend their legislation to ensure that if people were going to be disconnected, they would have a chance to test that decision in court.

**Mr. Simon:** But is it not the case that after a year, and lots of letters, people will get a first right of appeal to the Ofcom appeal body and then a second right of appeal to a first-tier tribunal, which is a judicial body? That is a court. Why do people keep saying that there will be no court appeal? There are two appeals, the second of which is judicial.

**Eric Joyce:** My hon. Friend is correct, but I do not regard a tribunal as the same thing at all.

Things are being put through in the Lords, and we have been told many times, both before tonight and, indeed, tonight, that there has been bags of scrutiny by the unelected Lords next door. Hon. Members have said that the experts have got one or two things tied up, and have talked about not having a complete grasp of some issues. I understand that there are technicalities about how people are disconnected, constrained, blocked and so on, but we have put great trust in experts and in the House of Lords. Of course, it would save a great deal of time with our future proceedings if we simply said, “They’ve scrutinised it next door, so we can just knock it down to an hour in this place.”

**Mr. Watson:** A number of hon. Members on both sides of the House have likened copyright infringement to shoplifting and stealing. If that is the case, why should not such people have their day in court like any other thief?

**Eric Joyce:** I profoundly agree with my hon. Friend. That is precisely what most people out there would say; indeed, people are saying that. We have rather blithely ignored the fact that thousands of people—not just an élite group of people on the internet with special interests—are making these very points on various things like the #hashtags on Twitter #DEBill and #DEB and we are casually pushing them aside and saying that we will put through this flawed legislation regardless of the views of those digital natives who know what they are talking about.

**Mr. Simon:** I apologise for arguing with my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Watson) through my hon. Friend, but going back to his assertion about people not getting their day in court, I repeat that the second appeal is to a first-tier tribunal, which is a judicial body. Why do people keep saying, “We want our day in court”? They will get their day in court if they insist on breaking the law.

**Mr. Watson:** Shoplifters do not go to a tribunal.

**Eric Joyce:** Indeed—they go to court. They get their day in court. Would we pass legislation saying, “Let’s not bother with shoplifters going to court. We’ll just have a tribunal that is heard by one quasi-judge, or judge, and he or she will make a decision”? Of course we would not accept that. We are talking about law-breaking, and such cases deserve to be tested in court. That is a pretty basic proposition.

My objection is no different from the one made by many other hon. Members. The hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) made some very good points about people’s need to earn a living, and I do not dispute for a second that powerful vested interests have argued against the Bill. However, he would not dispute that powerful interests have argued for it.

I have seen members of the Musicians’ Union arguing against his position, on Twitter and elsewhere. There are not many—I think that the hon. Gentleman probably represents a majority of Musicians’ Union members—but it is a fact that there are disparate views out there that we are simply not paying heed to. When we say that it is a pity that we have not had long enough to debate this Bill, people outside the Chamber will wonder why that

is. Usually, a Bill like this would get 40 or 50 hours in Committee and another three or four on Third Reading. We are cutting all that back to one hour of scrutiny tomorrow, but that will not really be serious scrutiny at all.

I shall end with a political point about the Liberal Democrats. @Ironjolt joked on Twitter recently that the party was desperate to be in a three-horse race. However, given that there have been no speakers at all from the Liberal Democrat Back Benches, it is clear that it is not even able to supply the back end for a panto horse. That is a great pity for its members, but does not greatly surprise me.

I shall conclude my brief remarks by saying that the Conservatives are willing to let this flawed Bill go through so that they can correct it after the general election. That is not what I want. I want this flawed Bill to be put off until after the general election, so that the inevitable Labour Government will be able to amend it properly.

9.11 pm

**Adam Afriyie** (Windsor) (Con): It has been a very interesting debate, with a single theme unifying the contributions from Back and Front Benches across the House—that the Government appear to be rushing through an important piece of legislation without due scrutiny in the House of Commons. After 13 years of digital dithering, this Bill is all they have to show on the digital front. It is a missed opportunity of massive proportions. Not only is it discourteous to rush such a significant measure through Parliament in the dying days of a failed Government, but it is also incompetent.

**Mr. Simon:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman so early in his remarks, but we all know that the Government can get the Bill through only if the official Opposition support it wholeheartedly, especially in the House of Lords. Surely that is a bit like trying to have his cake and eat it at the same time.

**Adam Afriyie:** That was a great attempt at distortion and distraction, but I assure the hon. Gentleman that we will not allow measures that we disagree with to go through. Therefore, I can say categorically that we will not allow clauses 1, 21 and 43 to go through. We have a very clear position on this Bill, whereas the Government seem to be all over the place and unable to focus on what they hope to achieve.

**Mr. Grogan:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, but a further point of clarity would be useful. I noticed him nodding when various hon. Members spoke about the lack of time for debate: will the Opposition Front Bench vote for the programme motion this evening?

**Adam Afriyie:** We have made it very clear where the red lines are. We are very keen that this Bill does get to Committee, if only for a short time. It is already reprehensible that the Government, who have been in office for 13 years and who began work on this Bill five years ago, should bring it forward only at this last minute. We want to examine what is available for examination in whatever time we have, but we will not cross our red lines.

**Mr. Don Foster:** I apologise for interrupting the hon. Gentleman, but I want to be helpful. He said that the Conservatives were unhappy with clause 23, which is entitled “Monitoring and enforcing C4C’s media content duties”, but I suspect that he was referring to clause 29.

**Adam Afriyie:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for recognising that I misspoke. I meant to refer to clause 29, as opposed to clause 23. We will not allow clauses 1, 29 and 43—

**Peter Luff:** You said clause 21.

**Adam Afriyie:** I meant to say clauses 1, 29 and 43: those are the ones that we will not allow to go through.

**Fiona Mactaggart:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Adam Afriyie:** I should like to make a little more headway and then I will give way several times, as we shall not have much opportunity beyond today to examine the legislation.

At the height of the dotcom boom, new Labour talked about modernising Government IT. They talked about the digital economy, but they were not digital natives, so they created an e-unit, an e-envoy and even an e-Minister. In fact, they slapped an “e” in front of anything that moved. While the pace of technological change was breathtaking, the response from the Government certainly was not. They have had ample opportunity to face up to the realities of the digital economy and the digital age, but they have failed to do so. They promised competition and innovation in the media industry, but they have chosen to subsidise and entrench old business models. They promised a modern communications infrastructure but they have delivered some of the slowest broadband speeds in the world. We are ranked 40th in the world. Labour has left Britain in the broadband slow lane, behind countries such as Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova. That was a fantastic achievement—and that was irony.

The Government promised a copyright system fit for the digital age. In the meantime, the music and film industries have lost millions, if not hundreds of millions, through illegal downloads. What is Labour’s answer to the new digital economy? Old-style taxes, old-style subsidies and old-style regulation. The Bill is nothing like the measure we wished to see. It is nothing like a Bill that will kick-start the digital economy. It is a Betamax Bill from a bewildered Government who seem startled and dazzled by the lights of modernity and the open data challenges.

There have been some fantastic contributions to the debate. There were good speeches from both sides, and it is frustrating that there has not been time to examine the issues more carefully. My right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr. Davis) said clearly that he was completely opposed to the Bill unless there was time to scrutinise and review particular aspects relating to civil liberties. I salute his integrity on those issues.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Peter Luff), who is Chairman of the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, pointed out that a large part of the Bill relates to the business aspects of the digital

[*Adam Afriyie*]

economy and that there has not been time to examine them in detail. I shall come to some of his other remarks in a moment.

The right hon. Member for Cardiff and Penrith—

**Alun Michael:** May I correct the hon. Gentleman's geography? Penrith is not within the boundaries of my constituency, which is Cardiff, South and Penarth.

**Adam Afriyie:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that correction. He gave a considered and balanced view. He was pleased with the reserve powers for Nominet, and concerned about internet safety issues. He was remarkably open to market mechanisms, or other ways of enabling internet access that did not require cumbersome legislation. I very much welcomed those comments and the fact that he wanted to avoid intervention on a large scale.

The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), the Lib Dem Front-Bench spokesman, observed that there were some good parts to the Bill, but that the failure to have proper scrutiny was making life difficult. I thoroughly enjoyed the acrobatics he described when reconciling presenting an amendment in the Lords and campaigning against it the following morning. I am surprised he did not bump his head on the bath.

The hon. Member for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (Derek Wyatt) paid tribute to Lord Carter—I think he referred to him as Lord Carter of Paris—and was particularly concerned about whether the Bill recognised the importance of next generation high-speed internet access, akin to ambitions in China and India. The hon. Gentleman said clearly that he felt the Bill lacked vision and that it was a missed opportunity on Channel 4. Like several other Members, the hon. Gentleman observed that it was his last speech in the House of Commons. We wish them well in their life beyond this place. What was most significant about his contribution was that he considered the practical measures that would have made the Bill better legislation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Maldon and East Chelmsford (Mr. Whittingdale), who is Chair of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee, said that the lack of scrutiny might well lead to a lack of legitimacy—that is an important point to hold on to—and that proving identity would be difficult in relation to university students in halls of residence and internet cafés.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) used an interesting term about the Bill. He said that the process and the ragbag of measures were akin to dress and that he had serious concerns about the digital switchover.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire, who is the Chair of the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, said that the legislation would have a great impact on the economy, society and culture of Britain and that this was the least constitutionally satisfactory process in his entire time in Parliament. That says a lot, as he has been a Member for a long time, and that sentiment was echoed by many other hon. Members. He recognised the balance between freedom of expression and creativity and the absence of a definition of what 2 megabits per second actually means. That is an important observation, because if such speeds are only sporadically

available, even though the headline rate is 2 megabits per second, many of the activities that we wish to undertake on broadband simply will not come about.

**Peter Luff:** I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks. I should warn him not to praise me too much; the Twittersphere hates me tonight, so he should be careful about doing so.

**Adam Afriyie:** I thank my hon. Friend for the warning, but his observations were balanced and fair, and he recognised both sides of the issues. In many ways, Twitter and many of the modern forms of communication are at the heart of what we are talking about today, and perhaps parliamentarians should be a little more relaxed about the public expression of differences, because that adds to our understanding of these issues.

**Pete Wishart:** I have been even more disgraced on Twitter this evening. I do not mind what was said about my contributions, but having a go at my shirt was far too much.

**Adam Afriyie:** The shirts and blouses that Members of Parliament may wear are important international issues, and I am glad that those who are wired in are discussing our sense of dress, as well as the points that we make.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire also mentioned in particular clause 43 about orphan works and photo issues. I am glad that he did so; that is one of our red lines. We will not support any regulation that includes clause 43.

**Fiona Mactaggart:** I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's reference to red lines. It seems that he is able, without there having been a vote, to declare some red lines—an opportunity that is not available to Back Benchers during the wash-up process. Does he feel that it is satisfactory that he and his Front-Bench colleagues can keep red lines, when issues that hon. Members on both sides of the House have expressed concern about will not be dealt with in that way?

**Adam Afriyie:** I am quite surprised that the hon. Lady asks an Opposition Front Bencher that question when her Government have hastily rushed through the Bill, which has not had sufficient time for scrutiny. We will work and make decisions in the best interests of the country and the creative industries and for the future of digital Britain, even if we are delivered a dog's dinner by the Government.

I thought that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon), a former Culture, Media and Sport Minister, made a carefully considered contribution—I should not sound surprised, should I? He pointed out that it needs to be acknowledged that illegal downloading is property theft, no matter how one looks at it. He also said that new business models for content delivery and economic value added are already available and that they are technically possible, morally right and economically necessary. If only his concerns had been echoed by his Front-Bench colleagues, the Government might have taken the issues more seriously and brought the Bill before the House two or three weeks ago, so that we could have had time to contemplate them more closely. However, the hon. Gentleman's contribution was well informed, lucid and, in some aspects, other-worldly.

**Kate Hoey:** I am a little concerned because the crux of much of the debate has been the way in which the Bill is being pushed through without genuine scrutiny. I would not want to support such a ludicrous timetabling motion, but I do not think that we would be able to carry a vote. Will the hon. Gentleman explain how it can be sensible to have a short Committee stage tomorrow? It will not be possible to do anything, so let us turn this out tonight.

**Adam Afriyie:** I share those concerns. We are keen that we use whatever time is available at this fag end of a Parliament to scrutinise the Bill, if only for an hour. Clearly, any Member of the House may object to the programme motion, and we shall see what happens.

The hon. Member for Penrith—

**Pete Wishart:** Perth and North Perthshire.

**Adam Afriyie:** I apologise to the hon. Gentleman—*[Interruption.]* Yes, I am obsessed with Penrith. I made my notes in the absence of an opportunity to use technology in the Chamber and it is difficult to read my poor handwriting.

The hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) made a passionate speech in support of the sanctions in the Bill against those who steal not only his intellectual property and collective works, but those of many people in a similar position. His plea will be recognised throughout the country and a balanced debate is required.

It is delightful to learn that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Watson) is the estranged son of the dark lord, whichever dark lord that might be. I welcomed many of his balanced comments. His speech was impassioned yet thoughtful. He balanced freedom of speech with the privacy of the individual, and when he talked about intellectual property versus fair use, he tipped the balance towards what he saw as the future for the United Kingdom, rather than our approach of the past. He referred quite often to squalid deals, but I reassure him that we are here at the last moment before Parliament shuts down—at five minutes to midnight—because his Government failed to bring the Bill forward earlier.

**Mr. Watson:** But for perhaps the first time in the hon. Gentleman's parliamentary career, he can stop this if he chooses. Destiny is in your hands; seize the moment!

**Adam Afriyie:** My blood is pumping, but it was pumping before the hon. Gentleman's words of encouragement. I assure him again that Conservative Members will do our utmost to ensure that those aspects of the Bill that have not been correctly considered do not go through. We will not move from that position because this is not about party politics or electioneering; it is about ensuring that this country has the legislation that it requires. My hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State gave the further commitment that we completely reserve the right to revisit any measures that might go through the House this side of the election. From my and my party's perspective, it is quite clear that we need an update of intellectual property law and copyright law, so we are committed to carrying that out. We will do our utmost to allow through the bits of legislation regarding which we think that there is time to make corrections, if they are needed. The hon. Member for

West Bromwich, East said that there are unpalatable truths to deal with. I can assure him that an incoming Conservative Government would take the bull by the horns.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Wokingham (Mr. Redwood) gave an experienced and considered exposition of the dangers of the hasty treatment of legislation, and of the lack of scrutiny. He pointed out that even on Second Reading, there were about 11 themes in the Bill that needed to be discussed. Contributions from around the Chamber have touched on many of those themes, but we have not dealt with them in as much detail as we should have done.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, North-West (John Robertson) actually agrees with the Conservative policy that we should consider opening up and enabling access to the ducts. We go further and say that that should apply also to the sewers and any other medium through which cable can be run and digital transmission can take place. We do not see that the only tool available to a Government is draconian legislation forcing measures through by the centre. We recognise that we have had a thriving and booming mobile phone sector and cable sector in the absence of the type of measures that the Government seem to wish to take.

**John Robertson:** Far be it from me to correct the hon. Gentleman, but I said that although I do not have a problem with opening up the ducts or sewers, or with pylons, somebody must be in control to make sure that things are run properly. Cowboys cannot be allowed to come in, as happened in the past, and ride roughshod over the infrastructure.

**Adam Afriyie:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for the clarification.

**Mr. Redwood:** The main issue that I was raising in my speech, as my hon. Friend may recollect, related to clauses 10 to 18, which are a blank cheque saying that orders will be laid in due course. We have no idea whether they would work or how they would be constructed. Is my hon. Friend sure that it is possible to construct sensible orders out of the chaotic haste of that part of the Bill?

**Adam Afriyie:** It would be an enormous challenge, which is why we have left open the opportunity to revisit the Bill, if it goes through and if there is a Conservative Government. It is not just the Bill that requires further work. There is a lot more work to be done to ensure that Britain is at the forefront of the digital revolution, rather than a laggard, as we are at present.

The hon. Member for Slough (Fiona Mactaggart) made a clear and robust speech, commenting that it was utterly feeble that in their dying days, a Government should try to introduce such legislation. She also rebuked those on the Opposition Front Bench for perhaps being in cahoots. I reiterate that we are clear that in our approach to the Bill, we will defend the interests of the country and we will not budge on the clauses that I mentioned.

**Fiona Mactaggart:** The hon. Gentleman misquoted me. I did not say that the Government were being feeble. I said that Back-Bench Members and Opposition Front-Bench Members are being feeble by failing to scrutinise what the Government offer us.

**Adam Afriyie:** That is a curious comment, given that it is the hon. Lady's Government who have introduced the Bill in massive haste. I thought that she was being altruistic and impartial in her comments, but striking out any contribution from her own Government to the chaos that we see this evening seems a little one-sided.

The hon. Member for Walthamstow (Mr. Gerrard) pointed out that there were some good clauses in the Bill. He was critical of the process that the Government have adopted, and observed that the fact that the Lords had taken such a long time to consider the Bill might be a bad sign. He suggested that it might be a more complicated and difficult piece of legislation than it seemed, and that therefore the House needed to concentrate on it. He pointed out that clause 43 on orphan works was not adequately thought through and he did not support it.

The hon. Member for Inverclyde (David Cairns) made a constructive contribution. He praised the public-private partnership—admittedly introduced by the previous Conservative Government—and the way in which it worked, and he raised many issues about the provision of local and regional news.

The hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Grogan), apart from having a few constituents who may be bonkers, observed that there was a challenge because of the shameful abuse of the process, and he was challenged to find a precedent of such importance in any wash-up prior to the Dissolution of Parliament. The hon. Member for Falkirk (Eric Joyce) said, "Don't let this through," and there was some debate about the redress to legal process for those who are accused.

On the economy, there are some useful aspects of the Bill. There is some merit in establishing reserve powers on the domain name system, and the proposals to tackle online copyright infringement are long overdue. Anti-piracy measures should recognise new technologies, and thankfully the Government have backed down on their draconian plans under the old clause 17. However, it is an insult to democracy and to this House not to make sufficient time to scrutinise the proposals in more detail.

We strongly oppose Labour's old-style subsidies that embed old-style business models, and we oppose unnecessary regulatory burdens. The Government have failed to explain why Ofcom requires additional duties, hence the opposition to clause 1. Ofcom already considers the state of infrastructure, and there is now a serious risk that the new duties could distort its objective of sustaining competition. That measure is nothing more than a shabby political dividing line of the Prime Minister's making.

I have also said many times before that we need a workable system for dealing with orphan works. If the Government had provided the time, rather than a cobbled-together mismatch, Britain could have led the world with a state-of-the-art copyright system. The Gowers review was published in December 2006, so they have had four years to find a solution, but this incompetent Government now want to force through substantial changes with insufficient scrutiny.

Many hon. Members have highlighted the serious questions about clause 43, and with the Government's consultation on copyright exceptions in its second phase it is clear that the copyright debate is not over yet. We

are committed to updating our copyright system for the digital age. In the interests of the country and the economy, a Conservative Government would retain the right and maintain the intention to revisit orphan works, in addition to extended collective licensing, as part of a broader copyright update.

Old-style taxes, old-style subsidies, old-style regulation: that is Labour's plan for the digital economy. After three Parliaments of digital dithering, they have left us at the last minute with some botched legislation. This is a washed-up Bill from a washed-up Government. There is a clear choice at the election: five more years of old-style, old-fashioned Labour dithering, or a new Government with the energy, ideas and leadership to deliver for Britain's digital future.

9.38 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (Mr. Stephen Timms):** We have had a good debate about the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Simon) made an excellent speech, and I join him in paying tribute to Stephen Carter, who through his work on the visionary "Digital Britain" White Paper, which was published in June last year, started us on this road and did a great service to the House and the country through his work.

We have had a good debate today, and there has been a long debate in the other place about the measures before us in the Bill. It is now for the House to determine whether the Bill be given a Second Reading. Some have argued that it should not, given the extent of concern about the Bill's measures to tackle copyright infringements. I shall be completely straightforward about my views; I shall not, like the Opposition Front Benchers, try to face both ways. My view is that it should be given a Second Reading, because it is right that we support the creative industries and make progress on the other measures that the Bill addresses.

I should point out that although it is opposed by some from whom we have heard, the view that we need to press on and make progress is strongly supported by the Creative Coalition Campaign, which includes trade unions that have rightly said that we must not let this opportunity pass. If we did not allow the Bill its Second Reading, we would be taking no action on copyright infringement at all—for several months at least, and possibly for much longer.

Some, of course, would welcome that. Some want the current ability to download unlawfully not to be fettered. But according to the Bill's impact assessment, the annual cost of online copyright infringement for UK industry is estimated at £400 million for music, film and TV. Meanwhile, the International Chamber of Commerce estimates the total annual cost at more than £1 billion a year. Given the importance of the creative industries, with their high growth rates, as we come out of the downturn we cannot afford a long delay in addressing the problem.

Legislation alone, of course, is not the answer; I agree with the hon. Member for Maldon and East Chelmsford (Mr. Whittingdale), the Culture, Media and Sport Committee Chairman, on that. Lots of other things will need to be done as well. We certainly need the creative industries to help educate consumers about the damage caused by piracy—and the straightforward fact that it is

wrong—and to try out new approaches and develop online business models that offer consumers what they want at a price that they are willing to pay.

Those business models are starting to be developed. We are certainly seeing some encouraging moves on education and I hope that we will hear more about that in the next few weeks. It is fair, however, to make some criticism of the creative industries for being rather slow in coming forward with online business models that can work. In the end, however, people cannot develop a business model if they are having to compete with others who offer their products for free. There need to be back-stop safeguards to assure legitimate businesses that they will not simply be competing with those who have taken unlawfully what they have paid to provide.

I turn to unlawful file sharing using peer-to-peer networks. I expect that the initial measures, which require internet service providers to write to customers who download copyright material without paying for it, to lead to a substantial reduction in the scale of the problem, and I think those measures are pretty widely supported. I hope that that will be enough to achieve a 70 per cent. reduction, as is our aim. If it is, the technical measures set out in the Bill will not be needed. However, we cannot guarantee that the provision will lead to that scale of reduction, so we need to be able to back up those initial measures with technical measures, including the possibility of temporary account suspension.

Accounts would not be suspended lightly. The Bill provides robust safeguards. Multiple letters will have been sent before technical measures are considered. If a technical measure is imposed, the subscriber affected can appeal and the measure will not be imposed until the appeal has been determined.

I understand the concern, expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Alun Michael), for example, about the danger of technical measures being taken against broadband in public libraries or universities, or against public wi-fi services. I do not think that it would be right to provide a blanket exemption for those services. However, the Bill requires Ofcom to draw up a code to govern how technical measures would be applied. The code will need to recognise and address the particular position of public services and institutions of that kind. We would not regard any assessment by Ofcom, under clause 10, as satisfactory unless it took account of the impact on public libraries, universities and public wi-fi services.

**Alun Michael:** Will my right hon. Friend also undertake to require Ofcom to engage those bodies in designing something that suits how they work as well as meeting the clearly important requirements in the Bill?

**Mr. Timms:** Yes, it will be important for Ofcom to have exactly that kind of discussion, to ensure that it draws up the code that is needed.

**Peter Luff:** Will small businesses be included in that list?

**Mr. Timms:** I am not sure which small businesses the hon. Gentleman is referring to—public wi-fi services?

**Peter Luff** *indicated assent.*

**Mr. Timms:** There will certainly need to be discussion with them, yes.

Unlawful file sharing using peer-to-peer networks is not the only form of online copyright infringement. It is the biggest today, but the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) made the point that perhaps a third of infringements are accounted for by other approaches. There will be new approaches in the future and legislation will be needed to address them.

I regret that an amendment in the other place supported by the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats removed the flexibility to tackle new forms of copyright infringement in future and instead introduced clause 18, which, in its current form, is highly problematic in a number of ways. It is a major change and there has been absolutely no consultation about it so far, and it would be unenforceable given the requirements of the technical standards directive. We have therefore drawn up an amended version to address those problems. It is available on the Bill website, although not yet in the Vote Office, for reasons that my hon. Friend the Member for Slough (Fiona Mactaggart) explained.

The amended clause will provide a power to make regulations and require that they be properly consulted on, and it will not fall foul of the technical standards directive. We can then consider further the case for such regulations, assess their benefits and consider the proportionality of suggested remedies to the problem. We can consider what the regulations need to do, when they are appropriate and what safeguards are needed. Regulations brought forward under the amended clause 18 will have to go through the super-affirmative procedure, allowing the maximum possible parliamentary scrutiny, including the ability for a Committee of either House to recommend changes to the terms of the regulations. I hope the House accepts that that will allow a high degree of parliamentary scrutiny beyond the agreement of the Bill, so that we can consider precisely how the amended clause 18 is to be given effect.

**Mr. Redwood:** Will the Minister explain what would happen if someone had paid for an article or some content from a paid-for site? What would they be allowed to do? Could they invite people in their home to read it for free online at their convenience? Could they print it out and circulate the print-out to friends or family, and could they make multiple copies? Is it just sending it around electronically that is illegal? I would be grateful to know what the crime is.

**Mr. Timms:** I think that the right hon. Gentleman is barking up the wrong tree. The owner of the copyright—the person who is responsible for the content, such as the right hon. Gentleman himself in the case of his blog, which he told us about—can do what he likes with that content. The amended clause 18, which is to provide a power to make regulations rather than change the law directly, will allow a copyright holder to apply for a court order to block access to a website.

**Mr. Redwood:** The Minister cannot say that I do not understand the matter. I am asking him how far someone could go in using something that they had paid for before falling foul of his proposal. It is a very reasonable question.

**Mr. Timms:** But the author of the content will not fall foul of the proposal. I do not imagine that the right hon. Gentleman will apply for a court order to block access to a website that holds his content. A music maker such as the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) might wish to do that, but the right hon. Gentleman clearly would not.

**Mr. Redwood** *rose*—

**Mr. Timms:** I need to make some progress.

Nothing illuminates the vacuity of the Conservative party's policy platform better than the vacuity of its policy on broadband. It is very depressing that the Conservatives have added to their yawning credibility deficit by supporting the end but refusing to support the means to roll out next-generation broadband in rural areas. They simply do not have a credible policy. For a long time they maintained that minor regulatory tweaks would be sufficient to unleash the scale of investment necessary. I am glad that they have now admitted that public funding will be needed for next-generation broadband in rural areas, as it most certainly will, but they have identified a funding source that will not be available for another three years. Taking their approach would be a disastrous betrayal of rural businesses, of young people and schools in rural areas, and of people living in rural areas who want to work from home. Virgin Media will offer 100 megabits per second services across its entire network serving urban areas by the end of this year. Why do the Conservatives think that rural areas should wait for another three years before they get any help?

**Mr. Hunt:** We do not, which is why we have said that we think that the digital switchover surplus should be used to help fund rural broadband.

**Mr. Timms:** That money will be available, on the hon. Gentleman's proposition, only in the new licence fee settlement for the BBC and so will become available for 2013. The money for the period between now and the end of the current licence fee period has already been spoken for.

The hon. Gentleman argued at the start of this debate that the market can ensure a diverse provision of regional independent news, but the truth is that despite the popularity of regional ITV news, it is under severe threat, as my hon. Friend the Member for Inverclyde (David Cairns) and others rightly pointed out. The Bill offers a multi-media model with potentially lower production and distribution costs which can meet audiences' needs. We propose to fund the pilots through a small element of the digital switchover underspend and then decide on longer-term funding later, in the light of the pilots.

**Mr. Foster:** The Minister knows that I entirely agree with him on that point, but the hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Grogan) warned us earlier to beware what Chief Whips say, and I am receiving messages that the Government Chief Whip has acknowledged that clause 29 will be dropped by the Government. Can the Minister confirm that that is categorically not the case and that they will press it as far as they can?

**Mr. Timms:** We certainly will press the clause as far as we can. We have heard the Conservatives describe their red lines and, as the hon. Gentleman knows, those on

the Conservative Benches are in a stronger position at this stage in the process than would otherwise be the case.

**Mr. Vaizey:** How is the Minister proposing to use the digital switchover surplus for IFNCs, given that he has just said that it is not available until 2013?

**Mr. Timms:** The scale of funding that the Conservative party is talking about is certainly not available until the new licence fee round is agreed. Indeed, I would argue that if the Conservatives think that the BBC can be run for a lower price, they should reduce the licence fee, not use it to fund other things. It would be far better to have a transparent and clearly identified source of reliable funding, as we propose with the phone line levy.

The case for a new ability to license orphan works is a very strong one. Many films, for example, some in the BBC archive, cannot be seen at all today because nobody knows who owns the copyright. It would be a criminal offence to show those films and that problem needs to be fixed. In the past few weeks, we have heard a good deal about the worries of photographers that clause 43 would allow people to exploit their work by claiming it to be "orphan". I understand and sympathise with those concerns, and I agree that they need to be addressed, but clause 43 would allow us to do that. In the end, if photographers were not satisfied that we were able to produce orphan rights regulations that met their needs, we would not proceed with the regulations. I welcome the statement about clause 43 made last week by a number of photography organisations, including the Association of Photographers, the National Union of Journalists, the Royal Photographic Society and Getty Images, welcoming changes made to the Bill in the other place and looking forward to working with Government on the regulations to be made under clause 43.

**Mr. Watson:** I have great admiration for how my right hon. Friend is putting his case, but I still have grave reservations about clauses 11 to 18, and it is with the greatest regret that I say that, although it is clear that the three Front-Bench teams are determined to railroad this through on Second Reading, if the Government cannot move on those clauses tomorrow—we will have only an hour on Third Reading—I will not be able to support the measures at the crucial vote on Third Reading. I am sure that I speak for other colleagues.

**Mr. Timms:** My hon. Friend, in his thoughtful speech, made his position clear. I say to him that our choice is between acting and not acting on unlawful downloading. That is the choice that the House needs to make, and I think that there is broad agreement across the House on the need to act in the way the Bill sets out.

I shall comment on some of the others points made in the debate. My right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth asked me to confirm that the powers in respect of Nominet would be used only as a last resort, and I can indeed give him that assurance. The hon. Member for Bath, who has entertained the House with the Liberal Democrats' policy changes, suggested having a super-affirmative procedure for clause 11. Actually, that clause is drawn pretty tightly, and the power can be used only following an assessment by Ofcom. So although I think it is appropriate for clause 18, I do not think that such an additional safeguard is appropriate for clause 11.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Sittingbourne and Sheppey (Derek Wyatt) for his contribution to this debate throughout his time in the House and for his contribution outside the House in creating the Oxford Internet Institute, for example. I wish him well for the future. The hon. Member for Maldon and East Chelmsford was right to underline the huge damage being done by piracy, but as I said earlier I agree that legislation on its own is not the sole answer.

**Mr. Whittingdale:** There is concern among some who have looked at the Bill that clause 46 might have similar sweeping powers to the unlamented clause 17. Will the Minister confirm that that is not the case?

**Mr. Timms:** Yes, I can. Clause 46 gives powers only to make amendments consequential on other parts of the Bill.

The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Peter Luff)—I enjoyed his Committee's report on broadband, and I, too, would have liked the response to have been published by today—made important points in his report and speech about 2 megabits per second. I agree that about 10 per cent. of homes still cannot get a 2 megabit per second broadband service. We need to make sure that they all can. Broadband Delivery UK, which started work just a few weeks ago, will be working up that definition.

We have had a very good debate. The digital economy and our creative industries are a source of great strength for the UK and our economy. There are enormous opportunities ahead. The digital economy holds out vast opportunities for the UK. The Bill will enable us to realise those opportunities, and I commend it to the House.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 63), That the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.—(Mary Creagh.)*

*Question agreed to.*

*Committee tomorrow.*

#### **DIGITAL ECONOMY BILL [LORDS] (MONEY)**

*Queen's recommendation signified.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52 (1)(a)),*

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Digital Economy Bill [Lords], it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable under any other Act out of money so provided.—(Mary Creagh.)

*Question agreed to.*

#### **DIGITAL ECONOMY BILL [LORDS] (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 Digital Economy Bill [Lords], it is expedient to authorise—

(a) provisions by virtue of which holders of radio licences granted under the Broadcasting Act 1990 or radio multiplex licences granted under the Broadcasting Act 1996 are or may be required to pay sums to the Office of Communications in connection with the renewal of such licences,

(b) provisions by virtue of which holders of licences granted under section 8 of the Wireless Telegraphy Act 2006 in accordance with regulations under section 14 of that Act (licences allocated by auction) may be required to pay sums to the Office of Communications in connection with such licences, and

(c) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund.—(Mary Creagh.)

*Question agreed to.*

#### **EQUALITY BILL (PROGRAMME) (NO. 2)**

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83A(7)),*

That the following provisions shall apply to the Equality Bill for the purpose of supplementing the Order of 11 May 2009 (Equality Bill (Programme)):

##### *Consideration of Lords Amendments*

1. Proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement at this day's sitting.

##### *Subsequent stages*

2. Any further Message from the Lords may be considered forthwith without any Question being put.

3. The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement.—(Mary Creagh.)

*Question agreed to.*

## Equality Bill

### Consideration of Lords amendments

#### Clause 9

##### RACE

10 pm

**The Solicitor-General (Vera Baird):** I beg to move, That this House agrees with Lords amendment 1.

**Mr. Speaker:** With this, it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments 2, 29, 34 to 38, 53, 63 and 82.

Lords amendment 84, and amendment (a) thereto.

Lords amendments 85, 90, 91, 93 to 95, 106, 108, 109, 111 and 112.

**The Solicitor-General:** The amendments in this first group all relate to the scope of the Bill and are either concessionary or clarificatory. They are fairly random in their subject matter, so I shall take them in numerical order.

Lords amendment 1 provides a power to add caste as a subset of race, which is covered by clause 9. The case for legislating against caste discrimination has been argued with passion during the Bill's passage by Members of this House and in the other place. We have seen a good deal of evidence that caste can affect how people in Britain are treated, but the evidence has largely been about discrimination in relation to personal or social situations—for instance, the choice of who a person should marry—that are well outside the scope of discrimination law.

The small amount of mainly anecdotal evidence of caste discrimination occurring in areas covered by the Bill—employment, education and the provision of services, for example—emerged late in the day, when the Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance published a report last November. The Government acted on that report and asked the Equality and Human Rights Commission to undertake further in-depth research, but it did not wish to do so. We immediately commissioned the National Institute of Economic and Social Research to undertake further research into the nature and extent of the problem. That research is under way, and it involves talking to a wide range of community stakeholders and conducting detailed face-to-face interviews with about 35 people who claim to have experienced caste discrimination. The report from this in-depth study is due in August.

**Mr. William Cash (Stone) (Con):** Will the Minister explain whether this provision is to be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure? I am looking at clause 199, and I do not see that any requirement for such a provision—including a power to amend the Act—to be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure. It is bad enough to have a Henry VIII clause, let alone this.

**The Solicitor-General:** It is subject to the affirmative resolution procedure; I can assure the hon. Gentleman of that.

**Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North) (Lab):** I am pleased to be able to intervene on my hon. and learned Friend as chair of the Dalit Solidarity Network trustees. I welcome the amendment and her response to it. Will

she tell us who will evaluate the report that she has commissioned, and when she expects that evaluation to be complete so that whoever is the Minister at that time can introduce the necessary regulations?

**The Solicitor-General:** The process should be that the report comes out in August and if there is evidence—we intend to disclose and discuss it with all the stakeholders that brought the issue to our attention—amendment 1 would ensure that, if necessary, we could introduce an amendment through secondary legislation to include race and caste in the definitions. I hope that my hon. Friend finds that process acceptable. It is, of course, a precautionary measure, as it were, because we do not yet know what the research will show. We have every intention, now that we have some evidence, of plumbing to the depths to decide whether there is a need to legislate to protect another subset of persons.

I move swiftly on to deal with school issues through amendments 2 and 29 to clauses 17 and 84, which are about protecting pregnant schoolgirls and young mothers from discrimination in school. Already in place are duties on schools and local authorities to provide suitable education for all children. There is guidance for schools on the issue of school-age parents, which we initially felt was sufficient to provide protection for girls who got pregnant at school without extending discrimination law in this area. However, we have listened to the concerns raised and we are now prepared to extend protection from discrimination here as well to provide clarity and certainty.

To move briefly into party politics, amendments 34 to 36 amend clauses 104 and 105, dealing with the selection of candidates by political parties. They add an explicit proportionality test for the positive action that might be taken to reduce inequality in our democratic institutions. Action might be taken, for instance, to encourage greater participation by people from black and ethnic minority communities through proportionality; it might, for example, be proportionate to target extra training, mentoring or funding to prospective candidates from under-represented groups, but not to provide such support only to them to the exclusion of others. However, this proportionality test will not apply to the time-limited legislation to permit all-women shortlists, because we feel that the time limiting, until 2030, is already a proportionate way of tackling the serious and continued under-representation of women in Parliament and other elected institutions.

Still on the subject of party politics, amendments 37, 38, 63, 106 and 111 arise out of a recommendation from the Speaker's Conference. They would insert a new clause 106, which would give Ministers power to require registered political parties to publish data relating to the diversity of candidates seeking selection. The point is to help to disclose any under-representation with a view to identifying barriers that might be causing it. Let me be clear that nothing in the provision will require a potential candidate to disclose any personal information he or she does not wish to disclose, and that the requirement to publish will apply only to anonymised data from which nobody can be identified.

**Mr. Cash:** There is support on this side of the House for more women in Parliament. Will the Minister explain whether these provisions carry any sanction and, if so, what it is?

**The Solicitor-General:** We hope that everyone will co-operate, and we hope that the hon. Gentleman will encourage that co-operation in the usual way he encourages these radical and progressive measures to bear full fruit.

**Mr. Cash:** Will the Minister give way again on that point?

**The Solicitor-General:** I want to make some progress, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

Following full consultation, including with political parties, the Electoral Commission and the Equality and Human Rights Commission, regulations will set out among other things which protected characteristics must be reported on, when, for what period the data are to be published and in respect of which elections and which political parties. This means that the requirements can be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances. For instance, it will be possible to require just large political parties to report and for the reports to cover only sex and race and only in respect of general elections. As I say, the details will be the subject of full consultation before any requirements are imposed.

Turning to deal with civil partnerships, amendments 53, 85 and 112 would insert new provisions into the Bill to amend the Civil Partnership Act 2004. They would remove the express prohibition on civil partnerships taking place in religious premises. This change applies only to England and Wales because civil partnership is devolved and any decision on this issue for Scotland and Northern Ireland would be a matter for them.

These amendments were tabled in the other place on Report by Lord Ali and pressed to a Division. The Government allowed a free vote because it seemed to us to raise a matter of religious freedom and conscience. The vote was won in the Lords, and once the other place had made it clear that it intended the amendment to be accepted, we assisted to make sure that it would be effective. Let me make it clear that no religious group or denomination will be forced to open their place of worship to civil partnership if it does not want to; no proprietor of religious premises or religious denomination will be liable for discrimination if they do not post civil partnership registrations on their premises. That has to be applied for in order for such premises to be used for civil partnerships; it is left that way around, and the regulations governing the approval will be able to say, for instance, who can make an application on behalf of which denomination, and clearly that can be done only with proper consultation. A couple who wanted to register their civil partnership in a church that had not been approved for it could not do so, therefore, and they could not require a denomination to seek approval to enable it.

On harassment, amendments 82 and 84 would amend the general interpretation clause to make it clear for the avoidance of doubt that where harassment is not explicitly prohibited, for example in harassment related to religion, belief or sexual orientation in school, protection is none the less available through the provisions prohibiting direct discrimination by subjecting a person to a detriment. Therefore, a pupil who is harassed, in the commonly understood sense of the word, by a teacher as a result of his or her religion, belief or sexual orientation, can bring a claim for direct discrimination if the treatment causes that pupil to suffer a detriment.

An amendment opposed to this Lords amendment has been tabled by the hon. Members for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Dr. Harris) and for Hornsey and Wood Green (Lynne Featherstone), which would mean that in those areas where harassment is not specifically prohibited, a person bullied because of his or her religion or belief will not have a remedy under the Bill. Imagining that the motivation behind their amendment is a concern that even the current approach makes it too easy for those with religious sensitivities to complain, let me say that in the case of employment the specific definition of harassment for religion or belief has been in place since 2003, and in the case of goods and services the detriment element of the definition of religious or belief discrimination has been in place since 2007, and in neither area has significant trouble or problem arisen. I am sure Members will agree that it will be better that, for instance, a Muslim schoolboy subjected to bullying by a school playground supervisor because of his religion should have a remedy. For this reason, I will ask the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Lady to withdraw their amendment.

**Dr. Evan Harris** (Oxford, West and Abingdon) (LD): I would be grateful if the hon. and learned Lady would just clarify why she felt this amendment was needed at all, if it has always been the case that there was this recourse to detriment. If that is so, what does this amendment that the Government inserted in the Lords add to the current position?

**The Solicitor-General:** I think it makes it very much clearer, which is very important, especially for legislation that simply will not work unless it is accessible, comprehensible and understood by everybody who wants to be protected by it.

Amendments 90 and 108 on gender reassignment would amend schedules 3 and 24 to make it clear that it is not unlawful discrimination for a minister of religion to refuse to solemnise the marriage of a person if he or she reasonably believes the person has undergone gender reassignment. These amendments take account of the different arrangements governing marriages in the Church of England and the Church in Wales, where ministers are required to marry qualifying couples, the corresponding arrangements in Scotland and the different arrangements applying to marriages in registered buildings and other religious marriages. That preserves the existing provision under the Marriage Act 1949, which might otherwise have been in doubt given the Bill's extension of protection from gender reassignment discrimination to the exercise of public functions. That is a very specific provision.

10.15 pm

Let me turn briefly to broadcasting. Amendments 91 and 109 amend schedules 3 and 24, in response to broadcasters' concerns, simply to make it clear that nothing in the Bill is intended to undermine their editorial independence. The amendments put it beyond doubt that the services and public functions provisions do not apply to broadcasting and distribution of content services.

**Mr. Cash:** On the question of the editorial matters of the BBC, is the Minister satisfied that the rules regarding editorial policy embodied in the charter and in the guidelines adequately provide the degree of impartiality that is necessary in our present-day democracy? Does she think, perhaps, that the editorial policy needs to be tightened up?

**The Solicitor-General:** I am not sure what day Department for Culture, Media and Sport questions is, but I think that question was an excellent one formulated for the next event. This is the Equality Bill. *[Interruption.]*

**Mr. Speaker:** Order. I apologise for interrupting the Minister, but I say to the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash), who is an experienced and senior Member of the House and who is well able to make his point when he is on his feet, that he should not also seek to make it from his seat.

**The Solicitor-General:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Amendments 93 to 95 dip back into the religious world and the occupational requirement exception for organised religion in paragraph 2 of schedule 9—a paragraph and schedule with which we became very familiar in Committee. These amendments were opposed by the Government and would remove from the religious occupational requirements exception the proportionality test and the definition of the very narrow range of religious jobs that the exception covers. These elements, though, would remain implicit because they are in the current law. Although we regret that their lordships did not see the value of the clarifying provisions in the Bill and voted to accept these amendments, the fact remains that the Bill, as amended, has the same effect as the existing law. With that in mind, the Government have decided not to seek to reject these amendments.

Again, the hon. Members for Oxford, West and Abingdon and for Hornsey and Wood Green are resisting amendments 93 and 94, which remove the express proportionality test. I can only reiterate what they have heard me say many times before—there will be no reduction in protection as a result of the Lords amendments. We talked a lot in Committee about the High Court case—the Amicus case, as we call it. In the view of the High Court, the existing exception

“has to be construed purposively so as to ensure, so far as possible, compatibility with the Directive”

that underlies it. As a proportionality test is required by that directive, the exception must be construed compatibly with that. The removal of the express proportionality test will not change the legal effect of the exception.

The House might recall that it was mentioned on Report and Third Reading that the European Commission had delivered a reasoned opinion in November 2009 on two aspects of our implementation of this directive. We have now responded to that opinion, although the correspondence is kept confidential. However, as my noble Friend Baroness Royall explained on 25 January in the debate in Committee in the other place, we did not inform the European Commission that the Bill will amend regulation 7(3) of the 2003 regulations, which paragraph 2 of schedule 9 replaces, to bring the position into line with the directive. We did not say that because the existing legislation already complies with the directive. I ask the House to agree to these amendments.

**Mr. Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): It is worth saying briefly at the outset—for the avoidance of doubt, and particularly because the Minister for Women and Equality, the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) goes around saying such things—that the Conservative party has never opposed the Bill. We are very pleased that it is nearing the end of its progress and that it will get Royal

Assent before the House is dissolved. The reason for that is because it consolidates nine Acts of Parliament, 100 pieces of secondary legislation and 2,500 pages of guidance, and because it has been welcomed by many organisations as broadly simplifying and making more straightforward the existing law. What we have said is that we do not agree with three parts of the Bill. If we form the Government after the next election, we will not bring those three requirements—socio-economic duty, the mistaken way in which the Government are tackling equal pay, and positive action, which I shall mention later—into force.

The House will be pleased to know that I do not plan to speak to every amendment that the Solicitor-General has set out. I shall simply pick on one or two of them.

**Dr. Evan Harris:** Before the hon. Gentleman does that, will he make it clear whether his position is the same as that expressed by his colleague, the shadow Home Secretary, that bed-and-breakfast owners should be entitled to exclude people on the ground of their sexual orientation? The Conservative party’s position on that issue, which relates to schedule 23, is not clear, but I think that lots of people would want to know what it is.

**Mr. Harper:** I am very pleased that the hon. Gentleman asked me that. I thought that someone would, and if it had not been him, I suspect that it would have been the Minister for Women and Equality, if she had been taking this business through, given that she cannot resist the opportunity to do so sometimes. I will be very clear. My hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling) has said himself that he voted in favour of those sexual orientation regulations. He is content with the law as it is and he does not seek to change it. On that, he is in line with the rest of the party. We support that part of the Bill and we do not propose to change it. I think that is abundantly clear.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** If there is no intention to change the law, why on earth did the hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling) make the suggestion that the law needed to be changed?

**Mr. Harper:** I have just set out my hon. Friend’s position. *[Interruption.]* No, it is what he said, and I have just made very clear the position of both my hon. Friend and the Conservative party. That is very clear and does not need repeating.

On Lords amendment 1 on caste, which I know the hon. Member for Islington, North (Jeremy Corbyn) is interested in, the Solicitor-General made a very clear exposition of the need for the amendment. We discussed it in detail in Committee, and there was consensus that if there was clear evidence of harm and of a need for the measure, it made sense to have it in the legislation. I support having caste as a subset of race rather than inventing a new protected characteristic, and I think it would be sensible for whoever forms a Government after the next election to look very clearly at the evidence and to make a decision on that part of the legislation depending on whether there is evidence of harm.

On Lords amendments 34 to 38 on reporting the diversity of candidates, there was a very good debate in the House of Lords. My noble Friend, Baroness Morris of Bolton, set out our position clearly, and we are very

happy to support the proposals. I had a good discussion with the Solicitor-General, and received assurances that talks would take place with all political parties about how this might happen. I am glad that she reiterated the proposition, which was echoed by the representatives of the three main parties, that having diversity reporting on gender and ethnicity probably made sense to start off with.

There are a number of other problems, however. You will be aware, Mr. Speaker, that just last week the Commons had the opportunity to discuss in Westminster Hall the report from your Speaker's Conference on parliamentary representation. We had a good debate, led by the conference's vice chairman, the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Miss Begg), and we discussed some of the issues associated with difficulties in identifying candidates with a disability. Sometimes they are unwilling to be identified as disabled, and there are many problems in measuring disability. I therefore think that it probably makes sense to start off with reporting on gender and ethnicity. We can see how that works and whether it drives the necessary change before we consider reporting in other areas.

I want to touch on Lords amendments 93 to 95. For the avoidance of doubt, I must tell the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Dr. Harris) that we will not support his motions to disagree with the Lords in their amendments 93 and 94 if he presses them to a vote.

We were very pleased that the Lords passed these three amendments, as we believed that the Government were narrowing the scope of the exemptions available to religious organisations. The Government said that that was not their position, but we thought that it was, so we can all be happy—we have changed the Bill, which the Government now say does what they intended in the first place.

In Committee, the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Drew) pressed what is now Lords amendment 95 to a Division. We supported him and, although we were unable to win, I am pleased that these three amendments were moved in the House of Lords by my noble Friend Baroness O'Cathain. With her assistance, we were able to get support there to change the Bill, and I know that the Government have made the commitment that they will not try to change it back in this House.

It is worth noting that the bulk of Labour and Liberal Democrat peers voted not to change the law. Support came predominantly from Conservative peers, Cross Benchers and a number of the Lords Spiritual. Colleagues—certainly on our Conservative side of the House—may wish to let religious organisations in their constituencies know who stuck up for them when necessary in the upper House.

**Dr. Evan Harris:** What about the gay communities in their constituencies?

**Mr. Harper:** From a sedentary position, the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon asks about the gay communities in constituencies, but these measures are not purely about sexual orientation. For example, they allow a Church to require that a married priest conduct himself in accordance with his marriage vows and not be unfaithful to his wife. The measures are not about sexual orientation at all. To be fair, that was how the matter was reported by many of the news organisations, but that was not what they were about.

**Miss Anne McIntosh** (Vale of York) (Con): It is curious that the Government have not taken the opportunity to close the existing loophole on siblings' ability to inherit, for example. A similar loophole in respect of gays and other minorities has been closed, and that is welcome, but does my hon. Friend know why the Government did not use this Bill to extend such rights to siblings? There is great support on both sides of the House for closing that long-standing loophole.

**Mr. Harper:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her question, although I do not think that it affects any of these amendments. I understand her concerns, given the advent of civil partnerships: family members of people involved in such partnerships have not been able to understand why they cannot take advantage of inheritance tax rules. That is what I think that she is referring to, although I do not think that this Equality Bill is the right place to address her perfectly good questions. Perhaps they should be addressed elsewhere, and I am sure that she will raise them in future debates.

I shall draw my remarks to a close by saying that we welcome this group of amendments. If the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon presses any of his amendments to a vote, I am afraid that we will not support him.

**Dr. Evan Harris:** First, I can assure the House that we will not press my amendments to a vote so, if they trust me, those hon. Members who are hanging around can relax. However, they all seem to be staying, which I guess is fair enough.

It is interesting to hear the Conservatives say they generally support the Bill.

**Miss Ann Widdecombe** (Maidstone and The Weald) (Con): I don't.

**Dr. Harris:** I suspect the right hon. Lady speaks for a large number of her colleagues in the country as a whole. However, the Conservative Front-Bench speakers say that in general they do not oppose the Bill, and I believe them. They do not oppose it, because it is not a radical Bill. As the hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr. Harper) made clear, it is mainly a reorganising Bill, and it has missed huge opportunities to be much more radical. The Government cannot say both that the Bill is radical and that the Conservatives who support it are anti-equality. In many cases, the Conservatives are anti-equality, but the Bill is not the test that shows it—except in the three areas mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. It is unfortunate that even though the Bill was amended in the Lords it is not as strong as it could be in many respects.

10.30 pm

I should like to press the hon. Member for Forest of Dean on the question about the shadow Home Secretary. If the shadow Home Secretary does not think the Bill should be changed, was he advocating that the law be ignored—an unusual position for a shadow Home Secretary—when he said that people should be able to exclude other people on the basis of sexual orientation? I fear that question will go unanswered.

We welcome Lords amendment 1. Members may recall that Liberal Democrats in this House first raised the issue. We did not have a great welcome from the

Minister in Committee, but on reflection in the Lords, and thanks to the work of Lord Avebury and Lord Harries of Pentregarth, among others, the Government were persuaded to compromise, so we have a provision that is welcome as far as it goes.

There were a number of amendments on equal pay, including on comparators. The Government have accepted amendments proposed by my noble Friend, Lord Lester—or that they tabled following discussion with him. Those amendments are welcome because they improve the equal pay situation. However, we regret the fact that the pay audit provisions in the Bill are still weak, because we were unable to get a majority for amendments in the Lords, despite our best efforts. Of course, the Conservatives think that even measures requiring companies to carry out audits at a certain point go too far, which says a lot about the Conservative commitment to equality.

I particularly welcome Lords amendment 29, the Government's concession on pregnancy in schools. The issue was raised in Committee in the House of Commons and I am pleased that the Government were persuaded that it was wrong not to make it explicit in the Bill that pregnant schoolgirls should not be exempted from some of the equality laws. That is important.

We welcome Lords amendments 34 to 38, which deal with diversity in the range of candidates. I endorse what has been said about the work of the Speaker's Commission in that respect.

I have sympathy for the Government's position, as expressed in the House of Lords, on civil partnerships on religious premises. It is not ideal to use the Equality Bill to change civil partnerships from being the equivalent of a same-sex civil marriage. The introduction of language about religious buildings or religious services would mean that there was no longer a read-across between civil marriage and civil partnership. The most effective way of dealing with what I recognise is a legitimate wish of people to have a religious aspect to their civil partnership would be to provide for same-sex marriage and amend the Marriage Acts. My party has been very clear: we think society has moved on sufficiently for the Government and the House to take a lead on that. It happens in other jurisdictions, and it is unfortunate that the Government will, as I suspect, leave office after 13 years without having been able to make an advance in that respect. Things are now made more complicated, in terms of what is civil about civil partnerships, by the fact that that had to be the necessary compromise.

Lords amendment 84 is the extra provision that the Government included. The reason why I express concern about that Lords amendment, especially as it relates to religion and belief, is to ensure that we have as much freedom of speech and expression as possible for religious people. The House has resisted, as has the House of Lords—rightly—a free-standing provision on harassment on the grounds of religion and belief in the delivery of services. Yes of course, in employment it is right and proper to have such a provision, but outside employment there are real concerns that if one enables people to take harassment proceedings on the basis of feeling that their dignity has been infringed or that they have been exposed to an offensive environment—that is the terminology of harassment law—it would mean that, for example, Christian hotel owners who display a poster, crucifix or some such thing in the public areas of

their business where their customers will see it might well find themselves open to complaints that people are being harassed.

**The Solicitor-General:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Dr. Harris:** I will give way in a moment.

I know that such things are not covered by this provision, but I am concerned that it introduces such an offence by the back door, and will encourage such action by people who are over-sensitive to statements or expressions of belief by people who have strong religious feelings. Although I may not agree with the strong exposition of religious belief, I am second to none in my concern that that freedom of speech should be protected. If the Solicitor-General wants to intervene, as she indicated a moment ago, I would be grateful if gave an assurance that it is not her intention to include a harassment provision.

**The Solicitor-General:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to intervene. He is utterly wrong, but he knows that, because he said this about six times in Committee, and I have told him six times that he is wrong. The case law is incredibly clear. For the sixth time, let me say that it is called *Driskel v. Peninsula Business Services*, and the Employment Appeal Tribunal made it clear that where the facts simply disclose hypersensitivity on the part of the applicant to conduct that was not perceived by the alleged discriminator as being to their detriment, there is no discrimination. I am sorry, but the hon. Gentleman is terribly wrong.

**Dr. Harris:** We could not have had this discussion in Committee, because the provision in Lords amendment 84 was introduced on the last day in Committee in the House of Lords and was never debated in Committee in this House.

**The Solicitor-General:** That is completely wrong as well. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that we had this very same debate on about 15 different amendments all the way through our consideration in Committee. Forgive me, but he is verging on the disingenuous by pretending that this is something new. It clearly and totally is not.

**Dr. Harris:** The suggested words, which appear in what would be clause 210(5) if we accepted the amendment, are completely new. At no point, because no hon. Member supported a free-standing religious harassment provision, was this debated in Committee. It was not even fully debated in the House of Lords. That is a symptom of what we have seen in the passage of this Bill, which is being rushed through at the very end of this Parliament.

**Mr. Cash:** I have crossed swords with the hon. Gentleman on a number of occasions in relation to religious susceptibilities. Is he saying that he believes that—quite rightly—Christians who wish, for example, to wear crucifixes round their necks should be entitled to do so in circumstances of the kind that he describes? Will he be quite explicit about that?

**Dr. Harris:** The hon. Gentleman invites me to make a distinction—I am happy to do so—between people’s ability to express their religious views wherever and whenever in employment, which, as the Court of Appeal has said, can be legitimately restricted without its being either direct or indirect discrimination. I urge him to read the Court of Appeal’s judgment in the case of *Eweida* from beginning to end, because it is absolutely clear on that point, but that is separate from what should concern all of us: the possibility of people who use a service—whether a public service or, particularly, a commercial service—taking offence at someone’s expression of religious views. We cannot have that, and despite the Minister’s normal bluster, she has not explained why, if this measure was not necessary, it has been brought in. A problem will be created when people read that the fact that there is no provision on harassment on the grounds of religion

“does not prevent conduct relating to that characteristic from amounting to a detriment for the purposes of discrimination within section 13”.

It might well be that a detriment is a higher threshold than that for a harassment claim, and that is dealt with in detail in an article by Michael Rubenstein in the March 2010 *Equal Opportunities Review*, which I commend to the Minister. The article points out, *inter alia*, that the threshold is not greatly different, and I am worried that even hypersensitive people whose cases would fail in the first instance will bring forward such cases because of sensitivity.

**Mr. Cash:** Much of the law in this area is based on matters that arise from the European convention on human rights and the Human Rights Act 1998. Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the strictures that the Lord Chief Justice gave in his speech to the Judicial Studies Board on 17 March about judges who were overindulging their enthusiasm for human rights law? Perhaps this is yet another example, and just as the hon. Gentleman suggested that I should read the case in question, I suggest that he might like to read what the Lord Chief Justice said only a few days ago.

**Dr. Harris:** I shall do that; we will have some time off for good behaviour in a few days. However, I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, of all people, does not know that law in this area is framed by a European Union treaty to which we are signed up—

**Mr. Cash** *rose*—

**Dr. Harris:** I do not wish to go into that area, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

I want to draw my remarks to a close by dealing with the final area of concern: Lords amendments 93 to 95, and especially Lords amendments 93 and 94, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Lynne Featherstone) and I have tabled motions to disagree. In normal circumstances, I would seek to press those motions, but in resisting the Lords I am—unusually for me—merely backing the Government’s position. The fact that the Government are not backing their own position is a sign that they have run out of the time, if not the energy, to say to the Lords that it is not acceptable for them to remove the proportionality requirement. That requirement is in the directive, and it should be made clear. It is extremely disappointing that

Parliament is saying that it is acceptable for someone such as a youth worker in a church to be sacked because it is found that they are gay, even though they are doing a perfectly good job, and that there need be no proportionality.

**John Mason** (Glasgow, East) (SNP): I must challenge the hon. Gentleman on his use of the word “acceptable”. Many churches and religious organisations think that what they believe and what they do are inherently tied together, and it is impossible to say that someone is doing a job acceptably if they are working against the beliefs of that organisation.

**Dr. Harris:** There is a fundamental problem. It is absolutely right that religious organisations should have the exemption for jobs that the Government tried to set out clearly in paragraph 2(8) of schedule 9, which Lords amendment 95 removes. The Government amended the original poorly framed provision to make it even clearer, and it stated that the right to discriminate should be restricted essentially to priests and people who directly teach scripture. Youth workers, however, do not do that, and it is wrong to destroy the career of someone who has devoted their life to helping children purely on the basis of their sexual orientation when that has nothing to do with the delivery of their job.

It is unfortunate that the Government are facing infraction proceedings even on the existing measure, after we removed their attempt, as they put it, to clarify. The Government are right and the Conservatives are wrong about this being a sufficient narrowing of the exemption. That is why we opposed it. We thought the exemption should have been narrowed somewhat. The fact that the Government ended up being defeated on a measure that did not achieve what it should have achieved shows that this part of the Bill has been badly handled.

At this stage of the Parliament and at this hour, it is inappropriate to seek to divide the House on these matters, but I hope it is clear that the Liberal Democrats believe that although this is a good Bill, and that many of the measures in it are welcome, it could have gone much further in achieving the equality that many of us say we want to see, and which many of us believe is needed.

10.45 pm

**John McDonnell** (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I shall speak to amendment 1, and welcome the Government’s acceptance of the Lords amendment. The background to it has been described, but the process started with representations received by a number of us from constituents and organisations such as the Dalit Solidarity Network and a series of temples across the country, led by the Shri Guru Ravi Dass temple in Southall, where representations were made to us about some of the horrendous implications of caste discrimination transposed from the Indian subcontinent to this country.

The matter was raised on Second Reading by Members across the House, and debated in Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton, South-West (Rob Marris) tabled an amendment to outlaw caste discrimination immediately. The Government were not convinced that there was sufficient evidence, so I tabled an amendment that would give Ministers the power to

[John McDonnell]

outlaw caste discrimination when they became convinced of the evidence. That was taken up in the Lords and has been accepted by the Government.

It is rare for a Back Bencher—certainly for this Back Bencher—to convince the Government about an amendment to a Bill, and I am grateful that they accepted this one. I am grateful for the co-operation that we received from the Front Bench and the flexibility that has been shown. The legislation will tackle discriminatory practices in this country which have scarred the lives of many people, and continue to do so, in all their activities in our society. The Minister said that the report could be produced within months. There will be further consultation on the basis of the evidence in the report, and the measure will be subject to an affirmative resolution of the House.

One of the issues in the first round of consultations was that the scope of those consultations did not extend to the wide range of organisations that represent the victims of caste discrimination. The consultation largely took into account the views of organisations representing some of those who have been involved in caste discrimination. I urge upon the Government, and subsequent Governments, the need for care. When the evidence report is produced, there should be thorough and exhaustive consultation with a wide range of organisations, particularly those such as the Shri Guru Ravi Dass temples, that represent people in our society who have hard and solid experience of caste discrimination over generations.

I hope that a speedy report can be brought to the House through the affirmative resolution procedure, and that at long last we can put into our unwritten constitution laws, such as exist in the written Indian constitution, that will outlaw caste discrimination once and for all, and give some protection to those who have suffered from it for generation after generation.

**John Mason:** I echo the welcome that has been given to the Bill. It is a good Bill, and it is good that it will get through before Dissolution. There was room for improvement, and some has been achieved via the House of Lords. The inclusion of caste is welcome, and on other matters the Government have given the assurances and the clarification that were sought in Committee and elsewhere. On employment, we certainly want employers to get the best person for the job, but I welcome the restrictions on what they can ask before people are appointed.

I am happy to agree with the hon. Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Dr. Harris) that many measures are not as strong as they could have been, and I agree that the Bill could have been stronger on many issues. It could have done with a purpose clause, as we said in Committee, and with guidance on how the courts are to deal with conflicts between different protected characteristics. As we also said in Committee, there is some concern among religious schools that when there is a conflict between two different protected characteristics, religion comes last. I accept that in Committee the Solicitor-General gave an assurance that that was not the Government's intention, but it would have been good to say so in the Bill.

On a personal note, I welcome Lords amendments 93 to 95, and in particular amendment 95, the subject of which has been debated at length in Committee and on

the Floor of the House. The wider religious public felt that the Bill represented a tightening of the previous legislation, whatever the Government might have said, and it would have incorporated positions that the Government had not intended to include. Youth workers were originally mentioned in the explanatory notes, and some did not realise that such workers are in many ways junior ministers, or junior priests, who lead young people spiritually in just the same way as ministers, priests and pastors.

Within church and religious organisations, belief and practice are seen as important and tied together, and to say, "Such and such behaviour has nothing to do with the job," shows a lack of understanding about what religious people think. It was disappointing that the Government did not give ground on those issues before, but I welcome their acceptance of the idea now.

That leaves in the air the relationship between the Church and the state, but that question is somewhat wider than our debate about the Bill. However, the state must be wary of becoming too involved in religious groups and how religious organisations operate. The danger is that many law-abiding citizens may be unnecessarily antagonised, and we do not want to go there. However, I welcome the Bill as a whole, and the amendments.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** I shall be brief, because there is not much time and others might wish to say something. First I thank all those who helped to support the agreement on the amendment about discrimination by caste and descent, otherwise known as discrimination against Dalit peoples. There has been a long campaign by many people, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) has played a big part in that, as have others. I was pleased that the Lords finally inserted that measure, because it at least recognises that in this country there is a problem of discrimination by caste and descent. It is a tiny part of the massive amount of discrimination that exists throughout the world, whereby 200 million lower-caste individuals are systematically discriminated against. In parts of the sub-continent they are killed, they live awful lives, do awful jobs, end up fundamentally underachieving, and their children are unable to receive a proper education.

I say that because India has, on the face of it, a constitution that absolutely outlaws such discrimination, yet it goes on because of the lack of representation, the authorities' lack of will to investigate and a lack of any ability to prosecute those who perpetrate it. Discrimination in this country is nothing like as bad as that, but there is evidence of systematic discrimination, and I am pleased that the Minister has ordered an investigation. I am extremely disappointed that the Equality and Human Rights Commission refused to undertake it, because its function is to investigate discrimination, particularly when there is prima facie evidence that it should be investigated. I hope that the commission will mend its ways on that matter.

If and when we reach the point at which regulations must be introduced, I hope that the House will support them. Above all, I hope that any cases that are brought to the attention of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, or any other competent authorities at that point, will be investigated, and where necessary prosecuted, so that we are quite clear that in this country we are not

prepared to accept such discrimination, and that in the councils of the world, British Government representatives will act accordingly to ensure that it is outlawed worldwide. Such discrimination is monstrous, and it is practised against a large number of people. I am pleased that we have made this progress today, and I thank the Minister for it.

**Mr. Cash:** I would like to draw the Minister's attention to the explanatory notes and the fact that, in relation to the Human Rights Act 1998, Baroness Royall of Blaisdon has said she believes that the Bill's provisions are compatible with convention rights. In respect of that, I should like to comment briefly on and quote from the recent important and seminal speech by the Lord Chief Justice himself about these matters. He said:

"The primary responsibility for saving the common law system of proceeding by precedent is primarily a matter for us as judges... Are we becoming so focussed on Strasbourg and the Convention that instead of incorporating Convention principles within and developing the common law accordingly as a single coherent unit, we are allowing the Convention to assume an unspoken priority over the common law? Or is it that we are just still on honeymoon with the Convention? We must beware. It would be a sad day if the home of the common law lost its standing as a common Law authority."

I too make those points, and many others are contained in that very important speech made by the Lord Chief Justice on 17 March. Mr. Geoffrey Robertson QC has made similar remarks with regard to the European convention. Such concerns lie at the heart of a lot of this legislation. Many of us are very keen on the idea of fairness and equality, but should that stem exclusively from abstract principles adjudicated in Strasbourg? As the Lord Chief Justice also points out, there is now an overlap with the European Court of Justice; I have been warning about that in the House for several years.

We are moving in a direction that has been referred to by the Lord Chief Justice, Geoffrey Robertson QC and Lord Hoffmann in a speech that he made some months ago. Many distinguished Members and former Members of the House of Lords are demonstrating that we Conservatives are right in questioning the extent to which the human rights culture, as expressed most recently by the Joint Committee on Human Rights, is going way off track.

**The Solicitor-General:** With the leave of the House, Mr. Speaker, I shall reply to the debate. As ever, the hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr. Harper) has over-argued his case. I hope that he sometimes has pause for thought about how conjuring up surreal incidents of harassment—putting forward examples that have never existed and suggesting that people behave as outrageously as he wants to suggest—can be divisive.

The Liberal Democrats have broadly supported the Bill, and we are glad of that; I am just sorry that the hon. Member for Forest of Dean cannot understand how extreme his views are. The Tories say that they are in favour of the Bill, but they have ended as they began, wanting only to codify and streamline, showing no interest in mobilising the public authorities to tackle further socio-economic inequality and no interest in positive action, and coming out against anything likely to be effective in improving equal pay.

Although at the Dispatch Box the hon. Gentleman no doubt believes that his party is pro-equality, when its Members are off camera they are different, and the

mask slips. His colleagues show him up. Contrary to what has just been asserted, the hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling) undoubtedly said that a bed-and-breakfast trader should be allowed to turn a gay couple away.

The Bill will work only if it is driven and pressed through society. I have listened to all that is said by the hon. Gentleman's colleagues when the mask slips, although he is strong and fair on equality. Older people, women, victims of caste discrimination and the many other people whose lives will be improved by the Bill know perfectly well that the only Government who will drive it forward are the next Labour Government.

*Lords amendment 1 agreed to.*

*Lords amendment 2 agreed to.*

11 pm

*One hour having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on consideration of Lords amendments, the proceedings were interrupted (Programme Order, this day).*

*The Speaker put forthwith the Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Standing Order No. 83F).*

*Lords amendments 3 to 114 agreed to.*

## Business without Debate

### DELEGATED LEGISLATION

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

#### FINANCIAL SERVICES AND MARKETS

That the draft Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (Amendments to Part 18A etc.) Regulations 2010, which were laid before this House on 3 February, be approved.—(*Lyn Brown.*)

*Question agreed to.*

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

#### CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

That the draft National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (Transport) Order 2010, which was laid before this House on 4 March, be approved.—(*Lyn Brown.*)

*Question agreed to.*

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

#### COMPANIES

That the draft Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (Liability of Issuers) Regulations 2010, which were laid before this House on 8 March, be approved.—(*Lyn Brown.*)

*Question agreed to.*

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

#### CRIMINAL LAW

That the draft Al-Qaida and Taliban (Asset-Freezing) Regulations 2010, which were laid before this House on 15 March, be approved.—(*Lyn Brown.*)

*Question agreed to.*

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

## LEGAL SERVICES

That the draft Damages-Based Agreements Regulations 2010, which were laid before this House on 16 March, be approved.—(*Lynne Brown.*)

*Question agreed to.*

## PETITIONS

**Equitable Life (Hornsey and Wood Green)**

11.1 pm

**Lynne Featherstone** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (LD):  
The petition states:

The Petition of residents of the constituency of Hornsey and Wood Green in the Greater London region of the U.K. regarding the Government's response to the Parliamentary Ombudsman's reports on Equitable Life,

Declares that the Petitioners either are or they represent or support members, former members or personal representatives of deceased members of the Equitable Life Assurance Society who have suffered maladministration leading to injustice, as found by the Parliamentary Ombudsman in her report upon Equitable Life, ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 16 July 2008 and bearing reference number HC 815; and further declares that the Petitioners or those whom they represent or support have suffered regulatory failure on the part of the public bodies responsible from the year 1992 onwards, but have not received compensation for the resulting losses and outrage.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to uphold the constitutional standing of the Parliamentary Ombudsman by complying with the findings and recommendations of her Report upon Equitable Life.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

[P000736]

**Cosmetics Testing on Animals**

**Mr. Andrew Pelling** (Croydon, Central) (Ind): It is my great pleasure to present my petitions after a very good Member, the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Lynne Featherstone), and that they have been provided for by the very effective campaigning of the vivacious students of Coloma convent high school.

The first petition states:

The Petition of the students of Coloma Convent High School and the people of Croydon,

Declares that cosmetics testing on animals is unethical and should be banned.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to bring in a bill to outlaw the testing of cosmetics on animals.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

[P000818]

**Size Zero Models**

**Mr. Andrew Pelling** (Croydon, Central) (Ind): The second petition states:

The Petition of the students of Coloma Convent High School and the people of Croydon,

Declares that size zero models set an unhealthy and unrealistic example to young girls, and influence the incidence of eating disorders such as bulimia and anorexia.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to introduce industry guidelines for the responsible employment of healthy models and guidelines for the media to ensure the responsible portrayal of women.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.

[P000817]

## Gladys Taulo

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—(Lyn Brown.)

11.5 pm

**Miss Ann Widdecombe** (Maidstone and The Weald) (Con): I think that I should apologise to the House on two counts. The first is because I said only a couple of days ago that I was making my last speech in this House, but that was before I realised that I was going to be lucky in the lottery at the last moment. The second reason why I should apologise, if not to the House, certainly to the Minister, is because this is the second time within seven days that I have caused him to be detained late at night to answer a constituency case.

This serious case demonstrates a malaise that is only too prevalent in official life—I hope that I may put it that way—in this country. I do not even say that that is solely the fault of this Government, because this malaise has been creeping up on us for a long while. However, this Government's obsession with targets and driving everything by numbers has meant that the malaise has intensified under them. The case of Mrs. Gladys Taulo is a very good illustration of that, because when officials are told that they have to work to targets and they have to secure a certain number of removals or a certain percentage of enforcements, it means that they are not going to spend a great deal of time on one very difficult case if they can push the score up by dealing with 20 easy cases in the same period. So, instead of pursuing immigration cases involving those people who have deliberately defied our law, who have come to this country unlawfully and who have disappeared and are very hard to trace, officials find it much easier to go for the people whose whereabouts are known and who are operating and functioning in society according to the law but who have committed, sometimes inadvertently, some technical breach of the law. They may not even have committed that, and such is the case of Mrs. Gladys Taulo.

Let me say at the outset that when I raised the other case, that of my constituents Mr. and Mrs. Acott, in this place last week the Minister was extremely encouraging towards me and I am very hopeful that that encouragement will result in positive action. I hope that he will be equally encouraging tonight in respect of the case of Mrs. Taulo. She is a senior care worker who came to this country perfectly lawfully on a work permit in November 2004. She came with a national vocational qualification level 3 qualification and she came to work as a senior carer at Winterwood UK Ltd, trading as Barty nursing home. She did that work in a most satisfactory fashion and she extended her work permit with the same employer—I stress that—in November 2006, when her leave was extended by the Home Office up to November 2009. By November 2009, my constituent had been in this country lawfully on a work permit and had been doing a vital job.

Mrs. Taulo is accompanied by her husband and three children, two of whom are at sensitive stages of schooling. One is 19, but one is 17 and doing A-levels and one is 14 and embarking upon a GCSE course. Therefore, the uncertainty to which the family have become subject, which I shall explain in a moment, is having a disturbing and unsettling effect on them all.

My constituent worked continuously for the employer named on the work permit, but she also took up part-time employment at a nursing home managed by Allied Healthcare Group. Her solicitors have stated clearly to the Home Office that the employment was not for more than 20 hours per week. My constituent never stopped working in all this time for her specified employer, and she only took up part-time work with the other employer. In July 2008, the Home Office intervened in her immigration status and served removal directions on the basis that she should not have taken up her second employment.

There followed a series of appeals that, the Minister will doubtless tell the House, were not successful. Initially, Mrs. Taulo believed that she had been wrong to take up the secondary work, which I stress was over and above her full-time work for the employer named on the work permit. That never changed; the work was secondary to that and taken up outside her normal working hours. She did it because there was a shortage of carers and because the employer very much wanted her to do it. However, she also did it to improve her own position. Considering the number of those who would come here and seek to be maintained at a cost to the public purse, I would say that it is admirable that she sought to add to her income by doing a useful job in exactly the same field as, and over and above, her main job covered by the work permit.

Mrs. Taulo worked for only one other nursing home, so it is not as though she was down with an agency and working all hours—that nursing home was managed by the Allied Healthcare Group—and she worked, as I said, for fewer than 20 hours a week. She carried on working a full week with her specified employer. Initially, she believed that she should not have done that, but in fact she has been advised that, according to immigration law, it is permitted for a work permit holder to take up supplementary employment, provided it is for not more than 20 hours a week and that it is outside his or her normal working hours. Those conditions were met in the case of my constituent.

Mrs. Taulo and her solicitors say—and on the information available to me, I would say—that she has not breached paragraphs 128 to 130 of the immigration rules relevant to work permit holders. Nor has she failed to observe any condition of leave to enter or remain, and therefore she is not a suitable person to have removal proceedings taken against her. Yet, everybody has been obdurate, including the Home Office, in insisting on this removal. [*Interruption.*] The Minister looks as though he is about to dispute that statement, so I shall look forward to hearing from him; I would love him to dispute it. If he is not obdurate, if he has changed his mind and if the previous letters that we have on file from the Home Office are all wrong, I will rejoice and regard it as a splendid ending to my time in the House, and I shall give the Minister all credit and say what a reasonable Minister, in this instance at any rate, he has been. I hope very much that the Home Office has not been obdurate, but according to all our papers and previous replies, it has been.

Discretion and common sense should prevail. I would say that kindness also should prevail, given the situation with the family: the husband is receiving health care and two of the children are at vital stages of their education. However, discretion and common sense, above all, should prevail. Had Mrs. Taulo departed from her

[Miss Ann Widdecombe]

named employer and been working all over the place, and had she departed from the field of work on the basis of which she was allowed to enter this country in the first place, I would say that the Home Office was justified, but she has not been doing any of that. To insist on removal, which is a tremendously serious step, is not only unfair to the family but completely detrimental to those who depend on that lady for the job that she does. If she goes, who will be the carer? Who else is going to do the job? Someone else coming in on a work permit. It would be in everyone's interest—including the public interest—if that lady and her family were allowed to stay, having been in this country quite lawfully since 2004. I very much look forward to the Minister's reply, and if he wants to throw in two lines on the Acott case as well, I would be delighted.

11.15 pm

**The Minister for Borders and Immigration (Mr. Phil Woolas):** I should like to offer more than the traditional congratulations to the right hon. Member for Maidstone and The Weald (Miss Widdecombe) on securing this debate; she has now had two in two weeks. I would like to quote briefly from this week's *House* magazine, in which she has the quote of the week. She says:

"I always imagined that when I was making my last speech and about to depart, I would be sad—instead of which I find my uppermost sentiment is one of profound relief."

I do not know whether she feels that again this evening. I would like to tell her that the House will miss her. She brings the House into good repute. She and I disagree on many matters politically but, as I said the week before last, we agree on more things than people would expect.

I should like to make a partisan point at this stage. The right hon. Lady said that there was a problem with targets in this country, and that we went for the easy cases because of those targets. That is not our policy, however. The criteria that we apply put the harmful cases at the top. The removal of foreign national prisoners is an example. Every day, in some of the tabloid newspapers, we see instances of our fighting exactly those cases, and expending significant resources on doing so. Of course we should apply common sense, and I shall demonstrate how we are doing so, but we cannot run the immigration system on a whim. There are rules and laws that have been passed by the House, and in this particular case the lady in question was outside the rules. Were I to say that I would not enforce them because she was a nice lady, or for some other reason, I would be subject to ridicule.

To continue with my partisan point, I presume that, if the right hon. Lady is against targets, she will be speaking out in the next few weeks against her own party's ridiculous immigration policy, which is based entirely on a target—a cap—that would be damaging. The cap would be applied to tier 1 and tier 2 cases exactly like this one, and people would be excluded not on the basis of common sense but on the basis that the cap had been reached. Whatever the needs of the care sector, for example, no one would be allowed in. Apart from being impractical, that is exactly the kind of policy that brings targets into disrepute. The Opposition criticise us for having targets, but they are proposing just such a policy to replace ours, so I hope that the right hon. Lady will speak out about that.

I also hope that the right hon. Lady will speak out in favour of the enforcement of the rules. She has raised the case of this particular family, and I am allowed to respond. The family is in education, and it is using the national health service. I have no doubt whatever that the lady in question has contributed significantly and that she has paid taxes, but you cannot have it both ways. Well, you can, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because you are the Deputy Speaker, but one cannot have it both ways. One cannot be in favour of controlled and managed migration that does not allow anyone to operate outside the rules or to use the NHS or the education service, but then say that we should not implement the rules.

I shall turn to the specific points of this case, because I am sure that they will be of more interest to the right hon. Lady. Before I move on, I should say that a letter is in the post and on its way—

**Miss Widdecombe:** Is it encouraging?

**Mr. Woolas:** It is not discouraging. We could perhaps talk outside this debate about the way forward, when the right hon. Lady has considered the letter.

Let me turn to the particular case. The right hon. Lady has outlined the background to it. It comes down to the point that a work permit and an extension to it were granted. Then, in 2008, a local immigration team in Kent investigated—not, as I understand it, the specific lady, but the employer. That again meets the right hon. Lady's point about targets, as this did not happen in any way because this lady was a soft target or anything like that. However, she was served with an IS151A, which the right hon. Lady will remember is a notice to a person liable to removal as a worker in breach of condition under section 10 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, which invalidated her work permit. Incidentally and for the record, contrary to the accusation that the Government had an open-door policy at that stage, the 1999 Act toughened up the immigration rules.

Mrs. Taulo was permitted to work for two employers under the terms of her work permit, but only within the hours allowed. There was a breach of the conditions of the work permit, which led to the IS151A. There was a mistake at that stage of the case, which, after my investigations, I have been able to highlight. The order was mistakenly issued on the basis that Mrs. Taulo could not work for both companies. As the right hon. Lady said, that is not the case; it is permissible to work for two or even three employers, as it is the total hours that count. This was correctly served on Mrs. Taulo, however, on the basis of the number of hours she worked.

Mrs. Taulo was advised of her right to an out-of-country appeal against the decision to invalidate the leave. However, an in-country appeal was incorrectly lodged against that decision to curtail her leave—and the decision was not, of course, taken by the UK Border Agency. Leave had not been curtailed; it had been invalidated. I know that the right hon. Lady understands the difference, as she has done this job herself. As there was no in-country right of appeal, the appeal was invalid and it should have been struck out. I have no information to explain why it was not struck out or why the appeal continued, but in any case the judge dismissed the appeal—the right hon. Lady predicted this part of my speech—upholding the decision to serve the IS151A, stating that

removal would not breach article 8, as it had been claimed. Further appeal was lodged in the High Court. It is at this point that the public start to get frustrated by the seemingly endless delays in the courts, but on 10 October 2008 Mrs. Taulo was deemed appeal rights exhausted and liable to removal.

In February 2009, Mrs. Taulo was interviewed in connection with her children's education and it was agreed that it would not be appropriate to pursue enforcement action because of the timing of the A-levels being studied by one of the children. We provide that flexibility. Again, I am heavily criticised, as is anyone holding my position, for providing that flexibility, which is sometimes difficult to explain to constituents.

However, let us think about moving forwards, which is what the right hon. Lady wants to hear. Mrs. Taulo is permitted to make an in-country, online application under tier 2 of the points-based system. That procedure will tell her immediately whether she has enough points to succeed. Mrs. Taulo's employers would need to obtain a certificate of sponsorship if they have not so already, although I imagine they would have in this sector of work. The UK Border Agency will take no enforcement action against Mrs. Taulo or her family while her application is processed or during the three months before any of her children sit any final exams—GCSEs, A-levels or their equivalent.

I hope that is helpful, but I do not intend to go into too much detail on the procedure. It is best if we can proceed on the basis I have set out, if, of course, that is what the lady in question and her family want to do. If that is the case, for my part, I will ensure that no enforcement action is taken in the meantime.

Turning to the wider policy, to be fair to the right hon. Lady, she did not specifically criticise UKBA—indeed, she did not even mention it. She did mention the culture of targets, however, and any person with common sense understands the point she makes. The agency does not just bear that in mind: through our board and management structures, it looks to see that there are no unintended consequences of the application of targets. We apply the criteria in such a way that the most harmful cases are handled first, which normally means those where there is criminal activity or the fear of it, or where there is the actuality or fear of violence within the family. We also expedite cases where it is relatively easy to remove, because there is a wider saving to the taxpayer in that. However, I should emphasise that in this case the lady was not targeted, as the impression may have been given.

One advantage of the points-based system for temporary work and study is the ability to hold the sponsor to account as well as the visa holder; in this case that was an employer, while in tier 4 cases it would be a college or institution. That system is proving to be successful in managing migration, although at the fringes there are, of course, relatively petty and unintended breaches of the rules. I can only take the right hon. Lady's word for it that in this case there was an unknown or unintended breach—it was to do with the hours and not the fact that there were two employers—but that takes us into a difficult area for public policy management where rules are involved. We are dealing with significant numbers of people in the work permit system, and there are bound to be such cases at the edges.

**Miss Widdecombe:** Does the Minister not agree that where there is a small and possibly unintended breach, a proportionate response is simply to let the person know of the breach, to require them to desist from it and to warn them that any future such breach will result in removal, rather than to move in a heavy-handed fashion to remove them in the first place?

**Mr. Woolas:** The right hon. Lady asks a difficult question of the enforcement officers and I would defend the enforcement officers, who use proportionate action. I remind the House that this lady was not removed, even though it was within the power of the officers to remove her. Of course, the work permit would have been invalid by now in any event. What pains me—and not just in this case—is the use of the legal system when a conversation and good advice might better solve the problem for all concerned.

I am just about out of time, but I was saying that the sponsorship system allows such enforcement. Of course, we are dealing with an area where rules are extremely complicated by their very nature. As they bed in, we will increasingly see the benefits of the system.

I thank the right hon. Lady for the courtesy that she has shown. I hope that this is not my last speech in the House of Commons—although the good people of Oldham, East and Saddleworth will decide that—but, whatever the outcome of the election, it has been a pleasure to work with her.

*Question put and agreed to.*

11.29 pm

*House adjourned.*



## Westminster Hall

Tuesday 6 April 2010

[MR. MIKE WEIR *in the Chair*]

### Gang Crime (London)

*Motion made, and Question proposed, That the sitting be now adjourned.—(Mr. Hanson.)*

9.30 am

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak on gang crime in London. This will be my last speech of the current Parliament, and I am fortunate indeed that it is on a subject on which I have worked in different ways all my political career. One of the first things I did as a young woman interested in wider society was help out at a youth club in Paddington, so the issues have always been close to my heart. It is an important subject also because it speaks to social cohesion, to our sense of community and to what is happening to our young people.

Gang crime is of great concern to all our constituents in London, but it would be wrong to move on and discuss my concerns without talking first about what my Government have done on the subject, not least because it will save the Minister from having to go over it. Gangs are part of the wider serious youth violence agenda, and my Government have spent more than £17 million on that agenda since September 2007. Through my Government's work, we have seen tougher enforcement and sentences and new legislation to tackle violent crime and gangs.

The Government have also introduced gang injunctions, which enable local authorities and the police to tackle over-18s involved in gang-related violence by banning them from meeting other gang members, wearing gang colours, hanging around in certain locations and owning dangerous dogs. We are looking to extend that tool to 14 to 17-year-olds. Under a Labour Government we have seen a tightening of the law on gun crime and the introduction of a minimum sentence of five years for possession of an illegal firearm. I have campaigned successfully for a ban on replica weapons, because much of the gun crime in London is perpetrated not with real weapons, but with replica guns that have been rebored for shooting.

The Metropolitan police have also put in place various operations to deal with gun, gang and knife crime, including Operation Blunt, which was set up after the murder of Robert Levy in Hackney in 2005, and I pay tribute to the work his father has done since then on gangs, guns and knives. We have consistently provided funding for local institutions best placed to work on measures that help young people to leave gangs. In April 2010 the Government are pledging a further £5 million to tackle knife crime and serious youth violence.

Having set out my Government's achievements on the issue, and not wishing to detract from what they have done, I will say that we all know that it is not just a question of money, and certainly not just a question of legislation. Some of the legislation to which I have

referred has not been used very much so far. It is a multi-dimensional subject, and I want to touch on some of those dimensions in my remarks.

As a consequence of the work that the Government and the Metropolitan police have done, we have seen an overall drop in crime in London. Statistics from the Metropolitan Police Authority from the 12 months to February 2010, when compared with figures for the previous year, appear to show that knife crime in London has decreased, as has youth violence.

The position in my constituency is similar. In fact, the figures seem to demonstrate that crime in Hackney is at its lowest level for 10 years, and I would like to take the opportunity to praise publicly the police in my constituency, particularly the borough commander, Steve Bending, for their hard work in achieving that milestone. The figures show that the borough has seen a 7 per cent. reduction in knife crime and an 8.6 per cent. reduction in serious youth violence.

However, as a former Home Office official, I know that it is possible to debate the figures. Such statistics are sometimes a matter of art, rather than science. Fear of gang crime—not just the fear of being the victim, but the fear that mothers have about how safe their children are on the streets—has never been higher in my constituency, despite the welcome drop shown by the statistics. When we read about gang crime in the papers, we read about the victims and the gang members are often demonised. None the less, for every gang member and every victim of a gang member there are mothers, parents, families and communities that have been traumatised, and that is what makes it such a widespread concern.

**Simon Hughes** (North Southwark and Bermondsey) (LD): I pay tribute to the hon. Lady for securing the debate and for the work she has done on the matter, as I have had the privilege of doing some of that work with her. Does she agree that it would help hugely, particularly in relation to the fear of crime, if we could get the statistics agreed politically, as it were, and thereby avoid the alarmist reporting, sometimes by political parties and candidates, that makes the situation sound and feel worse than it is? If we could get that sort of agreement even in London between all the parties as a starting point in the next Parliament, we would at least reduce some of the alarmist material that is put through people's doors and read in the papers.

**Ms Abbott:** That is an interesting and constructive point. In my speech I will try to distinguish between the fear of crime and the actuality of crime, which is why I started by setting out the statistics. One of the things that whips up the public on gang crime is the reporting of it, partly by some of our colleagues—it is true of all parties—who sometimes slip into using the issue to whip up fear and detract attention from the welcome actual drop in crime. If we could move forward in the next Parliament, perhaps with the leadership of the Metropolitan Police Authority, to have agreed figures for crime in London, that would at least provide a sensible basis for debate.

We hear much about knife crime in London and read about it in both the local and national papers, but the national press rarely mentions the fact that the knife crime capital of this country is Glasgow and has been for many years, because knives have traditionally been

[Ms Abbott]

the way in which Glasgow criminals settle their disputes. The impression we might have, however, is that the knife crime capital of the country is Southwark, Hackney or Lambeth, so to be able to go forward on the basis of mutually agreed figures would be a real step forward.

I warn against alarmism and point to the welcome drops in crime shown in the official figures, but sadly the incidence of gun crime, rape and offences of violence against the person is on the rise in my constituency, as it is in the whole of London. Those are specific crimes, so to highlight them is not to say that crime as a whole is rising in London, because clearly it is not, but those specific crimes are rising. It is not unreasonable to suggest that gun crime, rape and offences of violence against the person are sometimes related to gangs.

It is not just a question of statistics. Recently we saw an extraordinary incident of alleged gang crime in Victoria station, just a few hundred yards from here. It appears that two gangs converged on the station and, in plain sight of hundreds of commuters, decided to take their feud and warfare to another level. Commuters in Victoria station witnessed a 15-year-old boy being stabbed in the chest in the ticket hall during the rush hour. Witnesses say that the culprits were wearing school uniform. As many as 12 young people could face charges in what is believed to have been a pre-arranged fight in which children turned up armed with knives.

I ask Members to pause and think about that. We all know about schoolboy and schoolgirl angst and tensions. We all know about schoolboys fighting and, perhaps, about gangs, but what in the culture of this city makes gangs of schoolboys and schoolgirls feel able to stab each other in plain sight during the rush hour? Does that not suggest that we have moved on from the situation 10 or 20 years ago to a very different and alarming situation in which people's loyalty to their gang, their determination to gain respect and their disdain for wider society overrides the caution that kept young people from having knife fights in plain sight, even a decade ago?

Sadly, even in Hackney, in my constituency, we have seen some unfortunate incidents of gang crime. I have with me the latest edition of the *Hackney Gazette*. The title on the front page is, "The Scourge of Teen Violence". Further on in the paper, an article states:

"Gun and knife crime on Hackney's streets reached a terrifying peak last week in three days of violence in which a young footballer was stabbed to death and teenagers were targeted in two separate shootings."

One of those people was Godwin Lawson, a 17-year-old promising footballer, who was stabbed to death in Amhurst Park, Stamford Hill, in my constituency, in the early hours of last Saturday. Another incident saw shots fired in broad daylight while parents collected their children from a nursery in Allen road, Stoke Newington. Witnesses reported seeing two young people, one carrying a gun and one brandishing a knife, chasing another youth who was forced to take sanctuary in a shop. Just the week before, a young Turkish mother was shot dead at close range after answering a knock on the door to her mother's flat.

Something about these incidents—not just the violence as such but the brazenness and the fact that young people feel no fear and, paradoxically, almost that they

have nothing to live for—is chilling. It represents a step change from the kind of schoolboy fighting and incidents with which many of us will be familiar.

Gun crime is a particular issue in London, partly because we seem to have more gangs. However, we have to be careful about what we define as a gang. A group of young men is not a criminal gang just because they are hanging about on the street. Many of those young guys hang about on the street because they live in two-bedroom flats with half a dozen siblings. Hanging about on the street is what they know, and they make a practice of looking as frightening as possible when actually they are not about serious criminal business. None the less, there are real criminal gangs in the city.

In 2007, it was said that 169 separate gangs were operating in London, and that Hackney, in my borough, had the most gangs—a total of 22. Again, we need to be careful. Not all the groupings are criminal gangs. The London-wide figure of 169 in 2007 was down on the figure of 200 in 2005, but it is still alarming.

I live on Middleton road in Hackney. One end of the road is dominated by the Holly Street gang—it is the gang next door to me—and the other end is dominated by the London Fields gang. I remember on my way home one evening talking to a young boy who was complaining that there was nothing to do in Hackney. I asked him, "What do you mean there is nothing to do? The council has just built a brand new swimming pool in London Fields." He said, "But you don't understand. For me to walk from here"—we were at my end of the road—"up to the London Fields lido means going into the territory of the London Fields gang, and I just can't do that."

One can exaggerate the issue of postcode gangs, but they are real, and they affect how young people, certainly in my borough, feel able to live their lives. They are real to women I know who are frightened that, if their son is waiting at a bus stop or walking down the street and is perceived by other young men to be someone from another postcode who should not be there, he will be at risk. They create all kinds of issues in organising youth provision, because one can put such provision in an area and think that it is well placed, but people from a particular postcode who might be physically near it will not come. Postcode gangs are a genuinely new phenomenon, and young people are terrified of crossing the street or riding a bus into another postcode for fear of stepping into another gang's territory.

Some of these gangs—this is certainly the case in Hackney—operate in areas next to houses worth £1 million. One of the glories of London is that it still has a diverse and mixed community, but, unlike some other parts of the world, it means that we cannot say that gang culture is something that operates at some remove, in some remote ghetto at the edge of the city, as it does in Paris, for instance. In inner London, one is never that far from a postcode where some gang is operating, so gangs and the related youth criminality are not something from which people in more prosperous parts of the city can turn away.

Why do young people join gangs? As ever, young people join gangs, even harmless social gangs, because they want a sense of belonging. They want mates, and they want to be able to function socially. Some of us will remember "Just William" and the outlaws. That little gang was perhaps the archetypal gang: young men

gathered together, glorying in their sense of togetherness and keeping just this side of what grown-ups would like. Unfortunately, the Just William kind of gang has morphed into the gang problem that we see on the streets of London.

What is the source of the problem? I would say that the underlying issue is education. By and large, young men who are at school or college doing AS or A-levels are not taking part in gangs. However, those who have aspirations and are trying to study may get caught up on the fringes of gang culture. That has happened to the children of friends of mine. Friends have been shocked to discover that their sons, who are intelligent, and who are studying and working hard, are involved on the fringes of gang culture because if they did not appear to be willing to relate to the gang culture in their school or community, they would be outsiders. They would feel that they did not belong. Any hon. Member who is a parent will know that there is nothing more important to young boys than belonging.

There is the social thing, but there is also education, as I said. There is no question but that the continuing achievement gap between black boys and the wider school population has some bearing on the involvement of African-Caribbean boys in gangs. That is why, since the 1990s, I have worked on the issue. I have convened think-tanks and organised conferences. I set up a project, London schools and the black child, and for the past seven years have organised an awards ceremony here in Parliament for London's top-achieving black children in order to reward and try to highlight those young people, both male and female, who are bucking the trend, going to school and university, getting top grades and studying law, medicine and so on.

However, the stereotype of black young people and gangs is pernicious. I organised my last awards ceremony for October 2009. We had Christine Ohuruogu, the Olympic gold medallist, and several television celebrities handing out awards. When we tried to interest the *Evening Standard* in the event by saying that it was to be held at the House of Commons, that we would have celebrities and that we would give awards to children who had 11 A\*s at A-level, we encountered great resistance. Finally, it rang and asked, "Are any of these young people ex-gang members?" We said, "No", and it said that it was not interested. In other words, young people are a story if they are a stereotype, but a young person working hard and trying to do well at school does not fit the story. If we are going to deal with gang culture, we have to continue to address the educational gap faced by young black men and, increasingly, young Turkish men at school. The surest way of keeping young people out of the gang culture is showing them a way forward through education and the wider society.

I would not want to leave this subject without saying what Hackney schools are doing on this issue. Last month I visited Tyssen primary school, which is targeting underachieving Afro-Caribbean students with an innovative programme that engages them by using Nintendo DS "Brain Training", which has been successfully driving up their results, particularly in maths. Other schools in the area, including Hackney's first academy, Mossbourne, under the inspired leadership of Sir Michael Wilshaw, are working with and driving our young people of all colours to get some of the best educational results in the country.

Educational underachievement is an underlying issue in respect of gang culture. Another issue is the lack of role models, which the Government have addressed with their REACH programme of role models. None the less, the best role models are those people see in their own family. Both my parents came here from Jamaica and both of them left school at 14. When my brother and I were children our father went out to work every day God sent and, on a Friday, brought home his wage packet to my mother. That was our model of a real black man—a man who went out to work and looked after his family. He may have been a bit harsh and strict, but he had an unbending notion of financial responsibility. Sadly, in the estates around me in Hackney there are communities of young people who do not have male-headed households and do not see men or women going out to work every day. A father or mother, or a relative, going out to work and taking their responsibilities seriously is the most important role model for many of our young people—not some remote celebrity.

I am not saying—I would be the last person to say—that single mothers are the basis of this problem. I am a single parent myself, as are many of my friends, and we are rightly proud of our children. None the less, there are whole estates where hardly anyone is going out to work regularly, and that is a problem. To be fair, the Government have sought to address this issue. However, the absence of male role models is a serious problem.

As well as the more general absence of male role models, it is important to get more men into primary schools. I have visited a number of primary schools in my constituency in recent months and, with some exceptions, there is an absence of men in the classroom. All the evidence suggests that young black men, particularly—and, I suspect, working class young men more generally—need to see men in the classroom; men taking education seriously. Even if teachers cannot be recruited, men could come and read to them, making a marked difference to their aspirations and their notions of masculinity.

I remember working with some American academics in the 1990s who said that to make a difference in respect of black men underachieving one had to get them when they were under 11, get men in the classroom and tie that in with activities in the wider community. Lord Adonis was interested in that when he was Schools Minister. I attended meetings with him to discuss what we could do about getting more black male classroom teachers. Whoever wins the forthcoming election needs to address that issue, because it is a key component in giving our young men—both black young men and white working class young men—the role models that they can aspire to.

**Simon Hughes:** I agree. There are some encouraging signs. I chair the governing body of a primary school in Bermondsey and the head told me that more men are willing to apply to be primary school teachers and to do other jobs, partly because lots of people who had high-flying jobs in the City are not able to do them any more and partly because people are discovering that a career chasing money is not fulfilling. Lots of people are looking for a career change. There is the beginning of a realisation that one of the most valuable jobs that can be done as a man in London is to teach or to work

[*Simon Hughes*]

in schools. We should build on this new sense of responsibility. The hon. Lady is right. The next Government need to prioritise that. The local councils, all of which will be re-elected in May, need to make that a priority, too.

**Ms Abbott:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reminding me of this. Just recently there has been an uptick in the numbers of men going into schools. That is important.

One underlying issue in relation to gang crime, which is obvious but not often stated, is the high levels of unemployment in the inner city. Unemployment rates in my constituency are higher than the average: there is 8.8 per cent. unemployment there, which is the equivalent of more than 5,000 people. I remind hon. and right hon. Members that the figures are almost certainly an underestimate: many people are not counted at all because they do not even bother to sign on. The unemployment rates in Hackney, and in London as a whole, are higher than in the rest of the country.

It needs to be stressed that it is not just about overall levels of unemployment. When I was a child growing up in Paddington, before the days of Hugh Grant and the “Notting Hill” film, all the men in my life worked, often in light engineering and factories. In the 1960s and 70s, there was still a considerable amount of light engineering and factory work—my father was a welder, for example—and blue collar employment. In other words employment suitable for males without formal qualifications was available. In the past 20 years manufacturing and blue collar employment for males in London has collapsed. Whereas my father became a welder and had apprentices, even though he left school at 14, and was proud of being able to support his family, increasingly young men, both black and white, look around and do not see employment opportunities for them unless they get formal qualifications. It is much easier now for women than for men in the workplace, which is why I focus on education. But let us not forget that the collapse of male employment in London has helped create the problem that we see. That is not to say that because people are unemployed they are a criminal or should be a gang member, but it is part of the context.

Another issue behind the rising gang crime is the rise in materialism in the past 20 years. People want the bling, the clothes, the jewellery and the designer labels, and they want it now. There is no notion of deferred gratification among many of our young people. They watch MTV and music videos. They want glamour, glitz and materialism now and society appears to teach them that they can have it.

Things can be done about employment, but I would not want to leave the issue of employment without making a point about the Olympics, which were sold to those of us in inner London and east London—the Olympic boroughs in particular—as a way of providing employment and economic regeneration for people in the east end of London. I was shocked to find out a few weeks ago that of all the hundreds of apprentices on the Olympic park only one—just one—is from Hackney. I would not like to think how few of the apprentices are from ethnic minorities. If the Government are serious about these issues they must take steps, even at this stage, to ensure that proportionate numbers of the

apprentices on the Olympic park, not even the skilled men, come from deprived boroughs like my own and that appropriate numbers come from the ethnic minority communities.

Before drawing my remarks to a close, I want to touch on the changing face of gangs in London. I am an east end MP, so I cannot talk about gangs without mentioning the Krays or the Richardsons. Historically, criminal gangs in London were white criminal gangs—that is why we remember the Krays, the Richardsons and so on. In more recent times, particularly if one reads the papers, many gangs have been African and Afro-Caribbean, although there is also a strong multicultural element.

Sadly, in Hackney we have had an issue with Turkish-Kurdish gangs. Overall, the Turkish-Kurdish community plays an important role in London. It is a huge contributor, and has helped to rebuild and regenerate the community with its business and retail activities. Since last August, however, there have been 11 shootings in north London. That has exposed the entire community to bad publicity, and I am concerned about what appears to be a fresh turf war between Turkish-Kurdish gangs based on drugs. Such gangs represent only a tiny minority of the community, but they have been responsible for 11 shootings since August last year. Recently, Hackney police announced an appeal to encourage witnesses to the murder of a Turkish man in Upper Clapton road, Hackney to come forward. A gunman is believed to have entered a venue and fired indiscriminately, suggesting that it was not a targeted hit but a way of sending out a message to a rival gang.

The Turkish-Kurdish community is keen to work with the police on this issue. I recently convened a meeting between the head of the Turkish-Kurdish community, my borough commander and representatives from the local authority. We want to move against this type of criminality, and against some of the retail premises and social clubs that might be implicated in it. I believe that a high-profile, systematic programme of joint action between the police, the council and local stakeholders to close down those few cafes that have been infiltrated by criminals will reassure the wider Turkish-Kurdish community and the community as a whole.

I want to touch briefly on the new issue of young women in gangs. Increasing numbers of young women are joining gangs, not only as the girlfriends of gang members but as gang members at some level. I had a long meeting with a girl who had left the gang culture, and she suggested that there were three types of girls in gangs. First, there were the girlfriends of gang leaders, who had some sort of status; secondly there were girls who were attached to gangs and handed round from gang member to gang member, and thirdly there were what could be called equal opportunity girl gangsters, who had their own girl gangs and were out on the street. Young women are still more likely to be the victims of gang violence than the perpetrators of it, but just as it is wrong to stereotype all gang members as coming from a particular demographic, it is also wrong to stereotype gang problems as being only about boys. We are increasingly seeing girls involved as well.

Not enough support is targeted at women and girls who are involved in gangs, and there is a shocking incidence of rape, sexual violence and exploitation against women and girls who are associated with gangs. Sadly,

for too many gangs, rape has become the weapon of choice against girl gang members and relatives of rival gangs. The crime of gang rape is on the rise in London. That is tragic, and a particular issue in Hackney, Southwark and other inner-London boroughs. It is increasingly carried out by criminal gangs and is linked to various other forms of crime. In his 2008 manifesto, the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, promised to build more rape crisis centres. I want to use this speech to urge him to consider building one in Hackney, because of its high incidence of rape and gang rape.

There is an issue about the use of dogs as weapons. Another matter that does not get enough attention is the failure of the Crown Prosecution Service. A recent set of reports by the Crown Prosecution Inspectorate looked into the performance of the Crown Prosecution Service in boroughs across London. It showed that in too many boroughs, the CPS was deemed to be poor at securing conviction rates, especially in cases where witnesses were likely to be intimidated, such as in gang-related crimes. The reports ruthlessly exposed the failure to deal with gang crime and gang violence in boroughs such as Hackney. I met with the head of the CPS in London and the legal director for the north region, Alison Saunders and Grace Ononiwu, to discuss why that was the case. They told me that there was a lack of staff, but they assured me that they were acting to improve their performance. I will be watching that closely. The police and the community can do their best, but if the Crown Prosecution Service is failing—as recent inspectorate reports seem to suggest—it is letting down the community as a whole.

In closing, I acknowledge what the Government have done, particularly through legislation and by pouring money into initiatives. I acknowledge what has been done by the ex-Mayor of London, Ken Livingston, the present Mayor, Boris Johnson, and the Metropolitan Police Authority in focusing on those issues through initiatives such as Operation Blunt. I acknowledge that figures for crime in London are going down overall. However, the fear not only of being a victim of a gang, but that one's child—male or female—will get caught up in gang-related activity, is a real issue for many of my constituents, whatever their colour, race, class or nationality. It would be remiss of me as a Member of Parliament if I did not bring that matter before the House.

Tackling gang crime in London is complicated and requires a long-term strategy as well as a short-term strategy. There needs to be more focus on young women, both as members of gangs and as victims of gang crime. We need better provision for victims of rape to secure convictions, and the CPS needs to raise its game. Local authorities and the police must work closely together to target venues that are believed to be fronts for illegal operations, and there needs to be a continuing emphasis on closing the achievement gaps between some minorities and the school population as a whole.

Systems should be put in place and funded for young people who wish to leave gangs. Even in the current economic crisis, we must focus on getting young people into work and encouraging them to take up apprenticeships. Something must be done about the Olympic site because its record in providing apprenticeships for the Olympic boroughs is poor. We need stricter rules for those found to be using dogs as a weapon of intimidation. We need a

mix of targeting educational issues and strict enforcement. I speak not only as the Member of Parliament for Hackney, but as a mother and a resident in Hackney, and I want strict enforcement of the law on gangs, and I know that other people do too. Above all, we need a broad strategy that engages with the community as a whole. Only then will we deal with the gang crisis and with the fear of gangs in our midst.

London is a great city; I have lived in it all my life. I was born in London, and it never fails to be a source of pride to me that I lived to become a Member of Parliament in London. It is a great city with many amazing things to its credit, not least the extent to which communities in London manage to live so happily side by side, and the culture and variety that the city offers. It should not be disfigured by the scar of gang crime. Ministers have done much, but there is still much to do.

10.9 am

**Simon Hughes** (North Southwark and Bermondsey) (LD): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Lady, and I repeat my compliments to her about today's debate, the wisdom that she brings to the subject, her personal commitment and the work that she has done in all sorts of ways. At the end of this Parliament, perhaps I can mention specifically the work that she has done with young black men on educational aspiration, and note the annual conference in the Queen Elizabeth conference centre that she organised, as well as other events, some of which I have been privileged to attend. Such things are important in ensuring that every single Londoner—everybody who was born in London or who has come to London—feels that they have an opportunity to succeed, to do well and to be respected by their peers. If youngsters know that they can achieve that outcome, they are likely to target that and not other things.

The normal numbers of people are not here today because people are slightly distracted at the moment. The news tells us that the Prime Minister is probably going to Buckingham palace at this very minute to ask the Queen for a Dissolution, after which we will have a general election. If that is the case, as we expect, crime and the fear of crime will, not surprisingly, be an election issue again in London and elsewhere. That is why, as I said in my first intervention on the hon. Lady, I hope that, whatever differences there are in the next Parliament, and whatever the outcome of the election, we can at least agree on some things and share the facts accurately and well.

The Minister knows the importance of such issues, having been involved in them in different capacities over many years. In the past decade or so, we have had real difficulties with different sets of statistics. The British crime survey statistics and the Home Office statistics do not always say the same thing, with one lot collecting figures on the over-16s, but not the under-16s. It is easy to misrepresent the position and sometimes to exaggerate the problem and increase the fear. I make a pledge that I will work to ensure that those of my colleagues who are elected in London to sit in this place, as well as those who are elected to sit on local councils in London or on the Greater London assembly, work together to try to ensure that we have a common basis of information so that local papers and political parties do not misrepresent things. We should not play on people's fears to win votes or sell newspapers.

[*Simon Hughes*]

I pay tribute to the police in London, who have learned a lot and come a long way in recent years. We had a real struggle in the '80s to get the police to associate with, and relate to, the whole community. The new Metropolitan Police Commissioner, whom I met again the other day, is very focused on these issues, as well as being very practical and very realistic, and that can be seen in his senior management team and the operation of the Trident people and others.

The hon. Lady paid tribute to her borough commander, and I pay tribute to my new borough commander, Wayne Chance, who seems very level-headed and sensible. Commanders understand the importance in all our boroughs of the issues that we are discussing. Although such issues are more important in inner-city boroughs than in outer-London boroughs, they are not just inner-city issues. Boroughs such as Croydon and Enfield have been plagued just as much by gang violence as inner-city boroughs such as Hackney and Southwark.

I also pay tribute to those who have done good work in the Crown Prosecution Service, but I flag up at the beginning my concern that the CPS has not always got its act together and done its job as well as it should have done. I do not want to elaborate, but I simply endorse the hon. Lady's comment that we need a CPS that gets right the difficult balance between the benefit of sometimes prosecuting in the public interest and the benefit of sometimes not prosecuting.

We must ensure that people can have confidence in the criminal justice system. The police are often on the front line of the system, but the system actually includes the police, the CPS and the courts. I have always said that when police commanders are hauled in front of the public to provide answers in London boroughs, the leader of the council, the head of the local CPS and the senior district judge or magistrate should also be in the front line so that the public can see all those who are responsible for criminal justice in our communities.

**Ms Abbott:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is important to put on record the progress that the Metropolitan police have made? I picketed my fair share of police stations in the '80s, and I was never an unthinking admirer of the police, but there is no question but that they have embraced some of these issues, and the quality of the people at the very top of the Metropolitan police has increased exponentially.

**Simon Hughes:** That is certainly true. However, if they read the record of this debate, as I expect they will, I do not want them to go away thinking that there is not more to do. Until the police service is representative of London and looks like London in terms of ethnicity and so on, we will not have the confidence of all Londoners. I still go to too many events where there are very few non-white faces doing the policing. I know that it is not the fault of the police for not trying, but they need to keep pushing. One of the lessons of the Stephen Lawrence murder and inquiry is that we need a different sort of police service. We have moved a long way, but we have a long way yet to go.

The debate is about gang violence, and we have to pause for a minute to reflect on how frightening gang violence is. It is bad enough to be attacked by another

person or by two people, which quite often happens in street robberies, but when a group of people sets on one person—that appeared to be the case at Victoria station last week, where we saw the most dreadful sort of crime—or on each other, that creates fear, pandemonium and bedlam. A few years ago, gangs from the surrounding area used to go to the Surrey Quays shopping centre in my constituency. When they got on the bus together, they frightened the people on the bus, and when they got off the bus, they frightened the people at the bus station. They then went to the shopping centre, and anyone they met was in terror of what they would do as they rampaged around.

Gang crime is a really serious problem, over and above the issues of gun and knife crime. Although it is connected with them, it is a bigger issue. Gang crime requires specific analysis and specific responses, although that does not mean that we should not look at gun crime and knife crime. When I saw the commissioner the other day, it was reassuring to hear that the number of deaths as a result of such crimes had gone down in London. Less reassuringly, however, he told me that the statistics for knife and gun crime in the current year appear to have gone up again, which is troubling—it troubles him and it should trouble us. One troubling trend in recent years has been that the age of the young people involved in such crimes has gone down.

I was privileged to take part in the Home Affairs Committee inquiry into knife crime; the hon. Lady will certainly be aware of it and may well have participated. The Committee had its first seminar in London on 17 November 2008 at the YMCA in Stockwell, and I and others gave evidence at the Chairman's invitation. I commend to those who read the record of this debate the Committee's seventh report, which came out on 2 June last year and includes a report of that seminar. I want to put on record a couple of the Committee's conclusions and recommendations, many of which deserve attention and a response.

The first point obviously relates to knife possession, but is part of the wider picture. The report states:

“The 2008 MORI Youth Survey indicated that 31 per cent.—nearly a third—

“of 11-16 year olds in mainstream education and 61 per cent. of excluded young people had carried a knife at some point over the course of the previous year”.

A third of young people in mainstream education and two thirds of those who were excluded—in special schools or other places—had carried a knife. The Home Office survey two years before said that only 3 per cent. of 10 to 25-year-olds carried a knife. The truth may lie somewhere between the two, but the legitimate and illegitimate carrying of weapons, particularly knives, which are much easier to find than guns, is significant.

The second thing that the report made clear is that the

“vast majority of young people who carry knives say that they or their peers carry knives to protect themselves”.

That did not used to be the case; people used to carry knives because it was cool and then because they thought that they needed them to keep up with their mates, but now it is for protection. The cause of that is the same as the cause of gang issues: young people need to feel secure. The one thing that would change a youngster's decision to go with a gang would be feeling secure in the

knowledge that they could say, “No thank you, I don’t want to” and that other things in life were more valuable, whether their education, their family life or the respect that they enjoyed in the eyes of their family. We have to get to the root cause of the issue: youngsters’ security.

We must also be careful that we do not confuse and conflate all these issues. When 10-year-old Damilola Taylor was killed in Southwark more than 10 years ago, he was attacked by a group of boys. Some of the attacks, deaths and terrible tragedies that we have seen, are caused by gangs or large groups of people, but some are caused by an individual and some are accidental deaths caused by a fight or act of violence that just got out of hand. Again, we must ensure that we do not misrepresent things.

There have been some very honourable events at the two recent games between Charlton and Millwall, two football teams in south-east London. By the way, I am happy to say that the first game was a draw and the second one was won by Millwall. At those games, parents of youngsters who are supporters of the two clubs came together, with the support of the two clubs, to win the argument among the fans and to ensure that people understood that the sort of violence that we are discussing today is unacceptable and is, in fact, no good. The methods that those parents used were really effective, but they did not all relate to gang crime. They related to the violence that is sometimes reflected in gang crime, and sometimes reflected in other activities.

I pay tribute to those who do that type of campaigning, because the families and peer groups of gang members and former gang members are the most effective people in winning the argument against gangs on the streets.

**Ms Abbott:** The hon. Gentleman raises a very important point about the role of parents. I was very shocked by one parent whom I saw at an advice surgery. A young boy came in and said to me that he was in trouble for carrying a knife at school. He told me that he had carried it to defend himself and his mother said, “Yes, he did carry it to defend himself and I allowed him to carry it to school to defend himself”. The hon. Gentleman has raised a very important point about the role of parents and emphasised the importance of educating parents and working with them. Parents should know that there can be no circumstances in which they should collude with their child’s taking a knife to school and I said that to that mother.

**Simon Hughes:** The hon. Lady is right.

Let me just select five more sentences from different parts of the conclusions to the Home Affairs Committee’s report on knife crime and then I will go on to say some more about gang crime. The Home Affairs Committee is obviously a cross-party Committee and its report found:

“Sensationalist media coverage of stabbings has contributed to this ‘arms race’.”

That effectively repeats what I said at the outset about the importance of providing full and accurate crime data.

The report also found:

“A smaller number of knife-carriers say they carry knives to gain ‘respect’ or street credibility, or because of peer pressure.”

So there is a group in that category, but they are not the largest group of young people who carry knives.

The report goes on:

“Individuals born into social deprivation are more likely to commit violence.”

However, it also says that they are not the only individuals who commit violence and that others from the most respectable and crime-free backgrounds can get dragged into violence.

The report then makes a controversial point, but I believe that it is true:

“Evidence...supported our view that violent DVDs and video games exert a negative influence on those who watch and play them.”

The report also says that when individuals are sent away to serve youth custody sentences, they sometimes still have access to that sort of violent entertainment. That cannot help.

The report reaches two other conclusions to which I would like to refer. First, it says:

“The prospect of a custodial sentence may not deter young people from carrying knives.”

Instead, it is the prospect of “getting caught” that deters them. Young people are not normally thinking about a custodial sentence when they carry knives. Therefore, heavy, knee-jerk political responses such as, “Increase the sentence”, are not normally the answer. A much more complicated response is required.

Secondly, the report did not recommend

“compulsory introduction of knife detectors”

in all schools. Instead, it argued that such detectors should be introduced selectively and where it is appropriate to do so. Similarly, the report said that stop and search is vital but that it needs to be carried out appropriately.

There are good signs. I have mentioned Millwall and Charlton who, like other football clubs, have sought to work from their local communities outwards. There are also lots of community campaigns that try to tackle gang violence. In my borough, there is a campaign called “Enough”. In Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham, there are other locally-led campaigns. Sports action zones seek to engage young people in street and community sport, and they are really positive in providing diversionary activity. There is also good parental involvement in youth clubs and after-school activities, and more schools are providing pre-school, after-school and weekend activities.

In addition, there are really good youth clubs. The Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families came with his whole ministerial team the other day to the opening of the Salmon youth centre in Bermondsey. That is a fantastic new facility, which has climbing frames, training, apprenticeships and all sorts of other things. There are excellent initiatives.

Mediation is also important. The Southwark mediation service has young mediators who seek to teach youngsters how to mediate at school and also how to back off without losing dignity. Gang crime is often about respect. How does a youngster deal with someone causing offence to themselves or their girlfriend, sister or whoever it might be, without thinking that they have to pile in and steam in to the “other lot” who caused offence? It is often about learning that there are ways of dealing with such a problem that mean taking a step back rather than going forward.

[Simon Hughes]

Mediation is also about helping young people to vocalise what they think, rather than physicalising it. There is an organisation called Speak Out, which teaches young people to speak about these issues as a way of communicating verbally.

We have touched on the causes of gang crime. Families and role models are really important, particularly the father, the older brother or the boyfriend. Violence at home is a factor. Families should not think that if they are violent at home, that does not make it more likely that their children will be violent out on the street.

I have already mentioned DVDs, videos and films. The hon. Lady rightly talked about the materialistic or “bling” age we live in and the culture of instant gratification. However, modern communication methods are also important. Flash mobbing happens. Someone can text and they can get loads of people together really quickly. They never used to be able to do that. Ease of travel is also important. It is a good thing, but it also means that a gang can all pile on a bus and be somewhere together, at no cost, in no time.

The answers to those problems are to provide the types of things that we have talked about: training, apprenticeships, and the incentives to believe that there is a valuable alternative to gang crime. That is why I have a problem with just thinking about what young people should do from the age of 14 onwards. I have always argued that we should introduce youngsters to work at the top end of primary school. There are some children in Southwark, as in Hackney and other places, who have nobody at home who goes to work. Those children need to see the benefit of work and the best schemes in that respect start with year 6 pupils in primary schools. The pupils go to do a week’s work experience and they put on the kit or uniform to act as porters in the Marriott hotel, to count the money in Lloyds bank and so on.

What ought to happen about gang crime? I have made the pledge about crime statistics. I believe that there should be better data-sharing between hospitals and the police authorities, so that we identify where the problems of gang crime are worst. I also believe that we need stop and search, but it must be carried out sensitively. We need visible policing, but good neighbourhood policing is about good intelligence. Good intelligence is often the way to get into the gangs or groups before they really get going.

We also need larger numbers of detached youth workers in London. Like the hon. Lady, I was a youth worker for a long time before I was elected to Parliament. However, we do not need youth workers who sit in clubs waiting for kids to come to them; we need youth workers on the streets and street corners, who really know what is going on, who can act as role models and do other things. We also definitely need diversionary activities for young people.

The Government have worked hard on witness protection, but we still need better witness protection. I was involved in helping with the case of Jamie Robe, a young lad who was kicked to death, and I saw that people were terrified. Another youngster in my constituency, Daniel Herbert, was killed recently, apparently by a gang or a small group of people. Nobody has come

forward to help. Everybody sort of knows who did it, but nobody has come forward to help. We need to ensure that we help witnesses to be protected. The Minister knows about this issue well. We should think about whether we need to go further than we have done already.

**Ms Abbott:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. On witnesses, does he agree that, although there is, of course, adequate witness protection at the very highest level of gang crime, at the intermediate and lower levels there is not adequate witness protection? At those levels, people still do not feel confident about witness protection. In particular, they do not feel confident that they can be moved swiftly and effectively out of the area where they live, so that they are not subject to harassment.

**Simon Hughes:** I am working on a case where we have still not got somebody settled after moving her from her safe house to another area; I think that she has been in the new area for four years already, but she has still not been able to settle with her children. That was not a case involving gangs; it was a domestic violence issue. Nevertheless, we do not have a system that works, particularly between the police and local authorities, and we need to make it work much better.

I want to make a final point. The hon. Lady was right to say that what happens with gangs in London is that they decide that an individual will be part of a territorial group or some other group. It is often based on postcode. It can be based on a place, such as Walworth or Peckham. It can also be based on an ethnic group: Afro-Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Turkish, Kurdish or whatever. The feeling of being “one of us” is a bit like being a football supporter, but it occurs at a much younger age and in a much more violent way. All young people want to belong. People do not want to be isolated; we want to be part of a group. It is a natural human instinct.

My view, having thought about and worked on the issue, is that it is best not to try to prevent people from supporting a particular team or being loyal to their school but to ensure that from the earliest age, they spend time with pupils from other primary schools or do things in teams with other secondary schools. As well as competition between places—that is natural; it is what the Olympic games are all about—we need collaboration between young people. The Globe and Walworth academies, on opposite sides of the Old Kent and New Kent roads, include children from both sides of the road. If they spent time together from a young age doing sport, science, art, theatre and drama, it would start to break down the barriers between them. Faith groups have a large role to play, as they do not have nearly the same territorial catchment.

I end with a plea for work to be done to ensure that we in London all understand that although we may be from Hackney or Southwark, we are also part of a wider community and ought to have links from an early age. If all families, schools, youth clubs and faith groups sought to instil that idea, people might think less about being in gangs. If, at the same time, we made youngsters feel safer from an early age, they would feel less driven to join dangerous gangs in which they, rather than the people whom they set out to attack, are likely to be the victims.

10.31 am

**James Brokenshire** (Hornchurch) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr. Weir, for perhaps the last time during this Parliament; we understand that the Prime Minister has now left Buckingham palace after having sought a dissolution of Parliament. Many events are taking place outside this Chamber, but that should not detract from the importance of the matters that we are debating here. I congratulate the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) on securing this debate and highlighting many significant points that must be considered carefully in the context of the issue of serious gang violence.

The hon. Lady painted a picture of postcode gangs. It is absurd that where investment has been provided in community facilities for the benefit of young people, those facilities may essentially be off limits to particular young people simply because of their location. Young people, even if they are not part of a gang, may feel too frightened to use them, simply because they live in a different area. The development of postcode gangs also involves the absurd perversion of colours and other symbols to indicate gang membership, including safe colours for transit through certain areas. Buses and public transport can be places of significant fear for young people who are innocently trying to enjoy their own lives and are not at all involved in gangs or gang violence. The indiscriminate way in which some postcode gangs operate can draw young people into violence.

Gangs are also linked with sexual violence, as the hon. Lady mentioned, including rape and sexual exploitation. I am sure that the Mayor of London will hear her clear call for the establishment of a rape crisis centre in her area to deal with some facets of gang culture and the perversion and exploitation that sit alongside it.

The hon. Lady mentioned gang injunctions and new powers. The Conservatives supported the introduction of gang injunctions, but I hope that the Minister will be able to update us on whether any have yet been used. It is all very well to introduce new powers and legislation, but enforcement is crucial. That has been one of this Government's shortcomings—legislating in haste without necessarily setting out clear pathways for using the powers created.

The hon. Lady rightly highlighted the issue of risk, particularly during the transfer from primary to secondary education. Many young people are at risk when they go from being big kids in a small school to small kids in a large school and a different environment. It can be difficult for them, and may cause them to gravitate towards gangs. Recruitment may occur at that stage. Children with behavioural issues or special educational needs such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder may become more and more isolated and thus more vulnerable to recruitment into gangs or similar exploitation. That is why we must consider carefully the link between primary and secondary education.

However, we must also celebrate success. We should in no way suggest that all young people are involved in gangs. Only a small minority of young people engage in serious criminal activity. Fantastic community projects are taking place across our city. Recently, I attended the launch of the Ten Ten theatre company, which goes into schools and uses drama to challenge thinking about

knife possession and gang membership. Such concepts can be effective in engaging young people, challenging their perceptions of fitting in and addressing pressure to carry a weapon. We know that carrying a knife on the street makes a young person much more vulnerable to being the victim of a violent crime and having that weapon used against them, even though they may think that it protects them.

The London fire brigade is also doing good things with its LIFE project to engage young people and challenge them in a different way. It is a particularly good project. Another project by Metrac, the Metropolitan Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children, uses sport to harness young people's energy positively and show them that they do not need to feel that they must fit in by joining a gang.

The shocking events of the past few weeks, involving the tragic cutting short of young lives, underline the continuing problems of gang crime, knife crime and youth violence. The fatal stabbings of 15-year-old Sofyen Belamouadden from Acton and 17-year-old Godwin Nii Lawson from north London remind us all of the effect of such appalling crimes on families, friends and whole communities. The increasingly brazen nature of some of the crimes that have taken place in our capital in the past few months is also shocking and disturbing. Although the number of teenage murders in London fell from 29 in 2008 to 14 last year, recent cases underline the continuing challenge and the need for vigilance.

Last week, I spoke at a conference in the docklands organised by Through Unity, a charity that brings together and gives a voice to families touched by appalling crimes of violence. Its members are ordinary people pushed to the forefront by unimaginable circumstances who, despite personal loss, demonstrate a driving sense of purpose, a desire for good to emerge from tragedy and evil and a commitment to bringing about change and improvement in our communities and our country. Through humility and grace, they turn adversity into hope.

The event was as inspiring as it was humbling. It was a reminder why we all need to focus on preventing more such crimes from occurring. I agree that families have an important role to play in advocating and driving through change. I have met families over the past few years who have, sadly, been touched in that way. Their passion for seeing good come from the loss that they have suffered is powerful and impressive. We need to work with such families as much as we can.

**Simon Hughes:** I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington, the Minister and me in appealing for those who know something about the unsolved London deaths of recent years to come forward, as this debate might be our last opportunity to do so. I have four names: Adam Regis, whose mum has tried to get to the truth, the rapper Isschan Nicholls, the teenager Billy Cox and the student Nicholas Clarke. There are others. As a city, we owe it to the families of those people to bring those who are responsible forward. Those who know something must speak out.

**James Brokenshire:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. The sense that justice has been denied or has not been followed through is a recurring theme among many

[James Brokenshire]

families I have spoken to. There is a need for justice to be seen to be done. The perpetrators of crimes that have not been solved must be brought to justice. We need to consider carefully the protection and support that are offered to communities to ensure that people feel able to come forward, as he said in his speech. That is a significant factor that we must retain our focus on to ensure that these appalling crimes are solved and that those who commit them are brought to justice.

Part of the solution lies in more effective community policing. It is not good enough that less than 15 per cent. of a beat officer's time is spent on patrol. We need officers to be on the streets, not behind their desks. That is why we believe there should be a cut in the form-filling and bureaucracy that prevent police officers from doing their job and from providing the reassurance that so many communities desperately need. One practical example is that we would give the police greater discretion to make charging decisions on a number of offences to speed up the processing of arrests and get officers back on the beat. We would also give police officers the discretion to deal quickly and effectively with young trouble makers who are committing antisocial behaviour before they go on to commit more serious offences.

We need to improve the intelligence on the prevalence of violent crimes because many incidents go unreported. I endorse the Mayor of London's support for greater use of depersonalised A and E data across London alongside police data to provide a more comprehensive crime picture on prevalence, geography and trends. I welcome the fact that the Government are now acting on that and hope that the Minister will provide an update when he winds up the debate on the number of hospitals that are providing such data.

The risk of getting caught with a knife must be a real factor in the mind of someone getting ready to go out. That means that the police must make proper use of the power to stop and search. The Operation Blunt 2 task force has provided a focused response in hot spots across London and more people are being charged for possession of knives and sharp instruments. I pay tribute to the work of the Metropolitan police in carrying out such operations. When offenders are caught, they should usually be prosecuted and given the most severe sentences appropriate. Fines are an inadequate deterrent. There should be a presumption that offenders will receive a custodial sentence or a tough, enforced community penalty, not a so-called unpaid work requirement. The offender should wear a high-visibility uniform.

I pay tribute to the Mayor of London's work on the Heron wing of Feltham young offenders institution, which focuses on rehabilitating new young offenders and showing them that there is a different path. The fear is that once somebody is in the criminal justice system, it can be difficult to break them out and to provide an exit route from gang membership. I am following closely the Mayor's work on challenging such behaviour and preventing reoffending and further crime.

We would legislate to give police sergeants at the heart of community police teams a new authorisation to conduct searches for knives and other weapons. That limited power would enable them to act more quickly when they pick up intelligence suggesting that weapons are being carried in their community or that an act of serious violence is about to occur.

A recent Home Affairs Committee report noted that knife carrying is

“at a level to be of significant concern.”

The hon. Member for North Southwark and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) referred to some of the points made. I have touched on the issue of the perversion of protection. There is an issue with the insidious links to gang membership. Gangs use recruitment techniques that focus on people from less able backgrounds and that seek to exploit factors such as mental illness and unemployment. The Centre for Social Justice has highlighted clearly and commendably the fractures and fault lines that run through our society. We need to focus on the intergenerational dysfunction that lies behind youth victimisation, gang membership and youth crime. If a young person's experience of life is of violence and aggression, should we be surprised if violence and aggression are the methods by which that child seeks to resolve disputes?

There is a need for a change of approach. To make a sustained change that enables our communities to break out of gang violence and the scourge of crime, we must look to the long term as well as the short term. It is not simply about enforcement, but about the many other factors that have been highlighted this morning. We need a change that recognises the need for clear and robust sanctions for those who break the law, that devolves greater powers and responsibilities to those who respond to the problems on our streets and that recognises that strong families and communities are more effective at instilling a culture of respect and responsibility than any rule, law or regulation. Ultimately, societal change is required to promote safer and more cohesive communities not just in our capital city, but across our country.

10.46 am

**The Minister for Policing, Crime and Counter-Terrorism (Mr. David Hanson):** I am pleased to serve under your chairmanship, Mr. Weir, for what will undoubtedly be my last Adjournment debate of this Parliament, although hopefully not the last of my time in Parliament.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) for securing this useful debate. She has a sound record of tackling this issue not just through policy, but by providing support on the ground for young people in her constituency and across London. The points she has raised have been supported by the hon. Members for North Southwark and Bermondsey (Simon Hughes) and for Hornchurch (James Brokenshire).

My hon. Friend has raised important policy issues with which the Government are wrestling. She mentioned education, which is crucial in raising the abilities and achievements of young people across London. She mentioned positive role models, underachievement and the importance of positive employment. I am sure that we all remember the importance of peer group support and of being part of a group when we were young. Sometimes that can be a positive experience, but it can turn into negativity, as she described. She mentioned the increasing role of women in gangs, which is an important issue. Last week, the Minister for Schools and Learners and I met with Carlene Firmin and Theo Gavrielides from Race on the Agenda to consider what

we could do following an important conference we attended recently in London that focused on how women are drawn into gangs, often unwittingly, to support their male colleagues, friends or partners, and on how they become victims of gang violence. I hope that we can discuss those key issues that she has raised.

The hon. Member for North Southwark and Bermondsey made a plea for integrity in statistics. I, too, want to see that because we need to be able to trust the statistics that we work with and to know that they are independent. He praised the work of the police in London and elsewhere. He helpfully drew attention to the Home Affairs Committee report that raised a number of important issues. He raised the way in which we develop interpersonal skills, how violence at home can impact on people's attitudes to violence in the community and the importance of witnesses and witness protection. I draw his attention to the fact that investigation anonymity orders, which provide for the anonymity of witnesses during an investigation to encourage them to come forward, are available from today for witnesses involved in trials for murders committed using a knife or gun. That is important legislation.

**Ms Abbott:** On the question of witness protection, is my right hon. Friend aware that a key issue for some of my constituents is that they need to be moved away from people who might take revenge on them? What are the Government doing to ensure that all London boroughs contribute to the pool of accommodation available in such cases? The problem is that some boroughs are not contributing to that, which makes it hard to move people.

**Mr. Hanson:** I will certainly consider that issue in detail. The purpose of the anonymity orders that I mentioned is to give witnesses anonymous protection in relation to giving evidence, which is important, rather than moving people around because they happen to be witnesses and are willing to come forward. That is an important part of the prevention mechanism for individuals. However, ultimately, we need to give people anonymity, so that they do not have to fear being moved. Even if individuals who give evidence are moved, they will ultimately face potential intimidation downstream.

The latest recorded crime statistics show that knife crime is falling. There has been a 7 per cent. fall in recorded knife crime and a 34 per cent. fall in homicide with a knife or sharp instrument. The risk of being a victim of gun crime remains low and recorded crime involving a firearm has fallen for the fifth year in succession—the number of recorded offences involving firearms has fallen by 18 per cent. between 2007-08 and 2008-09. Firearm homicides are at their lowest point for 20 years, violence incidence has fallen by 49 per cent. since 1999, and there are 2 million fewer victims. In London, which is of particular importance to the debate today, the number of homicides has decreased. As the hon. Member for Hornchurch mentioned, there were 15 such incidents last year and 30 the year before. Homicide overall is down 24.2 per cent. in the year to February 2010.

Gang-related offences in the Metropolitan police area account for very low levels of crime—less than 0.3 per cent. of all recorded crime. However, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington

mentioned, although much work has been going on to help to drive down those figures, that does not mean that we are complacent or that we are satisfied with the situation to date. As hon. Members have mentioned, the murder of Sofyen Belamouadden at Victoria station on 26 March and that of Godwin Lawson on 27 March are stark reminders that such incidents occur. In many ways, those incidents were more visible and horrific than some of the other major incidents that we know about. Twelve young people aged between 16 and 17 have been charged with the murder of Sofyen Belamouadden, but unfortunately no charges have been brought in relation to the murder of Godwin Lawson. I send my sympathies to both families. Whatever the overall decrease in statistics relating to such crimes and the level of work that has been done, those incidents, which have occurred in the past month in London, show that issues still need to be addressed.

We have tried to tackle the problem through engaging in four main areas of activity: first, prevention; secondly, strong enforcement; thirdly, information and intelligence sharing; fourthly, rehabilitation. Our ultimate aim must be to prevent young people from being involved in a toxic and negative gang lifestyle in the first place. We and other Departments have tried to take prevention extremely seriously. In the youth crime action plan, which has been put in place across England and Wales in a large number of areas, we have considered a number of activities—for example, activities on Friday and Saturday nights, focusing on vulnerable individuals, after-school clubs, policing in our communities as a whole and other positive activities.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families has provided £2 million additional funding to the 81 local authorities that have been particularly blighted by youth crime and knife crime, so that provision relating to Friday and Saturday night activities can be boosted. We have put more than £270 million into the myplace programme to ensure that young people have high-quality, safe places to go where they can access activities to help them towards positive activity as a whole. That, coupled with the £4.5 million community fund and more than £600,000 of support given to community projects in London, is witness to the Government's work, to which my hon. Friend has paid tribute.

In light of that, on prevention activity, my hon. Friend will know—the hon. Member for Hornchurch mentioned this—that in September 2010, over-18 gang injunctions will be put in place. Legislation for that has been passed, but it will not be implemented until September 2010 for over-18s. If the Crime and Security Bill finishes its passage through both Houses in the week before Parliament is dissolved, I hope that we will be able to consider gang injunctions for under-18s.

We are strongly considering the question of enforcement. I accept what the hon. Member for North Southwark and Bermondsey said: sentencing is not necessarily an immediate deterrent. However, it is important that we consider sentencing as part of our work to help to reduce knife crime. The principle is that we need to catch people, and the threat of being caught is extremely important. The role we have given to neighbourhood policing and police community support officers, and the fact that we have the largest number of police officers ever in the capital city of London, shows that that is important. However, we also need to increase the

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strong stance on enforcement, which we have done. The starting tariff for the sentence given to adults who commit murder has been increased to 25 years. Those carrying a knife are more likely to go to prison than they were 10 years ago.

Dealing with enforcement also involves addressing important issues, such as knife arches, and a range of factors to do with test purchases in shops and other matters. It is important to ensure that we take the problem extremely seriously. In London, through Operation Trident, the Metropolitan police have disrupted 75 criminal networks. That has involved arrests and the confiscation of a range of live firing weapons, assets, drugs and other things that drive crimes related to young people generally. Action plans have been developed to address gun crime in the London boroughs of Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark—the borough of the hon. Member for North Southwark and Bermondsey. Plans have been drawn up with the help of community leaders and independent members to ensure that we take the issue seriously.

Hon. Members will know that Operation Protect and Operation Blunt 2 have also dealt with these matters in an effective and important way. We have undertaken intelligence and information sharing, particularly in relation to hospitals, which the hon. Member for Hornchurch mentioned. We have worked closely with hospitals and I am happy to tell the House that 31 hospitals in London are sharing data. They are part of 110 hospitals across England that are currently sharing data. Some 84 of those areas are within the knife crime action plan areas, where we have recently announced additional resources of around £5 million to help to tackle knife crime in the longer term. Intelligence sharing is important, so that we can tie up neighbourhood policing with prevention and with an assessment of the threat in particular areas. It might be of interest to my hon.

Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington to note that intelligence sharing has also involved information being given to Hackney community safety partnerships, so that they can target their activities in Hackney. Through the National Ballistics Intelligence Service, or NABIS, we are looking at the use of guns and the tracking of the use of firearms across the country as a whole. That has shown a very interesting picture of illegal firearms and their use.

We are also considering the issue of rehabilitation. Some people are being caught and some people are being sent to prison, but we need to change their mindsets and take them out of prison and youth offending in a positive way. Since last October, all youth offending teams in England and Wales—97 in total—and the teams across the 15 knife crime areas have been involved in working with offenders to change their attitudes on knife crime and to bring home to them the consequences of carrying a knife. That includes meeting victims and other agencies and working through how we deal with the matter. In January 2010, there will be a knife crime prevention programme pilot in Feltham young offenders institute to ensure that intervention is delivered to people, particularly in custody.

From my perspective, knife crime, gun crime and gangs are serious issues. My hon. Friend has raised some key points. We want to ensure that we work on prevention, enforcement, rehabilitation, tackling the long-term issues and working with the community to ensure that we reduce knife crime, gun crime and gang activity. We have a positive record, but there is more we can do. In the next Parliament, I look forward to working with colleagues across the House to make that difference, to reduce deaths and injuries and to break up the gangs that are having a negative influence across London. Many young people have a very positive influence on society and we should never forget that. The consideration we give to the positive work of young people is as important as that we give to gang-related violence.

## Poverty and Inequality

11 am

**Lynne Jones** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): I am pleased to have the opportunity to raise this important issue because it is very dear to my heart. I am sure that this will be my last speech as a Member of this House, so I am fortunate in having secured the debate. This subject is so complex that I could speak for a very long time.

During my speech, I shall draw on a number of important publications that I have recently read. The first is “An Anatomy of Economic Inequality in the UK” by the National Equality Panel—I congratulate the Government on setting up that panel because it demonstrates their determination to take inequality seriously. I shall also draw on “The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better” by Professors Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett. Finally, let me draw Members’ attention to an excellent publication by my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) and the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith) entitled “Early intervention: good parents, great kids, better citizens”, which is an excellent example of cross-party working.

Before this debate, I also read the transcript of the February 1995 debate, “Poverty and Unemployment”, which was initiated by the late Donald Dewar, who was then Labour’s shadow spokesman for social security. The debate was interesting because it showed the attitudes that prevailed at the time. The then Conservative Government denied that poverty was a problem and derided the whole idea of having a minimum wage, because, as they said, it would mean going from “low pay to no pay”. Wages at that time were extremely low. Members in the debate cited examples of people being offered £1.50 and £1.90 an hour.

I should like to provide a brief history of inequality. On Good Friday, I was hoping to watch my son racing his bike at Herne Hill cycle stadium, which was built for the 1948 Olympics. The stadium is somewhat run-down and will no doubt not be used for the 2012 Olympics. None the less, it served its purpose at the time. In those days we were probably more equal as a society than we had ever been. The belief was that we should have maximum working together and joint effort. It was felt that we were all in it together and that having a more equal society was very important.

Unfortunately, I did not see my son racing on Good Friday because the heavens opened and it poured with rain. As cycle tracks are dangerous in the rain, the whole meeting had to be abandoned, and I had paid £12 to no avail. As I was coming home somewhat bedraggled from the rain, I thought about the money; £12 meant nothing to me and its loss had no impact on me. Then I thought, “What would it mean for somebody who was on the minimum wage, unemployed or in a low income family?” They might have saved up £12 to see their son racing, and for them it would be an awful lot of money to lose. However, for someone such as myself, who is highly but by no means outrageously paid—I am on an income in the 10th decile of the upper incomes—it was not much at all. That got me thinking about when I was younger. Our household was quite poor because

my father suffered from schizophrenia and was unable to work most of the time. Although my father had a high level of education, we were probably among the poorest people on our council estate because in those days—in the ’50s and ’60s—there was full employment. My mother worked hard for low pay. She scrimped and saved to give my sister and I a good start in life.

When I started secondary school, my mother had to pay out quite a lot of money for my school uniform. The one item that I remember in particular was a pair of hockey boots that cost 17s 11d. I had been at school for only a week when some smart Alec decided to pull out one of my hockey boots from my locker, leaving me with just one boot. I was mortified because I knew that my mother had had to work hard to buy me those hockey boots. I did not tell her about losing one of them; I just made do with my pumps when playing games. I lost sleep at night over the waste, especially as I thought about the effort that my mother had spent on getting me those boots. Today, there are many families who would feel the same way if they had spent money on their children to no avail.

Although it was a more equal society in those days, I clearly remember the stigma that we suffered because my father did not work. He was ill, but he had no obvious disability because he suffered from a mental illness. We were ashamed that our father did not work and, unfortunately, those attitudes live on today.

I was fortunate because I received a good education and I prospered. Looking back, I can see how I prospered and how other people did not do so well. Inequality fluctuated slightly in the ’60s, and even improved a little in the mid-1970s before slightly increasing after the financial crisis. During the 1980s, it soared as unemployment reached 3 million in 1983. At the end of that period, inequality had gone up several fold, which is well documented in the report of the National Equality Panel, the figures from which were used by my colleagues in the 1995 debate. None the less, our concerns were ridiculed by the then Government.

Thank goodness we then had a Labour Government, who took poverty seriously. However, I am not so sure that I can say the same about inequality. For those groups of people who were seen as the more deserving poor, the Government have introduced changes that have benefited them greatly.

**Bob Spink** (Castle Point) (Ind): I congratulate the hon. Lady on bringing the subject before the House. Her story is compelling and I am listening carefully. I entered Parliament in 1992 and, to be honest, in my time here I have probably moved, on the issues of equality and the distribution of wealth in this nation, more towards the hon. Lady than she has towards me. I thank her for that.

Poverty is most felt by elderly people on small fixed incomes. While the hon. Lady is talking about special groups, will she urge the Government to bring forward for that special group the re-indexation of basic state pension to earnings? Will she also take the opportunity to urge the Tories not to break the link again, should they form a Government at any time in the future? That was a major cause of poverty for that elderly group.

**Lynne Jones:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that, but I think I got there long before him, when I was writing pensions articles calling for the restoration of

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the earnings link and expressing great concern about the means-testing of people who did a little bit better for themselves than they would have by relying completely on the state. I urge whoever is in government not only to restore the link but to do so as quickly as possible.

To go back to 1997, the poorest pensioners were expected to live on £69 a week. Thanks to the current Government, no single pensioner in this country need live on less than £132 a week. In 1997 we were very much aware of growing inequality. It will be recalled that there was consternation about the executives of newly privatised industries paying themselves huge amounts of money in salaries and share options. The name of Mr. Cedric Brown comes to mind. At about that time chief executive officers were paid about 40 times average pay, but today they are paid about 81 times average pay.

There have been huge changes: the poorest pensioners and people on disability benefits have been guaranteed a minimum income; and there are now working tax credits and the child care strategy for families with children, with large numbers of extra child care places available, and help in paying for them, as well as Sure Start and improved maternity pay; and there is now a carers strategy and rights for carers, who are some of the most neglected people. However, sadly, inequality has continued to widen because of the large increases at the very top of the scale, such as those I have mentioned. It is not just a question of the highest-paid executives or a small number of people: the highest-earning 1 per cent. of the population has a huge impact overall on the median income—the income level at which half the population has more and half has less.

We have a divided society. Disraeli wrote in “Sybil” of

“Two nations between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are ignorant of each other’s habits, thoughts and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones or inhabitants of different planets”.

Only last week, echoing those sentiments, Richard Lambert, the director general of the CBI, pointed out that chief executive officers are so differently remunerated that they are in a “different galaxy” from the rest of us. The recent *Evening Standard* pull-out special edition on London’s forgotten poor, said:

“London is a shameful tale of two cities. In the richest capital in Europe almost half our children live below the poverty line.”

Despite the best efforts of the Labour Government in lifting half a million children out of poverty we still face a huge, uphill task. I congratulate the Government on their commitment, in the Child Poverty Bill, to bring down those horrendous figures.

As to solutions, we must first recognise that inequality is not just about the difference between the average and the poorest. It is about the total inequality in society. We are now a much more unequal society than many other countries in the OECD, apart from the United States and Portugal. The huge salary increases at the top end, which put people out of touch with the reality of life for those at the poorest end of society, have not been replicated in other countries with more equal societies, where economic development is just as good as ours, if not better.

Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett have set up an organisation called the Equality Trust. In their book they comprehensively argue that in rich countries a

smaller gap between the rich and poor means a happier, healthier and more successful population in terms of life expectancy, achievement in maths and literacy, infant mortality, homicide, imprisonment, teenage births, trusting one another, obesity, mental illness, drug and alcohol addiction and social mobility. They say convincingly, based on their evidence, that if we halved inequality in the UK murder rates would halve, mental illness would reduce by two thirds, obesity would halve, imprisonment rates would reduce by 80 per cent., and trust would increase by 85 per cent. More equal societies benefit everyone—those at the top as well as those at the bottom.

Inequality is pervasive in society. It wrecks lives. Wilkinson and Pickett cite a very interesting study from 2000. World Bank economists Karla Hoff and Priyanka Pandey reported the results of a remarkable experiment. They took 321 high-caste and 321 low-caste 11 and 12-year-old boys from scattered rural villages in India and set them the task of solving mazes. First the boys did the puzzles without being aware of each other’s castes. In those conditions the low-caste boys did as well as—in fact, slightly better than—the high-caste boys. Then the experiment was repeated, but this time each boy was asked to confirm an announcement of his name, village, father’s and grandfather’s names, and caste. The boys did the mazes and this time there was a large caste difference. The performance of the low-caste boys dropped significantly. The same phenomenon has also been demonstrated in experiments with white and black high school students in America. Black students performed as well as white when they were told that the tests were not a test of their ability, but when they were told that the tests were about their ability they performed much worse than white students, who performed equally in both tests.

There is a stereotype, and people react to it. There is plenty of evidence of biological impacts on people who are of low status and feel threatened. When they are happy and well adjusted they release high levels of the hormone dopamine—the feel-good hormone. When they are threatened and under stress, they are ready to strike out and they have high levels of stress hormones, including cortisol. That has an impact on their behaviour, as is well documented in the “Early Intervention” booklet. The authors—our colleagues—argue strongly for early intervention, between the ages of nought and three, when young children are extremely damaged if they are not given the nurturing and love that they need. I commend the booklet for the action that it proposes for future Governments, but we must see that in the context of the need for a more equal society. The current Government have already been trying to intervene. There have been area programmes such as the new deal for communities. However, we still find that those societies are disadvantaged.

It is interesting that the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green cites statistics about council estates. I think that in 1980 more than 70 per cent. of people living on council estates were on above average incomes and those areas were mixed areas, where people worked. Now, they are wholly deprived areas, and that concentration of deprivation has been the result of Government policies over the past 30 years that have not recognised that good-quality rented housing is important and should not be regarded as only for the very poorest. We have

seen the sale of the best council houses, which are lost to the stock altogether once the people who bought them move away. I am talking about the more affluent people moving out of council houses or people moving out of the area and out of council and social housing altogether. We have seen the ever greater concentration of deprivation in those areas. We must break that cycle and we must do that on the basis of tackling inequality.

There is a lot of stereotyping of lone parents, and many people in the areas that we are discussing are lone parents. However, the Wilkinson and Pickett evidence shows that more unequal societies have more lone parents and that in more equal societies, even families headed by a lone parent are not disadvantaged, because they are less unequal than they are in this country.

That brings me on to the point about the deserving and the undeserving poor. Rightly, hon. Members on both sides of the House have wanted to do their best for pensioners, for people who are obviously disabled, shall I say, rather than those who are less obviously disabled, and for children—so long as they conform to our stereotypes. Let us consider the case of children such as baby P and Khyra Ishaq. Society—both the authorities and the communities in which they lived—failed them. They are rightly seen as victims of our unequal society, but let us imagine what would have happened if they had not been killed and had been taken to a place of safety—taken into local authority care. What would their prospects have been?

Although children in local authority care represent only 0.6 per cent. of children, 25 per cent. of the prison population is made up of people who have at some time in their lives been in care. That is a disgrace. It does not happen in other societies. In this country, people in deprived areas who go into care do very poorly educationally, despite the best efforts of the Government and the fact that there have been improvements in educational attainment. Very few of those children go into higher education, whereas in Denmark, for example, 60 per cent. of youngsters who were brought up in care go into higher education. So it does not have to be like this. We do not have to have such a low regard for children. Our society does not have a high regard for children. Yes, when they are victims, it does, but when they are not well brought up and when they are damaged, they are seen as evil. They are described as yobboes and hoodies and in other pejorative ways.

When the Leader of the Opposition expressed sentiments about how we regarded young people in this country, which I agreed with, I was dismayed that he was condemned as wanting people to “hug a hoodie”. I would have liked the Government to say that at last the Conservative party was coming round to our way of thinking with regard to not labelling young people when they perhaps go off the straight and narrow. We must look to ourselves as a society and what we are doing to those children, and recognise that in other, more equal societies, children who face disadvantage do not suffer in the long run, and then society does not suffer from the activities in which young people from disadvantaged backgrounds all too often engage.

There was a TV sitcom called “Keeping Up Appearances”, and there is too much of that behaviour in this country. Why do people feel the need for such huge incomes? It is all about competition. If one executive is paid millions of pounds, another must be paid a bit

more. In fact, there is a race not to millions, but to billions of pounds. When we were having the Cedric Brown arguments, that was all about millions; now it is about tens of millions in remuneration. We heard at the weekend about the president of Barclays.

Let us just think of someone on the national minimum wage of £5.80 an hour—£240 a week for a normal week. It would take them hundreds of years to earn—or to receive in income—what some executives receive in a year. That cannot be tolerated. The Labour Government set up the Low Pay Commission to introduce the minimum wage in a way that did not damage employment. There is still scope for improvements in the minimum wage, and I invite the hon. Member for South-West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) to confirm the Conservative party's commitment to the minimum wage and to increasing it in line with recommendations from the Low Pay Commission. The Low Pay Commission has been enormously successful, although I regret the fact that young people under 21 are paid less for doing the same job. Is it not time that we had a high pay commission to consider disparities in earnings in society and in companies? I say that because such huge disparities are not conducive to a good economic outcome.

As Richard Lambert explained in the speech that I mentioned, no one denies the importance of companies making adequate profit for reinvestment and reasonable remuneration; indeed, some of the most successful companies—Richard Lambert cited Dave Packard, one of the founders of Hewlett-Packard—realise the importance of rewards, but rewards should be proportional and profits need to deliver wider goals than shareholder value. As the Member for Selly Oak, which includes Bourneville, I echo that entirely. Shareholder value was the only issue that was considered in Kraft's takeover of Cadbury.

Hewlett Packard is not the only enormously successful company whose founders recognised that they must engage with their work force and that employees must feel part of the company. Other industrialists who have been extremely successful and recognised that excessive pay divides rather than unites companies include Ove Arup, founder of the Ove Arup Partnership. John Spedan Lewis founded the John Lewis Partnership, one of our most successful retail companies, and acted on the philosophy that differences in reward must be large enough to induce people to do their best, but in 1957 he declared that the differences were too great.

It is time for greater company publicity about people's earnings. A pay audit is an excellent idea. A high pay commission might not be able to impose on companies' remuneration, but could suggest reasonable benchmarks. Some years ago, Channel 4 produced a series of programmes about high pay, and a high pay commission was set up. I do not remember its membership, but it included someone who was a cook, although I cannot remember her name. It concluded that there should be maximums and minimums in company employment for fairness and good performance. We need fairer organisation in companies.

We have seen the demutualisation of the banking and financial services sector, and the squeezing out of trade unions. Countries such as Japan do not have a large welfare state and transfers, but they have much more equal societies in terms of remuneration. It is common in Japanese industry for people to come up through the

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trade union movement and to become company executives as a result of partnership working. We must encourage more worker participation, and it is appropriate to flag up the 1977 Bullock report on workers' rights and representation on company boards. We should reconsider some of those philosophies, which were not welcomed by many people in industry. Many trade unionists did not welcome involvement in decision making at the highest level, although I am pleased that one of my predecessors, Tom Litterick, who was the MP for Selly Oak in the 1974-79 Parliament, was the chief sponsor of an early-day motion welcoming the Bullock proposals, so it is appropriate for me to flag him up in my valedictory speech today. He was not my predecessor, but my predecessor but one.

The Government have proposed that football club members should have a share in their clubs, and perhaps we could extend that to other companies to provide more worker participation, more worker shareholders, more worker involvement and more co-operation in companies, as in the John Lewis Partnership, where performance is much better than in companies where workers are badly treated and their efforts are not sufficiently rewarded.

I turn to other things that Governments can do, including small measures. Post-Thatcherism, the present Government adopted too many of the stereotypes and attitudes to people, particularly unemployed people. Although the Government have done a lot for pensioners and families with children, unemployed people's incomes have not increased, but have merely been pegged to the retail prices index. At present, an unemployed person on jobseeker's allowance receives £65.45 a week—1.6 million people receive that allowance—and couples receive £102.75 a week. They receive help with housing costs, but those are the sums that they must manage on to meet all their needs—food, gas, electricity, clothes, social life and so on. I defy anyone in this Chamber to live on that level of income. The figure for young people under 25 is even more obscene at £51.85 a week. A small number—around 37 per cent.—have children and have benefited from the Government's measures to deal with child poverty, but the situation is a sad reflection on a Government led by a Prime Minister who in his maiden speech in 1987 castigated the then Government for their philosophy that unemployment benefits should be so low that people would be forced into even low-paid work. I do not expect that sort of attitude from the Government.

At a time when unemployment is high—it has not risen to levels seen in previous recessions thanks to the Government's measures, which were opposed by the Conservative party—we must remember those who have been affected. We are still dealing with the fallout from the 1980s. Although unemployment fell after the peak of 3 million before rising again in the early 1990s, at the end of that period we saw a doubling of the number of workless households in which no one was in work. That has further exacerbated division and deprivation in our society. I urge future Governments not only to consider measures to deliver public services and early intervention but to consider equality of incomes and the damaging effect that very unequal incomes have on our society.

There are measures that the Government could take, but the issue is not just redistribution of tax and benefits.

I would like a much more progressive tax system. I am pleased that we now have a 50p income tax rate, but I am not pleased about the complexity resulting from withdrawal of the tax-free allowance. It is about time we started to talk about a truly fair and progressive tax system, so that people on low incomes of around £10,000 did not pay any tax. I realise that if that were to be introduced without making changes higher up the income scale, it would benefit higher earners as much as the low paid. We need a properly progressive income tax.

We also need to consider other ways of making taxation fair. The Conservative party is castigating the Government for the increase in national insurance. I am unhappy about that change because it will affect everyone, but I am not at all happy about the alternative of meeting the £6 million gap that will result from the Tory promise on national insurance. Meeting it by increasing VAT would be even more regressive. Why do we have an upper threshold as well as a lower threshold for national insurance? Rather than having an across-the-board increase of 1 per cent., why should we not extend the upper limit? The 1 per cent. rate goes higher up the threshold; perhaps we could recoup some of the money lost through not levying the national insurance increases by raising the threshold.

We should also consider property taxes. They are easy to collect and difficult to evade, but the only property tax that we have is the council tax. That is unfair because people with lower-value properties pay proportionately more than those with mansions. There should be a small taxation on increases in the value of land resulting from public investment, as it would be difficult for rich people to evade.

**Bob Spink:** Before the hon. Lady moves too far from VAT and the Tories, does she share my concern about the refusal of the Tory shadow Chancellor to rule out future tax rises if the Tories get into Government? Whatever other Tory Front-Bench spokesmen say about VAT, the shadow Chancellor flatly refuses to rule it out.

**Lynne Jones:** I am sorry, but I did not hear what the hon. Gentleman said. Did he mention class sizes?

**Bob Spink:** No; I said that the shadow Chancellor refuses to rule out future tax rises.

**Lynne Jones:** I am sorry, but I am a little deaf. I do not see how the shadow Chancellor can rule out future tax rises. In some ways, I would prefer progressive tax rises to cuts in services that would affect the vulnerable.

It is time that I began to wind up. I wish to mention a couple of other areas where Government intervention has been extremely successful. It may seem rather bizarre, but I start with the national forest. I am a member of the Select Committee for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which recently reported on the national forest. The project has been tremendously successful in improving areas of Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire.

A range of indicators have demonstrated the improved economic health of the national forest, including a significant decline in the proportion of the forest population who live in the 25 per cent. most deprived areas in England. The area outperformed the regional average for economic growth between 1998 and 2006, with high levels of new business development. The area's tourism

industry is now worth more than £270 million a year, with more than 4,000 people engaged in it. Since 1995, more than 250 jobs have been created or safeguarded through forestry, and through farm diversification to forest uses and woodland business. What has been achieved over those 15 years was done for the princely sum of £44.3 million in Government grant in aid. I commend such projects to future Governments.

Another organisation based in my constituency is the national industrial symbiosis programme. It has been extremely successful in bringing businesses together to treat waste as a resource. As a result, a small amount of Government money has yielded a return to the Treasury of 30 times or more in net receipts.

Those are examples of Government spending that has helped business and society to reduce inequality. It is not about the private sector versus the public sector. Public spending is crucial to a thriving private sector. Surely, after the recent crash, we should have learned that the public and private sectors need each other.

We are about to embark on a general election. Candidates are being asked to make the equality pledge drawn up by the equality organisation set up by Professors Wilkinson and Pickett to promulgate the arguments that they put forward in their excellent book. Having seen the website, I know that a number of hon. Members from all parties have signed up. I hope that they will not sign up blithely to a commitment to work to reduce inequality, but that they will take it seriously and that those who are successful in the election will consider how to implement measures to reduce inequality in our society.

Four wards in my constituency will be going their separate ways in the election. The Kings Norton ward, which is probably the most deprived part of my constituency, will become part of the new Northfield constituency. I shall certainly support the Labour candidate, who will be my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden). It will generally be a straight fight between Labour and Conservative, as it will be in the new Selly Oak constituency. Bournville and Selly Oak will be joining two wards from the Hall Green constituency.

I hope that Labour candidates will be elected, because I do not trust the Tories to take up the equality agenda. Although I am disappointed in some of the outcomes achieved under the present Government, things have become better for many people. Public services have improved, and that would not have happened if we had continued with a Conservative Government in 1997.

We have a more interesting situation in the Moseley and Kings Heath ward of the Hall Green constituency. The Conservatives are nowhere in the election, and it will be interesting to see what happens because it is a three-horse race. I was not happy with the endorsement of the Labour candidate in that constituency. Because there is no risk of the Tories winning that seat, I may allow myself a little tactical voting by supporting the candidate who most shares my values.

**Mr. Mike Weir (in the Chair):** Order. The hon. Lady is straying a little. I ask her to return the subject.

**Lynne Jones:** Thank you, Mr. Weir. The candidate who most shares my values and whom I respect the most will be the one who I think will put up the greatest fight for a more equal society. That candidate will make a much better job of it than I have managed.

During my time here I have fought hard for disadvantaged groups, starting in the 1992 to 1997 Parliament when I fought the dreadful discrimination against transgendered people. When I wrote to the Employment Minister at the time, the right hon. Member for Maidstone and The Weald (Miss Widdecombe), she seemed to think that it was perfectly acceptable for a transgendered person who was outed in the workplace to be sacked simply because her work colleagues did not like working with her. Thank goodness that attitudes to transgendered people have changed over time, but they still suffer a great deal of discrimination, which is highlighted in the National Equality Panel's report.

I have fought for gay rights. I worked for a gay couple in my constituency, one of whom was an American who was going to be deported, as the then Tory Government were unwilling to recognise that couple's commitment to each other. That has changed, and generally there is now a much more progressive attitude across the House on both areas, although the recent comments of the shadow Home Secretary, the hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling), were very unfortunate.

I have even fought with my Government for single parents and disabled people to try to reduce proposed cuts in benefits that had actually been put forward by the previous Conservative Government. I was most disheartened when the incoming Labour Government decided to carry through some of those changes, such as changes to housing benefits for young people. Some of those bad decisions have been reversed by changes to tax credits, help for children and, to some extent, help for disabled people, but the fight must go on for disadvantaged groups, including people from ethnic minorities, women who still face disadvantages and people from different classes who face disadvantages. That work will have to be carried on largely by my successors, although I hope to play an active role in that, particularly in the field of mental health, which is perhaps the last great stigma we have to tackle. Things are now much better for those with mental illness than they were when my father was alive, but we still have a long way to go.

I will conclude with a quote from Robert Kennedy:

"The gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country. It measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile."

I leave the future Parliament to ponder those thoughts.

**Mr. Mike Weir (in the Chair):** Before I call the next speaker, I remind Members that the debate must finish at 12.30 pm and ask them to tailor their remarks accordingly.

11.54 pm

**Mr. Paul Keetch (Hereford) (LD):** I will tailor my remarks appropriately as I am anxious to hear the Minister's response. It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Lynne Jones). I agreed with much of what she said, including the quote from Bobby Kennedy and her remarks on Hall Green. I have found myself with her in the Division Lobby many

[*Mr. Paul Keetch*]

times during the past three Parliaments. It seems that she has often followed the Liberal Democrat view of things, perhaps more astutely on occasion than her Labour Government would have liked.

**Lynne Jones:** The hon. Gentleman should not take great comfort from my remarks on Hall Green.

**Mr. Keetch:** I have no doubt that the electorate will hear that point. The hon. Lady has certainly been a great parliamentarian, and the House of Commons will be the worse for her not being in it after the election. She said that the debate would be topical literally as the Prime Minister returned from the palace and the general election was called. The debate is important because there is a feeling, certainly among the charities with which I have spoken, that if we are not careful the election might see a new Government come in who will not give the same priority to poverty and inequality that Labour has done in the past 13 years. I congratulate the Labour party on what it has done in many areas in those years. It has poured billions into tackling child poverty, but there is a real fear that the recession will undo some of that work or at least set it back.

Although child poverty has decreased under the Government, pensioner poverty has not fallen to the same extent. Poverty among working, childless adults has increased to its highest level for 40 years. In addition, the Government's third term has seen a rise in income inequality, with the poorest fifth of the population experiencing a fall in income. The Institute for Fiscal Studies has stated, for example, that the gap between the income of the rich and the poor is now the highest it has been since its comparable time series began in 1961, the year I was born, and inequalities in wealth are even greater than those in income.

The hon. Lady mentioned the Child Poverty Act 2010, which we of course supported. However, we are concerned that the Government have watered down the goal of "eradicating" child poverty by 2020. Instead, the Act now states that no more than 10 per cent. of children should be in poverty. By our maths, that means that the Government are resigned to accepting that around 1 million children will still live in some form of poverty in future. The recession has seen inequality and poverty continue to rise in certain groups, as they did in the past few years when the UK was booming, so what will be the effects when we tackle the problems ahead?

The targets of halving child poverty by 2010 and eradicating it by 2020 were set out by Tony Blair in 1999, but the interim target was missed in 2005-06 and, unsurprisingly, it looks as though the 2010 target will be missed as well. When times were good it was easy to pick off the low-hanging fruit, meaning those who were only a few percentage points below the poverty line or who were perhaps on a low income temporarily and would quickly find another job, or who were poor simply for one reason, rather than for complex, multiple reasons. However, now that times are harder, we are concerned that the good work that has been done so far will stall and perhaps start to go backwards, particularly if there is a new Administration after 6 May who will place less emphasis on tackling child poverty than the current Government have done.

We have seen some recent changes on pensioner poverty, one of which has been to the state earnings-related pension scheme. The second state pension scheme has effectively been frozen for 2009-10, meaning that around 9 million pensioners will have a real-terms cut in their pension payments this year, amounting to around £515 million.

**Dr. William McCrea** (South Antrim) (DUP): With the breaking of the earnings link, the gap whereby our pensioners have fallen behind basic pay is certainly significant. Therefore, surely we need a substantial rise in the basic state pension, and then the link with earnings.

**Mr. Keetch:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right and makes a good point, and I will mention in a few moments some specific things my party would like to see done. We certainly oppose the recent freeze, as we do not believe that pensioners should be the first to feel the pain of the recession. Freezing parts of the state pension would be a blow to those pensioners who already live on or near the poverty line. The woeful inadequacy of the basic state pension is a legacy of successive Governments. Since the link to which he referred was broken 30 years ago, the pension has simply withered away, and the Government have done nothing to reverse that trend. The whole pensions edifice is built on a totally inadequate foundation, and until that problem is addressed all other pension reform will be merely tinkering at the edges.

Four million pensioners are poor enough to be entitled to means-tested pension credit, and that number will rise to encompass half of all pensioners by 2050. Is that something we ought to be proud of? About one third of those who are entitled to claim pension credit do not do so, partly because of the complexity of the system and partly because they do not want to spend their lives asking for handouts.

The Liberal Democrat party is the only party that has pledged to restore the earnings link immediately rather than by the end of the next Parliament or beyond, and we would like a target to be enshrined in legislation to eradicate pensioner poverty in the same way that this Government set a target on child poverty in the 2010 Act. We believe that a decent state pension is the key to a solid foundation for retirement, and our goal is to introduce a citizens pension that would give people a full pension regardless of their contributions. It would gradually be raised high enough to lift people out of means-testing.

Several other policies would be particularly beneficial to pensioners. For example, we propose that the personal tax allowance be raised to £10,000 for everyone—the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak referred to this—so that no pensioner with total income below that amount would pay any income tax. That would benefit most tax-paying pensioners to the tune of some £100. We also propose to abolish council tax and replace it with a local income tax that is based on the ability to pay, which would be of huge benefit to most pensioners. They would pay less under a local income tax than they do under council tax.

My party welcomes the Government's plan to auto-enrol workers in personal accounts under the new National Employment Savings Trust scheme, as only one half of today's work force is currently paying into a private

pension. However, that will work only if the Government are prepared to ensure that employer contributions are at a much higher level. The proposed contribution levels for personal accounts do not go far enough to ensure decent provision.

Poverty among working-age adults without dependent children is now at its highest since data were first collected in 1961. That is because the Government have focused their policies overwhelmingly on families with children. We understand that, but we should not disadvantage families who do not have children.

Of course, some of the biggest casualties of the recession have been young people. More than 700,000 18 to 24-year-olds are out of work, and that can be a real disadvantage for them as they start their working lives. We need to intervene and offer help far earlier than we do. My party has pledged to offer young people access to further education, internships and train-to-work programmes after 90 days out of work. We do not think it is right to abandon young people, often in the midst of their first attempts to find work and start a career, for up to six months without a chance to do something to improve their employability. We would offer all those young people the £55 a week jobseeker's allowance rate as a training allowance while they complete a three-month internship with an employer.

We believe that the next Government must continue to invest to stimulate the economy and create jobs. We want to rebalance the British economy and build it again on solid, sustainable and green foundations. We have identified £3.5 billion of current Government expenditure that could fund an economic stimulus and job creation plan. Together with our banking reforms, which will end the dependence of the British economy on the City of London, that plan will kick-start economic growth on stronger foundations than before, and ensure that growth and jobs last as they should.

As we face the election, which is being called today, there are several steps that can be taken in an attempt to stop a further rise in poverty and inequality. The question at this election is whether the next Government will aspire to such aims. A Liberal Democrat Administration certainly would.

12.3 pm

**Andrew Selous** (South-West Bedfordshire) (Con): I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Lynne Jones) for her speech. This is an important subject, and I am glad that she secured this debate. It is a pity that there are not more Members here to participate in it, but we understand why, in the circumstances of the general election being called today.

I welcome the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Keetch), who I believe is also standing down at this election. He does not usually speak for his party on these matters, but he is welcome here today. I am not sure where the members of his shadow Work and Pensions team are, but we wish them well in their absence.

I was particularly struck by the quote from Robert Kennedy that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak ended with. I have not heard it before, but I shall acquaint myself better with it when *Hansard* comes out tomorrow. It struck me that there was a certain similarity in what he said and some of the issues around gross

well-being, to which my party leader, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Cameron), has drawn attention.

We need to look at the facts in this important area of poverty and inequality and try to understand why things have become worse under this Government since 2004. According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and, indeed, the Government's own figures on child poverty and other statistics, it was at that point that poverty, unemployment and repossessions started rising in the UK. That was well before the recession began.

Poverty is now back at the same level it was in 2000, having risen every year since 2004-05, and an additional 400,000 children now live in poverty. There has been an increase, not a decrease, during that time. We are indebted to the work of Save the Children and others who pointed out a particularly worrying trend as far as severe poverty among children is concerned. They said that it, too, has risen since 2004-05.

This debate has rightly dealt with the position of pensioners living in poverty. There are 2.5 million pensioners living in poverty in the UK, which is some 100,000 more than in 1996-97. My party is also committed to restoring the earnings link.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Helen Goodman):** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Andrew Selous:** No, I will not. I want to make some progress.

We welcome the auto-enrolment proposals embodied in the National Employment Savings Trust initiative, which my party supported. It is important to get more people on low incomes saving in pensions.

**Helen Goodman:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Andrew Selous:** Yes, I will give way to the Minister.

**Helen Goodman:** The hon. Gentleman just made the incredible claim that child poverty had increased since 2000.

**Andrew Selous:** No, I did not.

**Helen Goodman:** I would like to give him the actual figures. In 2000, there were 3.1 million before housing costs; now there are 2.9 million. After housing costs, the measure was 4.1 million, and it is now 4 million. The hon. Gentleman simply must be accurate in what he is saying.

**Andrew Selous:** When the Minister reads the record tomorrow, she will see that I said that poverty, not child poverty, is back at the same level as in 2000. Those are the Joseph Rowntree figures. If she wants to dispute them, she is welcome to. She knows very well that my figures on child poverty referred to the increase since 2004-05, which is extremely well documented, and on which, sadly, we have not had much fresh thinking from this Government.

Another group that I am glad was mentioned today is the disabled. Several Members mentioned them in their speech, which was right and proper, because we know that there is a much higher rate of poverty among disabled people. Some 16 per cent. of non-disabled

[Andrew Selous]

people live in poverty, but the figure is around 30 per cent. for disabled people. I shall shortly discuss what my party would like to do about that. We must never lose sight of that group when we discuss these important issues.

We now have the highest levels of inequality since the comparable time series was started in 1961. That should concern us all, as it has a number of serious negative effects. The Gini coefficient, which is a commonly used measure of inequality, is now above the level that this Government inherited and, as I said, at the highest level since the start of a consistent time series in 1961. The National Equality Panel, which the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak rightly quoted, said that we have the highest level of inequality since world war two, and the UK is placed seventh worst for income inequality in the list of OECD nations—so considerably worse than many of our European neighbours.

My party is committed to building a society that is not only richer but also fairer and safer, where opportunity is more equal and poverty is abolished. We will focus our efforts on looking at strengthening families and communities and at incentives into work, which, although it has not been raised so far in this debate, is important.

With our major focus on welfare to work, we will replace this Government's complicated, bureaucratic employment programmes with our work programme, which will be a single programme of back-to-work support for everyone on out-of-work benefits, including the 2.6 million on incapacity benefits who have not had the attention that they should have had under this Government to try to help them back into work. We will also create 400,000 new apprenticeships and training opportunities over two years to tackle youth unemployment and prevent a generation from being written off by the recession.

We are passionate about education.

**Lynne Jones:** The hon. Gentleman mentioned the slight increase in inequality, but that is largely due to the huge increases in the highest rates of pay. What would the next Conservative Government do, were they to be elected? Hopefully, they will not be elected. Would they support a high pay commission, for example?

**Andrew Selous:** I will mention specifics in a moment, if the hon. Lady will allow me to develop my remarks a little bit further. I assure her that I will touch on that area.

Schools are the motor of social mobility. They provide children from low-income backgrounds the chance not to replicate low income among their own children and to increase their life chances. We will weight school funding towards children from the poorest backgrounds through a pupil premium, ensuring that extra funds follow those pupils into the schools that educate them. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak was right to draw attention to that. She mentioned the woeful underperformance of children on free school meals compared with other school children. That is a passion of the shadow Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, who has raised this matter on a number of occasions.

We want to see a universal health-visiting service for all parents and we want Sure Start to go back to its original purpose. We share the Government's aspiration to halve child poverty by 2010—although sadly, from what we have seen in the documents in the Budget, that seems not to have been achieved—and eliminate it by 2020. We supported the Child Poverty Bill during its progress through the House.

We want to make greater efforts to try to break the link between disability and poverty. We will focus on trying to find jobs for people who are disabled and trying to enable them to progress in their careers. One area that will be particularly important in that regard is flexible work. Again, there has not been leadership from the Government on promoting and creating flexible work. Five Departments have numbers of part-time employees only in single figures. The Government could and should lead by example.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak is right to say that levels of inequality matter in society. They matter for a number of reasons that are important to Conservatives. We know, from Professor Richard Wilkinson's book, which the hon. Lady mentioned—I have a copy in my office, which I have been reading—that in more unequal societies there is less volunteering and more crime. I was looking at some evidence over the weekend showing that the level of crime in London's most unequal boroughs, compared with five more equal boroughs, is significantly higher. We also know that levels of mental illness are higher in areas where there is greatest inequality. We can say that more unequal societies lead to additional costs to the public purse and prevent us from being a more cohesive society.

I am pleased that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak has the book on early intervention by the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr. Duncan Smith). That is a good example of important cross-party collaboration on early intervention. She mentioned the importance of brain development. If I remember rightly, she said that if time in the 0 to 3s, particularly, is lost it is much more difficult to make progress with a child. Politicians need to take notice of this important epidemiological insight. I believe that this cross-party work has been significant in doing that. Early intervention is important, but I agree with Professor John Hills that children need a series of what he describes as in-flight boosts to correct inequality later on.

I say to the Minister and to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak that it took a Conservative Mayor of London to bring in a living wage for local authority staff. The cleaners who cleaned the Minister's office early this morning are not paid the London living wage by her Department: I found that out from answers to parliamentary questions. I wonder whether that is as it should be.

The Government seem to have turned their back on inequality in the public sector. That is surprising. The Government can do something about that. The hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak rightly spoke about the private sector, but should not the Government take a lead in respect of the area about which they can do something? For example, the maximum sum payable for the chief executive of a strategic health authority is £204,048 a year, whereas the pay for an NHS employee

at pay band 1 is £13,233 per year—by the way, that is £600 below the minimum living standard—which is a ratio of 15.1:1.

The hon. Lady spoke about chief executives, but only in the private sector, not the public sector. Let us look at local authorities. In the local authority in Slough, which is the example that I have to hand, the lowest salary of a full-time employee is £12,994, whereas the chief executive is on a salary of £157,479, which is a ratio of 11:1.

Interestingly, in the Army—the hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Keetch), who knows about these things will agree—the ratio between a brigadier and a private soldier is only 6:1. I think that most hon. Members in this Chamber would agree that the Army is an effective, cohesive public sector organisation. If there can be an effective organisation—

**Helen Goodman** *rose*—

**Andrew Selous:** No, I will not give way to the Minister. She will have her turn to speak in a moment, when she will perhaps respond to my point about the cleaners in her own office and say whether she is happy for them to be paid below the London living wage—perhaps she is.

It is interesting that there is a much lower difference in the ratio between the lowest and the highest paid in an effective organisation.

The shadow Chancellor has said that any public sector wage higher than the Prime Minister's will have to be put to the Chancellor for agreement. Some 323 public sector employees are paid more than the Prime Minister. Over the weekend I learned that the Scottish First Minister is paid more than the Prime Minister, which is somewhat strange. The director-general of the BBC is on around £850,000 per year.

I believe in Government leading by example. If these things matter and we are going to say to private industry, "Get your house in order", private industry can rightly say to Members of Parliament, "What's going on in those institutions over which you have some say?" We have not seen much action from this Government in that area.

In answer to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak, I say that we Conservatives are committed to the minimum wage.

**Helen Goodman:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Andrew Selous:** No. The Minister will have a chance to speak in a second.

The Minister is responsible for the Child Support Agency. As shadow Minister, I find it unacceptable that, according to table 15.1 of the 2007 families and children study produced by the Department, 61 per cent. of all parents with care were not receiving child maintenance. Those are not figures for which the CSA is responsible—where there is a valid maintenance contract—but it is shocking and unacceptable that 61 per cent. of fathers, largely, have got off without taking care of their responsibilities. How are we really going to do something about inequality and poverty among the lone parents whom the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak spoke about when 61 per cent. of lone parents are not in receipt of child support?

12.19 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Helen Goodman):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship this morning, Mr. Weir. I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Lynne Jones). I am not sure what the opposite of a maiden speech is—perhaps we had better not go there, as they say. However, I wish to pay tribute to her for her speech this morning, and for the huge commitment that she has shown on these issues, both during her parliamentary career and before that in her work on housing in Birmingham.

She raised several important points to which I hope to respond. First, she talked about the importance of early intervention. Last week, I was in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen), to see the work supported by the Labour Government on early intervention. I saw three particularly good examples of that. One was work with teenagers who were pregnant or new mothers, and excellent work was being done to increase the life chances and opportunities of their babies. Another example was a family intervention project that dealt with families that suffered from a huge, complex interaction of problems. The third initiative was Sure Start and I feel proud—as does my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak, I am sure—that there are now 3,500 Sure Start centres. I am deeply alarmed by the proposal repeated by the hon. Member for South-West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) to reduce the number of Sure Start centres in this country.

My hon. Friend talked about the level of equality and how it has varied over the past 60 years. That was interesting and, like her, I assumed that equality in the country was highest immediately after the second world war. In fact, that is not borne out by the data because high levels of inequality were a spillover from the problems of the interwar years. It was not until between 1975 and 1979—after four Labour Governments—that the lowest inequality ever to have existed in this country was achieved.

I know that we are not allowed to use visual aids, but I must refer to a document on the distributional impact of the Labour Government from 1997 to 2010, produced by the independent and highly-respected Institute for Fiscal Studies. It shows that over that period, the effect of changes in tax and benefits led to an increase in wealth of about 12 per cent. for the poorest 10 per cent. of people. The effect on the richest 10 per cent. has been a reduction in wealth of about 8 per cent. Looking beyond the richest 10 per cent. of people to those earning more than £100,000, the impact of the tax and benefit changes has been minus 15 per cent.

In part, that is the result of measures taken by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who this month introduced a 50p rate of income tax for those earning above £150,000, a withdrawal of personal allowances for those earning over £100,000, and a restriction on tax relief for pension contributions. In two years' time, there will be a freeze on the higher-rate tax threshold. Meanwhile, at the other end of the income scale, there have been one-off real increases in benefits and increases in child tax credits. From 2012, a new child tax credit for one and two-year-olds is designed to benefit all parents of small children whether they are married, unmarried, separated or widowed. It will not stereotype

[*Helen Goodman*]

or ghettoise anyone, or try to make choices between the deserving and the undeserving poor.

The hon. Member for South-West Bedfordshire made several remarks and I do not have time to make a thorough critique of them all. At the end of his speech he claimed to be concerned about people on low wages—that from the party which steadfastly opposed the introduction of the minimum wage. He now says that his party is committed to the minimum wage, but he has not said whether it is committed to maintaining it in real terms. The minimum wage benefits one million people, two-thirds of whom are women. Since its introduction in 1999, it has increased in real terms by 23 per cent. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene to say that his party is committed to maintaining the minimum wage in real terms, I would be happy to give way.

**Andrew Selous:** My understanding is that the minimum wage is set by the Low Pay Commission. I think that the trick is to set it as high as possible so as not to harm the prospects of people going into low-paid work. There is a conversation to be had about the level of tax credits and the minimum wage.

**Helen Goodman:** That was as clear a commitment as one could expect under the circumstances. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak also—reasonably enough—mentioned the problems at the high end of the spectrum. It will not have escaped her notice that the Chancellor has imposed a special tax on the pools that banks have set aside for bank bonuses. As she will know, that was expected to raise £500 million, but in the event it raised £2 billion—a significant sum of money by any standards.

The Government's commitment to tackling poverty cannot be gainsaid; we have achieved some significant improvements. The hon. Member for Castle Point (Bob Spink), who is no longer in his seat, was the first to

mention pensioners, and 900,000 pensioners have been lifted out of poverty. The poorest third of pensioners are now £2,100 a year better off, and we have made moves to re-establish the link between pensions and earnings, which was so needlessly destroyed by the previous Administration.

The Government's policies on families mean that the poorest fifth of families are, on average, £3,000 a year better off. Half a million children had been lifted out of poverty by 2007, and measures taken since then will lift a further 550,000 children out of poverty by the end of the year. We have halved absolute poverty. The hon. Member for Hereford (Mr. Keetch) asked whether we have a continuing commitment to that policy. We took the Child Poverty Bill through Parliament—and we are grateful for cross-party support—because we are absolutely committed to making continued progress on that matter over the next 10 years.

**Mr. Keetch:** Will the Minister give a commitment that a future Labour Government would introduce a pensioner poverty Bill along the lines of the Child Poverty Bill, and legislate to ensure that pensioners do not fall into poverty?

**Helen Goodman:** Much as I would like to, I cannot anticipate the manifesto or the next Queen's Speech.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak asked about the significance of property taxes. She was right to mention that, and it is another reason why the Conservative party's proposal to cut inheritance tax for the wealthiest 3,000 millionaires is so bizarre when coming from a party that claims to be concerned about inequality. Any party interested in inequality must address poverty, and look across society at the whole complex of policies and how they impact on people. At this time while we struggle to emerge from a recession, I cannot see that the British people—

12.30 pm

**Mr. Mike Weir (in the Chair):** Order. Unfortunately, we have run out of time in this fascinating debate.

## Swindon to Kemble Rail Line

12.30 pm

**Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (Cotswold) (Con): I am grateful to you, Mr. Weir, and to Mr. Speaker for allowing me the opportunity to hold this Adjournment debate. I am even more grateful to the Minister for being here on a day when I am sure that he would prefer to be doing other things elsewhere.

[**DR. WILLIAM MCCREA** *in the Chair*]

I welcome you to the Chair, Dr. McCrea. This is the second Adjournment debate that I have had on this subject; the first was on 30 June 2008. Given the work that has been involved in campaigning in support of the redoubling, it is perhaps fitting that it is one of the last subjects on which I will speak before the election. If the Minister will forgive the metaphor, I hope that my campaign for redoubling is arriving at the station and that he will have some good news today for my constituents.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Mole)** *rose*—

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** Perhaps this is the good news that I am waiting for.

**Chris Mole:** In my experience as a rail Minister since last July, it is impossible to make a speech about rail without using a rail metaphor, so I forgive the hon. Gentleman.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** The Minister is obviously reserving the good news for when he speaks.

Let me begin by detailing the reasons for the campaign, how it has progressed and the incredible amount of cross-party and cross-national support that it has received. We are talking about a single-track line that stretches a mere 12.5 miles between the Swindon locomotive yard and the western portal of the Kemble tunnel. The line was singled in early 1970s. The necessity for redoubling stems from the self-evident limitations that are imposed on trains travelling in opposite directions on a single-track line. Doubling the track would provide a significant extra benefit. As passengers who use the line know only too well, delays and cancellations are frequent, the infrastructure cannot support an hourly timetable and delays are regularly exported from the line. Network Rail believes that significant demand from passengers and freight is being suppressed because of these limitations.

The second factor is the nature of the Swindon-Kemble line as a diversionary route. As the Minister will know, because I have spoken to him privately about this, the Welsh Affairs Committee's 10th report of the 2009-10 Session, which is entitled "Cross-border provision of public service for Wales: follow-up", noted:

"The main diversionary route for South-Wales London services when the Severn Tunnel is closed for maintenance runs from Swindon via Kemble and Gloucester."

It adds that the Severn Tunnel

"would remain operational...into the medium term, but that regular closures for maintenance would nevertheless be necessary...although the Tunnel would be suitable for electrification, this will require a longer closure for the work to be completed."

The relevant section of the report finishes by noting:

"The importance of this line as a diversionary route when the Severn Tunnel is closed will be heightened during electrification of the Great Western Main Line. We urge the Government to ensure that final costs are agreed as soon as possible so that work can begin."

The Minister will also know, as I mentioned in my previous Adjournment debate, that the redoubling would "provide a diversionary route for freight traffic travelling from Southampton to the west midlands and for trains from the south-west to the north of England, which is the preferred diversionary route."—[*Official Report*, 30 June 2008; Vol. 478, c. 705.]

There are also additional benefits, such as building in rail capacity to support growth and regeneration in the south-west in the coming years, supporting freight movement and the cost saving to be achieved by closing the signal box at Minety. I will not elaborate on the scheme's further benefits, because the case has been well and truly made, but it is worth mentioning that supporting rail travel ties in with the Government's and, indeed, the Opposition's policy on a modal shift to supporting green travel and the green economy, which would lead to CO<sub>2</sub> reductions.

If the Minister will indulge me further, I would like to take him on a quick diversionary route—he will be glad to know that that is my second and last rail metaphor—to clarify exactly where we are now on the redoubling and how we have got to this point. I have campaigned for the redoubling of the line for many years. Unfortunately, as he knows, the Office of Rail Regulation announced its funding plans for 2009-14 on 5 June 2008. Although we had the good news that the Cotswold line would be redoubled, it was announced that the Swindon-Kemble line would not receive funding. In my view, and probably in the view of the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Drew), the Swindon-Kemble line was perhaps more deserving than the North Cotswolds line.

Following that news, I called an Adjournment debate on 30 June, in which the then Transport Minister, the hon. Member for Glasgow, South (Mr. Harris), stated:

"I wish the scheme a fair wind."—[*Official Report*, 30 June 2008; Vol. 478, c. 712.]

Subsequently, I was able to keep up pressure for reconsideration of the scheme. I did that through meetings, first, with the hon. Member for Glasgow, South and, subsequently, with the Secretary of State for Transport. On both occasions, I was accompanied by colleagues from Gloucestershire, including my neighbour the hon. Member for Stroud, who has been a long-time supporter of work on the line. Representatives of Network Rail and First Great Western were also present.

**Mr. David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): My neighbour and I make common cause on this issue, which is very pleasing. I declare an interest, in that I was on the line this morning. The key point, beside the fact that there is to be a general election, is that we need to know now that the team will come over from the Cotswold line. That has to be the absolute priority. If it does not happen now, it will not happen this side of a decade. Does the hon. Gentleman agree?

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** My neighbour is clairvoyant. I will make exactly that case a little later.

[Mr. Clifton-Brown]

The lobbying work proved effective. It was clear that despite the ORR's decision, support for the scheme was forthcoming from the hon. Member for Glasgow, South, the Secretary of State for Transport, Gloucestershire county council, the South West of England Regional Development Agency, the regional assembly, the district and urban councils and most, if not all, Gloucestershire MPs. The only thing missing was the funding.

The first steps to overcome that problem took shape when the Department for Transport committed £900,000, and the Welsh Assembly offered £100,000 towards a feasibility study. Some £20 million was put aside from the regional funding allowance for the project itself, but that still left a gap—the scheme had been estimated as costing £37 million before the new feasibility study was conducted.

On 3 September 2009, I attended the South West Regional Grand Committee, where I found that the Minister for the South West was another supporter of the redoubling scheme. At the meeting, he clearly stated:

“It would provide diversionary seven-day railway capacity and route capacity that First Great Western has indicated it could take up on a commercial basis. It would also facilitate housing growth if the Government were to bring that forward. Good arguments can be made in favour of the redoubling of this line and I am happy to play my part in that process.”—[*Official Report, South West Regional Grand Committee*, 9 September 2009; c. 12.]

As the Committee progressed, I challenged the Minister to produce one positive outcome from its proceedings. I must give him credit for taking up that challenge and writing to the RDA on 6 October 2009, suggesting that if it could produce

“an agreed, realistic and deliverable five year programme”,

he hoped that that programme would be able to go ahead.

By 16 November 2009, the Minister for the South West had persuaded the RDA to agree to provide a further £25 million in funding. The money had previously been allocated to the Westbury bypass, which had been refused permission, so the money could be reallocated to fund fully the Swindon-Kemble line. With the feasibility study not expected to be completed until the end of the year, it was clear that that deadline could not be achieved, but we now had an absolute commitment for £45 million towards the project.

Subsequent to that news, the hon. Member for Stroud called an Adjournment debate on 27 October 2009, when he made a further eloquent case for the work. The debate further highlighted the cross-party support for the scheme. Unfortunately, when the results of the feasibility study were announced, the final figure—as the Minister knows only too well—was £52.4 million and it was clear that further work was needed to progress the scheme.

I then contacted 18 right hon. and hon. Members in the Welsh parliamentary area, for whom the redoubling work would have particular significance. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies), the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the hon. Member for Ogmere (Huw Irranca-Davies), and the right hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) for their support in contacting the relevant Ministers.

That brings us up to date, in terms of detailing why the scheme is so vital, the steps that have been taken by myself and others to raise its profile, and the success that we have achieved.

Before the Minister responds, I want to raise with him the ultimate purpose of today's debate. We are now looking at either cutting £7.4 million from the estimated cost of the scheme according to the feasibility study, or finding £7.4 million of funding from non-governmental sources or from departmental end-of-year savings, or a combination of the two.

Many of my constituents fail to understand how a scheme that appeared to have ministerial support as long ago as 2008 has still not been able to progress. Although they and I understand that there are financial pressures, there are also time concerns. In that regard, I entirely agree with what the hon. Member for Stroud said. As he pointed out, there is a clear window of opportunity if the go-ahead for the redoubling work is given soon. Skills and equipment that are currently being used for the redoubling of the North Cotswolds line could easily be transferred to the Swindon-Kemble line. If they are not transferred, the larger national schemes such as Crossrail and the refurbishment of Reading station will come into play and the Swindon-Kemble line might lose its place in the queue, perhaps for many years.

So can the Minister say exactly what discussions he has had with Network Rail since the figure of £52.4 million was announced in the feasibility study? Most importantly, can he tell us if he believes that £7.4 million in savings can be made? If so, why has it taken since January for that announcement to be made? If he cannot tell us that those savings can be made, or if he has doubts that they can be made, does he believe that any end-of-year departmental savings could be redirected towards this scheme? Furthermore, Network Rail has a huge maintenance budget and it will save on maintenance if this scheme goes ahead. So, could Network Rail be persuaded to find some money for the scheme?

In addition, has the Minister had any discussions with the train operator on the line, First Great Western? Any passenger travelling at peak times between Kemble and London, as the hon. Member for Stroud did this morning, would pay £58.50 for a single standard ticket or £91 for a first-class seat. This is a very lucrative line for First Great Western. With a growth in rail users and a growth in population in the south-west, does First Great Western not have a vested interest in seeing the redoubling scheme progress? If it does, could it possibly provide some money towards it? I also want to ask the Minister if there are any other funding avenues that he, I or anybody else should be investigating.

Ultimately, however, I hope that the Minister will use this 11th-hour opportunity, before Parliament is dissolved, to give all the users of this rail line some wonderful news, by announcing that he has found a solution and that the redoubling of the single track between Swindon and Kemble will now go ahead.

12.43 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Mole):** Dr. McCrea, it is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship in this debate about the redoubling of the Swindon to Kemble railway.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Cotswold (Mr. Clifton-Brown) on securing the debate. Along with a number of other Members of Parliament, he has been diligent and very determined in promoting the case for the redoubling of the route. At the same time, of course, I also welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Stroud (Mr. Drew) for the debate.

I am pleased to have another Westminster Hall debate on this issue, as it gives me the opportunity to give the latest position on the work of achieving an acceptable and affordable price for this redoubling scheme, so that it can be delivered with financial support from the south-west region. I want to reassure the House that much effort is being devoted to the issue. In particular, I want to thank Network Rail, the nation's rail infrastructure owner and operator, for the hard work that it is doing in this regard.

The Secretary of State for Transport and the Minister for the South West have both expressed support for the scheme, as the hon. Member for Cotswold outlined. We all recognise the value of extra capacity and improved train performance that this particular redoubling scheme would create. Before I turn to the specific subject of the debate in more detail, let me remind the House about how the region and the wider area served by the Great Western main line, in particular the line's passengers and freight customers, will benefit from our ambitious rail plans.

The performance of First Great Western continues to be of high quality, with Network Rail reporting in its latest figures that 93.4 per cent. of First Great Western's trains arrived on time. On 23 July 2009, we announced the £1.1 billion electrification programme of the Great Western main line between London, Bristol, Oxford, Newbury and Swansea, along with the electrification of the line between Liverpool and Manchester. That was great news for those specific areas and for the public transport industry in general.

The electrification programme will boost jobs, reduce journey times, make trains more reliable, increase capacity, contribute to sustainable or "greener" transport and build on improvements in train performance. From 2016, passengers travelling between London, Slough, Reading, Newbury, Didcot, Oxford and Swindon, as well as to intermediate stations, will benefit from the reliability and comfort of electric trains. The aim is that, by 2017, electrification will be extended to inter-city services to Bristol, Cardiff and Swansea. Electrification will mean that minimum journey times between London and Swansea can be reduced by almost 20 minutes. It will also enable capacity on inter-city services during the morning peak hour to be increased by about 15 per cent. Electrification of the Great Western main line is being integrated with the significant upgrade of Reading station, which the hon. Gentleman referred to, and the £16 billion Crossrail project, which will reach out to Heathrow airport and Maidenhead.

Electrification of the Great Western routes between London and Bristol and between London and Swansea will potentially enable more trains to operate. It will also reduce the cost of the track and the damage to it. The environment will be improved as fewer diesel trains will run. Journeys for passengers will be improved, as electric trains will be able to accelerate faster and consequently journey times between London and the

other major city centres will be reduced. Operators will also be able to run more frequent services as their business continues to grow.

I will now address the Swindon to Kemble line specifically. Network Rail initially identified the redoubling of the line as one of several options to improve the performance of the Great Western main line and the wider network. The line was originally singled in 1968, which is slightly earlier than the hon. Gentleman suggested, as an economy measure by the operator at the time, British Railways' Western Region.

Network Rail believes that redoubling of the line would improve performance, especially when the line acts as a diversionary route for trains between London and south Wales or when there is engineering work on the line or in the Severn tunnel. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that that use of the line will be especially important when electrification takes place.

The south-west region and the local authorities believe that redoubling is essential if an upgraded Cheltenham and Gloucester to London service is to be provided. The railway industry agrees with that view. I fully accept that we also need to provide for the improvement to such rail links. However, a little while back the Office of Rail Regulation concluded that there was not sufficient evidence to justify the inclusion of the Swindon-Kemble enhancement as a funded scheme to deliver the overall high level outputs specified by the Government. That decision by ORR has been debated frequently in the House and we have responded positively to Members' representations.

More recently, the Secretary of State for Transport wrote to regional partners to outline his strong support for the redoubling scheme. In our response to the south-west region on its regional funding advice, we asked that consideration be given to taking forward a fully funded Swindon-Kemble major scheme. The south-west region has risen to the occasion and I must congratulate it on the action that it has taken, which I will return to in a moment.

In addition to that dialogue with the south-west region, the Secretary of State and I have committed Department officials to work with the railway industry to make the case for redoubling. As the hon. Member for Cotswold well knows, the south-west region, the Department for Transport and the Welsh Assembly Government have jointly funded a rail investment study by Network Rail. Their total contributions amounted to some £2.6 million. That is a good example of working in partnership and I commend the parties involved for their respective contributions.

It is also now well known that the south-west region has offered to contribute £45 million from its funding allocation budget towards the capital cost of redoubling. That is very welcome indeed and I commend the role of the Minister for the South West in making that happen. That £45 million is made up of an initial £20 million contribution, followed by a further £25 million allocation from funds that were originally earmarked for the Westbury bypass. Network Rail has already provided an interim report on its investigations. That has been examined by the Department, which has asked Network Rail to continue to explore a wide range of issues.

Network Rail is undertaking an evaluation of the earthworks and associated structures on the Swindon to Kemble line, in particular the disused sections where

[Chris Mole]

only minimal maintenance has been carried out since the line was singled. There is also a need to determine the most efficient means of bringing a number of level crossings up to modern standards. Much of the present single line is laid along the centre line of the old double track formation. That makes for a slightly more formidable challenge in redoubling compared to a situation where the single track takes up just one of the paths of the old lines. In December 2009, Network Rail concluded that, on the evidence available, redoubling the 13-mile section of route would cost £52.4 million, reduced from a previous and less sophisticated calculation of £62 million.

I recognise that redoubling the Swindon to Kemble line is a regional priority that could facilitate growth and support resilience and performance. As I said, it acts as a diversionary route to and from south Wales when work is taking place on that route, particularly in the Severn tunnel. The importance of the diversionary route will increase while the task of electrification is taking place.

However, the national rail budget remains fully committed until 2014, and we cannot bridge the funding gap. In the circumstances, the £45 million allocated in the regional funding allocation is, for all practical planning purposes, the maximum presently available. The current price of £52.4 million therefore represents, as the hon. Gentleman identified, a difference of £7.4 million with the budget. Deducting the £2.6 million spent on the study reduces the difference to £4.8 million.

Network Rail is exploring a number of opportunities to see whether the gap can be bridged, including the deployment of different and possibly innovative contracting methods to get the most competitive price. The study also considered the extent to which reconditioned materials could be used and how best to undertake the work. For example, should all the work be done over a limited time scale while the line is shut, or on weekends and at night? The emerging conclusion appears to involve a mixture of both, but I am equally conscious to ensure that passengers using the line—no doubt they include many constituents of the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friend—are not overly inconvenienced. It might also be possible, as the hon. Gentleman said, to offset some of the work against the cost of maintaining the route in future years if it remained a single line. The Office of Rail Regulation is considering the matter.

I am personally confident that the hard work being done by Network Rail's engineers will reduce costs to an amount near, if not within, the funds available. They are a focused group and have risen to the challenge of doing the job within the £45 million limit.

**Mr. David Drew** (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): That is relatively good news. I do not want to speak out of turn, but my only worry was that the people assigned the problem were not the first rank of engineers within Network Rail. It is important to know that the brightest and best are seeing it as an opportunity. I hope that my hon. Friend will ensure that they can hold forth and that the scheme goes forward.

**Chris Mole:** The officials within the Department to whom I speak advise me that the people working on the situation are absolutely committed to making it happen.

I know that my hon. Friend is concerned about when the team will finish work on the Cotswolds line. As the issues are considered more closely, one factor to take into account is that carrying the team across might be a way to reduce costs from the estimate, which might have been based on assumptions that a team would be set up from scratch.

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** I agree with my neighbour the hon. Member for Stroud (Mr. Drew); it is relatively good news. If we are not to have an announcement today that the scheme will go ahead, we are at least moving towards the station. However, does the Minister not agree that the longer we take to find the funding, the more it will cost and the more funding we will have to find? It seems as though we will never catch up with ourselves enough for the scheme to be given the go-ahead. What timetabling assurances can he give us about when the funding might be found? Has he really re-examined all alternative funding sources, such as First Great Western?

**Chris Mole:** The hon. Gentleman has asked me two specific questions about Network Rail, one of which I just answered; it concerned potential savings from future renewals and maintenance costs that could be offset by undertaking the work earlier. The other involves the franchise operator, First Great Western. He made the case that it might be interested in an investment that could enable it to grow its passenger numbers. I suspect that First Great Western's assessment would prioritise investment in the front-loading of a new train service that would not run at sufficient capacity in the first instance to return a profit. Its priority would probably be to subsidise the first few years of the new services, which would take advantage of the capacity, rather than investing in infrastructure, which I think most train operators are fairly reluctant to do.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the Welsh Assembly Government, and I know that he is interested in other potential funding sources such as the European Union. The line is not a trans-European network, so it would not necessarily qualify for European funds from that source. Nor does the nature of the area suggest that funds for addressing regeneration and disadvantage would be forthcoming. I am not aware whether the Welsh Assembly Government could access European Union funding, but the Welsh Assembly Government might be able to make the case that it is a strategic diversionary route for south Wales. However, I understand that they have already been making best use of European funds for investment in railways. Given what I have heard about their investment in railways in Wales, I suspect that they are unlikely to want to invest in railways outside Wales. They seem to be fully committed to the railways in their own territories at this time.

To address the hon. Gentleman's question about timing, I understand why he is anxious. Network Rail is due to report to the Department's officials early this summer, by which I mean no later than June. If a positive result is forthcoming, I hope that a deal can be struck. Although we are driving hard to get the job complete within what is on the table, I am nevertheless anxious to know whether the amount can be supplemented should a genuine need arise. I have discussed European and

Welsh Assembly funding. In these challenging economic times, we must be realistic about how limited such opportunities are.

Network Rail's 5,000 engineers have experience from earlier redoubling and are seeking to improve how it is done. Perhaps that will help the hon. Gentleman. He asked me for my assessment of the prospects of reducing the cost further. At one point, the outline figure was £62 million; it is now down to £52 million. There are challenges as redoubling work takes place and problems with embankments and cuttings are identified. The ground on which a one-track railway sits is not always robust enough to build a two-track railway. As such problems are identified, costs rise, but as I said, using our experience from earlier efforts can reduce them again.

In conclusion, the spotlight is on Network Rail to achieve an efficient price for the scheme. It is working hard to do so, but until it provides something affordable, further developments cannot go forward. I am keen to ensure that this unique opportunity to implement the scheme is not lost. If Network Rail's price is affordable and the region's endorsement is maintained, spending could be allocated over the fiscal years 2011-12 and 2012-13. Our aspiration would then be to commission the doubled track by December 2012.

## Tackling Crime (Plymouth)

12.59 pm

**Linda Gilroy** (Plymouth, Sutton) (Lab/Co-op): As I pointed out in 2001 in one of a number of debates on crime, Plymouth was one of the earliest places to adopt a partnership approach to tackling crime, as recommended by the Morgan report. Many years on, that partnership work is now wider and deeper. It is embedded in the work of our local strategic partnership, Plymouth 2020, which has the vision that by 2020, our city will be recognised as

“one of Europe's finest, most vibrant waterfront cities, where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone”.

Community safety and bearing down on crime are important parts of that.

Since 1997, crime has fallen by 36 per cent. and violent crime is down by 40 per cent. nationally, although one would never know that from some of the stories in the national press. I do not usually read the *Daily Mail*, but I noticed yesterday that it focused only on the negative aspects and quoted figures as if there were no context of significant drops in crime.

In Plymouth, the police authority, the basic command unit and their partners have used the Government's investment and policies to make us the fourth safest police authority area and one of the safest cities in the country. As well as celebrating that, I will focus on how the next Parliament can help us to continue down the strong direction of travel that we have established locally and nationally.

Things have moved on since the 2001 debate. With neighbourhood renewal funding came the need to set up the local strategic partnership. For over seven years, it has worked on stretch targets set under the safer and stronger communities theme group that reports to the main board. Recently, the Audit Commission awarded Plymouth with a coveted green flag in the first comprehensive area assessment, which indicates “exceptional performance and innovation that other public services could learn from”.

It was awarded for

“the way partners in Plymouth plan ahead to protect people in the city during large scale emergencies.”

The new Oneplace area assessment of local public services says that Plymouth is a safe place for most people and concludes:

“The Council, Police, Primary Care Trust, Fire and Rescue Service, other public services, voluntary groups and businesses work extremely well together to plan ahead and respond to emergencies to keep the city safe.”

That is reflected in the day-to-day work that has resulted in a drop in our crime figures. In the year to September 2009, crime was down by 9.6 per cent. compared with the previous year and in the first quarter of 2010, it was down by 11.7 per cent. compared with the same period in 2009. There are still challenges aplenty. Although there is a well established downward trajectory in crime over a number of years according to police recorded crime and the British crime survey, it does not always feel that way and certainly not to the victims of the crime that remains.

The fear of crime remains stubbornly high, although people rate their local situation better than their perception of the country as a whole. Such fear is partly rooted in a belief that the steps to tackle crime are not travelling in

[Linda Gilroy]

the right direction, even though they clearly are. The police and the criminal justice system are not the only public services that face such perceptions. There is a wide disparity in the answers people give about the health service. When asked about their last experience of using the health service, most people say it was good, but when asked how the health service is doing generally, people usually think that it is travelling in the wrong direction, which it clearly is not.

Lagging perceptions are not new. When I worked at the Gas Consumers Council in the 1990s, people commonly referred to the gas boards even though they had been done away with 25 years previously. That is perhaps not good news for the police, who have a target of enabling the public to feel confident and safe in their communities. Against the background of negative reporting, that is difficult to achieve. However, those involved are determined to do it in a realistic way by engaging people with what the police are doing to bring safety to local communities.

Important in achieving that are the new tools being developed by neighbourhood police teams, which Plymouth has had for some time. Police and communities together, or PACT meetings are one good way of ensuring that the things that people in the community rate as important are tackled. Some neighbourhood police teams have gone further. The team that covers Stonehouse has gone from house to house in the last year to find out proactively what matters to people in the neighbourhood.

That was part of and complemented by Operation Glendale, which was designed to roll back an upsurge in drug-related crime in the waterfront area of my constituency. It was a great success and all the more so for engaging with other partners in the strategic partnership. It helped to meet one of the key stretch targets in the work plan. It also led to a fall in acquisitive crimes because bearing down on drug-related crime has an impact on theft to fund drug use. Compared with the previous year, domestic burglaries were down 32.6 per cent., theft from motor vehicles 37.7 per cent. and the theft of vehicles 28.1 per cent.

Although there has been an increase in serious violent crime, violent crime is down. Homicides have gone down from four in the previous year to one. Chief Inspector Andy Bickley stated that a change in the recording practice accounted for most of the increase in serious violent crime and offered the reassurance that it was not an indication that Plymouth was becoming a more violent place.

At the last strategic partnership meeting I attended, the stretch target for the number of domestic violence incidents recorded by police was being discussed because it was not high enough. More active engagement was planned to ensure that more domestic incidents were reached. That is sensible because detection, along with seeing cases through to conviction, is a key factor in preventing crime. Of course, such work may have an adverse impact on the police recorded crime figures in the interim.

The point of this debate is to acknowledge the success of what has been done and to look forward and consider what further tools could maintain the downward trend in crime. That becomes more difficult the more successful we are. I want to raise three points. First, there is a need to maintain front-line staff, including police community

support officers. Secondly, there needs to be a whole community answer to alcohol abuse and related crime. Thirdly, I want to mention the Talents programme, which was developed in Plymouth and is a cost-effective way of producing results.

On front-line staff and PCSOs, there used to be a big argument about getting officers out of cars and having bobbies back on the beat. We still discuss how to ensure that police officers and PCSOs are out and about for a high percentage of their time, but I have not heard the either/or argument about panda cars versus the beat for some time. That is thanks largely to the advent of PCSOs, who have become the eyes and ears of the neighbourhood team and trusted allies to people in communities who want to see change for the better. With the advent of neighbourhood policing, of which PCSOs are an important part, we have both/and, not either/or.

My constituents and I worry that the pressures facing police authorities, including the added pressures arising from the pension obligation, will weaken what has been so recently established to such good effect. What measures does the Minister think are needed to ensure that police authorities are required to make administrative efficiency savings, while protecting front-line services? Police forces such as Devon and Cornwall have done some of that work effectively to ensure that front-line services can be developed. I hope that that will be recognised. A blend of carrots and sticks will be required to focus minds on the difficult times that lie ahead. I hope that he will give some pointers on how he thinks that will happen.

I was pleased to hear that partners in our local strategic partnership are planning to share back-office and procurement costs on a scale that would not have been possible before we had the strategic partnerships that are now well embedded. That can and must be scaled up through multi-area agreements across local authorities, PCTs and police authority areas if our precious front-line services are to be protected.

Having an alcohol policy is simply a no-brainer. I do not mean that in the sense that some people consider it a good thing to get drunk out of their skull at a weekend; I mean it in the sense of having effective policies to reduce demands on the health service, the police authority and much other public service spending. There is also, of course, a quality of life issue. A great deal of work has been undertaken by organisations and individuals in Plymouth to prevent and alleviate harm resulting from the use and abuse of alcohol. The challenge set out in the Government's "Safe. Sensible. Social. The Next Steps in the National Alcohol Strategy," which was published in 2007, is to minimise health harms, violence and the antisocial behaviour associated with alcohol, while ensuring that people are still able to enjoy alcohol safely and responsibly, as many people, of course, do.

I have a sense that, despite the strategy, there is a need to give greater impetus to what is being done locally and nationally. If we are to bear down further on crime, it is important to deal with the matter correctly and, from what I know, it should not be rocket science to do so. We need to create cities and communities in which people who want to enjoy themselves can do so without damaging their own health or damaging the communities that suffer from antisocial behaviour. We also need to ensure that the health of individuals whom such people

come across is not damaged. That includes far too many shop workers and public sector workers in the health and police services. I am a great admirer of the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers "Freedom from Fear" campaign. However, we still need to get to grips with alcohol, because it is at the root of so much antisocial behaviour against public sector workers. Dealing with crime has to be as much about changing the culture of things as it is about conventional policing. As I said, doing so is not rocket science, but it requires the sort of joined-up national, regional and local approach that is essential if we are to preserve front-line services and meet the challenges that lie ahead.

I would like to offer a solution to some of the taxing problems that we will face in the coming years, which will perhaps be part of the answer to the things that I have mentioned above and to many other things as well. Mr. James Webster, who until recently was Plymouth's police commander, looked to the Gospel according to St. Matthew to find inspiration from the parable of the talents—you will be familiar with that parable, Dr. McCrea. The landowner gave money to each of his servants, and urged them to make good use of it. Those who invested it made bigger returns and in turn earned more.

Chief Superintendent Webster gave £500 to each of Plymouth's 11 neighbourhood sergeants to develop initiatives that would help to address crime and disorder priorities identified by local residents at PACT meetings. As with the landowner's servants, each sergeant had to account for what they had done with the money. The range of ideas was extraordinary—from a simple TV and video set-up showing policing information at two of the city's biggest supermarkets, to a fireworks scheme in an area of Devonport with an arson problem. There was also a street dance initiative, a boxing club, a football coaching scheme and a project that funded students themselves to develop community ideas.

In a follow-on from the first Talents programme, neighbourhood teams linked with some of the Co-operative Society stores in the city to tackle the youth crime and disorder often associated with hanging around the communities' eight-til-late-type stores. That programme is in its 13th round. It has brought a whole new approach to policing and has released the full potential of some very talented people. When Mr. Webster was interviewed about the programme by Carl Eve, a reporter for *The Herald* in Plymouth, he said:

"When I came to Plymouth, I quickly realised the very high calibre of staff we were now recruiting - much more than when I joined - but our rank structure hadn't changed... We were getting top-quality people but weren't making it easy for them to use the full range of their abilities. They have massive powers on the street - they can arrest people or break down doors - but they don't have the power to authorise expenditure of a £10 note."

He said that policing procedures "strangled innovation" at street level and that officers complained that, if they could only get funding for an idea, they could achieve better results. Just like in the parable, Mr. Webster gave them that opportunity. He allowed them to be creative, but insisted that there should be a return. Officers have in fact turned £500 into £20,000 or £30,000 projects. They have created long-term community assets and generated good will from members of the community involved.

The Home Office has supported the initiative, and £55,000 of the national partnership improvement fund money has been awarded to the city's strategic partnership,

to develop the idea across the entire partnership. In the difficult times that lie ahead, we should perhaps take heed of what the programme's author says about it:

"If I had £20,000, I could buy a new police car, but its impact would be very little. Put £20,000 into the community, from the grass roots up, and I can do a lot more with it... Once you allow officers the power and responsibility they can do far more than you ever would if you just directed them. It's inspiring and humbling to see people fired up. People join the police to do great things."

The Talents model gives a structure to seek funding, and to create leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship in the fight against crime in Plymouth. Indeed, it is a practical working model for partnerships for and with other public services that deliver at a community level. Our further education provider—the City college—is now delivering a course designed to empower front-line staff in public services to use the model. Public services, including the fire service, are indeed using the model.

I am pleased to have had the chance to talk about some positive things in relation to tackling crime in Plymouth. I hope that the Minister, as well as joining me in acknowledging some of the good work being done and thanking those who work so hard to deliver good public services, will point the way to how we can go even further in bearing down on crime in Plymouth and elsewhere.

1.16 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Alan Campbell):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Dr. McCrea, and to listen to the wise words of my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Linda Gilroy). I congratulate her on securing this important debate and on her long-standing commitment to the issue, which has been shown outside our short debate today. She has been a strong local champion for the people whom she represents. We share her concern and commitment to ensuring that we maintain reductions in crime and antisocial behaviour. We take the issue very seriously.

I am pleased to note from my hon. Friend's comments that Plymouth reflects the continued national downward trend in crime and disorder. As she said, overall crime is down nationally by 36 per cent. and there have been bigger reductions in burglary and vehicle crime and violent crime. The south-west is a relatively low-crime area and overall crime is lower in Plymouth than in many similar areas nationally. However, given that Plymouth is an urban centre, the figures are, of course, slightly higher than those for the surrounding areas. Many types of crime are declining, such as theft of vehicles, burglary, criminal damage and violence, and they are continuing to fall even during a recession. The accepted wisdom was that there would be a big increase in crime during a recession, but that has not happened. Part of the reason for that is the proactive response from not just the Government, but all agencies on the ground, including those in Plymouth.

We have put measures in place for the longer term—for example, more effective action is being taken to tackle domestic abuse and families are safer as a result. I join my hon. Friend in congratulating Plymouth on being awarded a green flag in 2009 through the comprehensive area assessment for protecting the public during large-scale emergencies. I agree with the central theme of her

[*Mr. Alan Campbell*]

speech, which is the importance of good local working. In order to tackle crime and disorder successfully, it is vital that key local stakeholders work in partnership together.

Crime is being tackled locally by Plymouth's community safety partnership, which combines the previous crime and reduction disorder partnership with the stronger communities group of the local strategic partnership. A range of public, third sector and business agencies are working well together to keep the city safe, and that provides an inclusive, integrated approach to tackling the city's safety issues. That is important because tackling crime and disorder is not just a matter for the police, the local authority or, indeed, the Government; it is a matter for the whole community. The key to tackling crime and antisocial behaviour is for good local partnerships to work together.

My hon. Friend drew attention to Operation Talents, which is a highly innovative and successful way in which local groups can work together to consider how things can be done more effectively. The key is to trust local people and local partnerships. It is about not only sharing responsibilities but focusing on problem solving. We need to understand what is happening in an area and who is causing the problems so that we can target resources on those who blight our local communities, because that will reassure the majority of residents. I am sure that other areas will want to look at Operation Talents and its underlying principles, because it is very much the direction in which we want local partnerships to go. Opting for such a scheme is a matter for local areas, but we, at the Home Office, are very pleased to do everything that we can to support them.

When we talk about crime and disorder, people want to know about the local police. Plymouth follows a well recognised neighbourhood policing model. Teams are present in all 43 neighbourhoods in the city's three policing areas. All neighbourhoods have three top priorities agreed through a community engagement and they benefit from a person first, problem solving approach.

Nationally, police numbers are at an historic level, and they are supported by 16,000 police and community support officers. I want to reassure my hon. Friend that the Government have guaranteed the funding for warranted officers and PCSOs who do such an important job in her community, and in all our communities. It is about not just numbers but how the police work in an area. Neighbourhood police teams are transforming policing in our local communities, with 80 per cent. of their time being spent on front-line policing. Moreover, they are governed locally by the terms of the policing pledge, which is partly designed locally. They are measured by the confidence that local people have in the police and in their partners.

Let me say something about police funding. Given that we live in a changed set of financial circumstances, my hon. Friend has raised some understandable concerns. We have guaranteed that the money will be there for warranted officers and PCSOs into the future. We have already announced a £259 million increase in overall police funding for 2011. None the less, in the longer term, it will be necessary for the police to continue to look for more savings.

As my hon. Friend acknowledged, the police in her area are already embarked on such a process. The police service delivered value-for-money improvements of £500 million in 2008-09, and is on track to deliver £1.3 billion per annum by March 2011.

**Linda Gilroy:** Does the Minister understand the concern that a successful authority has when it has already achieved its target? In being expected to go further, it will be benchmarked against authorities that have not gone quite so far. Will the Minister consider how the formula could be worked to take account of that?

**Mr. Campbell:** I will certainly bear that point in mind and also talk to my colleague, the Minister for Policing, Crime and Counter-Terrorism. Changing the police formula is very difficult. If we change it in one area, it has a knock-on effect in others. Generally, we expect police forces to make savings in, for example, ICT and the procurement of goods and services. Moreover, we expect them to work together better to procure not just vehicles and equipment but the services that they need. Whatever concerns individual police forces have, it is incumbent on all police authorities and forces to do everything that they can to save money in such difficult times.

My hon. Friend raised the idea of the whole community coming together to tackle the problem of alcohol, and I agree with her. Many areas have problems with alcohol and crime and disorder, but, again, it is a matter of public perception. The reality is that alcohol-related crime has fallen in many areas in recent years, but it is still too high, and it can have a huge and damaging effect on local communities. Our aim is to minimise the violent antisocial behaviour and the health harms associated with alcohol, but we also want to ensure that people can enjoy alcohol safely and responsibly. There is an array of powers that partnerships can use, and I urge them to do so. When such powers are used, people's behaviour changes.

The Government understand the need to tackle the irresponsible premises that contribute to alcohol-related crime and disorder, which is why we introduced the new mandatory code that comes into force today. The code bans irresponsible promotions such as, "All you can drink for £10", "Women drink free" deals and speed-drinking competitions. Moreover, we are committed to improving the management of the night-time economy, and we have invested in a major programme of training for front-line practitioners to ensure that existing powers are being used effectively.

We have also invested in regular enforcement campaigns—such as the £1.5 million partnership support programme from the Home Office—in the top 50 alcohol priority areas specifically to target public perceptions of drunk and rowdy behaviour. Plymouth has been identified as a priority area for 2010-11, and, as such, will receive additional support to tackle alcohol-related crime and disorder. We are currently in the process of planning the next phase of support for our priority areas.

On 13 and 14 October, police and licensing colleagues from Plymouth attended the Home Office's alcohol skills seminars in Torbay at which training and guidance was given on enforcement skills. We are also committed to encouraging individual responsibility. We have launched the £4 million national "Know your limits" social marketing

campaign to challenge the tolerance of drunkenness as well as establishing nine new adult alcohol arrest referral pilot schemes, and a further six pilot schemes for young people to ensure that those who have been arrested for an alcohol-related offence can benefit from a brief intervention by a trained worker, which should help significantly to reduce reoffending.

Furthermore, we have introduced drink-banning orders, which prohibit known troublemakers from entering pubs and clubs and consuming alcohol in public. We are committed to continued reductions in alcohol-related crime and disorder, and we believe that the measures that I have outlined and those that we will consider in future will bring further benefits to our communities.

We know that antisocial behaviour is sometimes fuelled by alcohol. Perceptions of antisocial behaviour in Devon and Cornwall are in line with the average for England and Wales, and we have taken a front-footed approach to reducing such behaviour. The new deal for communities has developed local programmes to tackle perceptions of antisocial behaviour over the 10 years it has been operating. My hon. Friend asked with great frustration why the public does not recognise what is going on in their area. Changing attitudes and perceptions is very difficult.

**Linda Gilroy:** Does the Minister think that if the public understood the cost in each locality, it might focus their minds rather sharply?

**Mr. Campbell:** There is a considerable cost to antisocial behaviour. However, there is an understanding among the public, particularly where alcohol is concerned, that they should acknowledge that the investment—and it can be considerable investment—in alcohol referral pilots, drug intervention projects, family intervention programmes and other such interventions pays, because, in the long term, the pay back is considerably more than the cost of investment. However, at this time, and in the future, there will always be different priorities in the public mind. I am clear, as I am sure that my hon. Friend is, that antisocial behaviour continues to be of major concern to communities in Plymouth and elsewhere.

**Dr. William McCrea (in the Chair):** The next debate is about the development of Kidderminster railway station; I see the Minister is very popular today and is back in his post again.

## Kidderminster Railway Station

1.30 pm

**Dr. Richard Taylor (Wyre Forest) (Ind):** It is a delight to have secured this debate under your chairmanship, Dr. McCrea, right at the end of this Parliament. You will have noticed that this morning's subjects have been crime, poverty and inequality, and public transport—three of the crucial issues that we shall, I think, be returning to repeatedly in the next few weeks.

I must declare an interest. First, I am a very small shareholder in the Severn Valley railway. I would not call myself a train buff, but I certainly remember going to school for many years on trains pulled by gorgeous steam locomotives in the '40s and early '50s, so I am nostalgic for steam railways. That is why I want to talk about Kidderminster station.

At the moment we have a very uninteresting square brick box: that is Kidderminster station. It is just next door to the gorgeous Severn Valley railway station. I think, Dr. McCrea, that you are probably old enough to remember Hornby trains and I wonder whether you ever had one of those tin-plate stations that they made, just after the war. The Severn Valley railway station is reminiscent of just that type of station.

This is not the first time that Kidderminster station has come up in Parliament. In 1852 Acts of Parliament were needed to extend the railways, and it was then that they were extended to Kidderminster, on the Worcester to Wolverhampton line. I am told that the first station, from 1852 to 1859, was just a wooden structure, and that there was another wooden structure from 1859 to 1863. Then, in 1863 the Great Western Railway took over. Anyone who knows about it will know that GWR really stands for God's wonderful railway. It certainly had the most interesting and the best selection of steam engines. Even though I was brought up as a London, Midland and Scottish lad I must admit that GWR had the edge.

When GWR took over the station it was discovered that sitting in Swindon was a sort of kit for a station that had been designed for Stratford-upon-Avon. The kit was the most amazing wooden-covered structure and it produced for Kidderminster the most unlikely, impossible station building ever. It was a half-timbered extravaganza—my idea of a haunted country cottage; the sort of place where the witch in Hansel and Gretel would have lived. It was described by the historian H.C. Casserly as the “ultimate in half timbering”.

At its peak it had a station master—one of the pre-eminent citizens of the town—and 25 to 30 staff. There were 11 porters. Can you imagine that, Dr. McCrea? One never sees a porter in a station these days. It had refreshment rooms and catering staff.

That amazing building lasted until 1968, when it was riddled with dry rot and it was uneconomic to repair it; so we lost that cottage in the country in the heart of Kidderminster. It was replaced in 1974 by the small, square brick box that I have mentioned. At the same time, the Severn Valley railway, which is the preserved steam railway from Kidderminster to Bridgnorth, was developing, and shortly afterwards it achieved its own station. The convention in the Great Western Railway was that if there were two stations in a town, the one

[*Dr. Richard Taylor*]

nearest to the town centre was called the town station. The Severn Valley railway station has the distinction of being Kidderminster Town station, because it is about 75 yards nearer to the town centre than the main station.

For years, we have needed something more in keeping with the Severn Valley railway station. Now, thank goodness, we have the chance of that, and it is terribly important, with the growth in passenger traffic. In 2004-05 about 750,000 passengers used Kidderminster station and in 2008-09 there were more than 1.25 million; so it is going up. The station is situated on one of the main entrances to Kidderminster from the south-east and we want a prestigious entry to the town. Since I have been the MP I have been promoting it, strange to say, as a tourist attraction, because we have an almost unique collection of industrial heritage buildings and structures. To our great delight we are just about to achieve a carpet museum—because Kidderminster is known as the pre-eminent carpet town. We have the building and much of the money, and expect it to happen. That is at the bottom of Comberton hill, which is the road on which the station is situated. In addition there is of course the Severn Valley railway; the railway museum in Kidderminster, which has the largest archive of photographs apart from that of the National Railway museum; the Bewdley museum; and the refurbished Stourport docks, as well as one of the very few water-powered forges.

Those present a splendid tourist attraction and it is marvellous that the county and district councils, Network Rail, London Midland and the Severn Valley railway are all coming together to produce what we hope will be a dream station—not quite the chocolate box thing we had before, but something very suitable and attractive. I understand that £3.5 million has been put aside: £2.5 from the county council—presumably from the Government—and £1 million from Network Rail.

In an idle moment I browsed as we all do on Google and Wikipedia, which I was delighted to find says:

“Plans are in hand to replace the small brick station building with something echoing that of the adjacent SVR building. As well as this, the plans envisage a large bus exchange, improved car parking and “drop off” areas.”

That is all very exciting. I am grateful to Louise Butcher of the business and transport research section of the Library for giving me some details about the station code, which was updated in 2006 and which emphasises safety and accessibility and the aim of integrating other forms of public transport.

To make an exciting, impressive and compatible entrance to the town and to Wyre Forest, design is crucial and the choice of architect is vital. I was delighted to learn that the tender list includes an architect who is not usually on Network Rail’s lists—a heritage architect who happens to be a railway enthusiast and who is the architect for the railway museum. I hope that he will put in a pretty competitive tender.

There are one or two concerns, first about the building. Not that long ago, a footbridge was built at Kidderminster, because until then it had been necessary to walk off one platform, cross by a road bridge, and descend to the station again. We now have a footbridge, which is a particularly hideous building of a sort of sickly yellow

brick, with a weird plasticky-metal sort of structure, providing the bridge and a staircase. The worst thing about it was that from building to opening took about six months, because the people who designed and built it did not realise that the lights on it would dazzle the engine drivers coming from Worcester so that they could not see the signals. Therefore it could not be opened. It took about six months to put the right sort of glass in the bridge so that train drivers were not dazzled. We want the right architect—someone who understands railways—who will ensure that that type of problem does not arise.

My next concern is the timing. My understanding is that the money has to be spent by 31 March 2011. With the consultation finishing only on 18 June and the tendering process still to be gone through, time is getting very short, so I again appeal to the Minister to impress on everyone how fast they have to move.

With regard to the consultation, there is no mention of or question about the invaluable newspaper shop that is there at the moment; it provides biscuits and coffees as well. There is only one question about the structure, and it is a very odd question. It is in the improvements questionnaire. The question is:

“How important to you is it that the new building minimises its environmental impact?”

Does that refer to the building having to be very green or to the visual impact? If it is a brick box, we do not want any visual impact at all, but if it is a delightful semi-classical building that fits with the other one, much as, amazingly, Portcullis House fits with the rest of the parliamentary buildings, we would like a great impact.

We welcome the plans. People are very excited, but there are some major local concerns about traffic issues. The third key part of the project is

“The installation of traffic signals at the entrance junction to the station”.

As I said, that is off Comberton hill from the south-east—the main route into Kidderminster from the south-east. Concerns about the traffic lights, which I think are absolutely genuine, come from local shopkeepers and traders, from representatives of the Severn Valley railway and, most important, from the traffic management police officer. They all object to the fact that the traffic lights will cost £700,000, which is about one fifth of the total money available.

The traffic management officer makes six points. First, there are no particular traffic problems now. Secondly, lights will cause delays on what is already a congested road, with traffic lights at the top, a big roundabout at the bottom and a pedestrian crossing in the middle. Thirdly, that road—Comberton hill—is already ranked at or near the top in Worcestershire for pedestrian collisions. Delays and congestion could make such collisions even more likely. Fourthly, there is no rear access to businesses, so lorries that are making deliveries often have to be double-parked. If there are traffic lights and streaming of the traffic, that will cause chaos.

The fifth point relates to parking. The traffic lights themselves will mean the loss of only two parking spaces, but between the two sets of traffic lights that will be necessary, there is a single yellow line. I had to check The Highway Code, but people are allowed to park on the single yellow line out of hours—after hours. It will

be a tremendous blow to lose the six or seven extra spaces. People could manage losing the two for the lights themselves, but not the six or seven that will be covered with a double yellow line, because in the road are a large number of fast-food outlets. Captain Cod, the fish and chip shop, which is very well used, is just by the single yellow line. The Railway Bell is also there. The road was badly harmed by the loss of the post office some time ago, so I do not want to see any more difficulties for the traders.

The last comment from the traffic management officer is that there will be only about 10 buses an hour, and those that go through to Bromsgrove, continuing towards the south-east, will go straight up the hill without turning in to the station in any case.

I come now to suggestions. First, we need urgently a full road safety audit and traffic flow studies. If they show that traffic lights are not absolutely necessary, I have two alternative suggestions. The first, which is very realistic and comes from the traffic management officer, is a cobbled junction platform, which will slow down the traffic and will be in keeping with the cobbles that will remain on the station forecourt. The second suggestion, which is really my dream and goes well with the heritage of the Severn Valley railway station, is to reinvent a policeman in a pulpit just for the hours of 5 to 7 pm—the peak hours. Until relatively recently in Kidderminster, we had a policeman in the pulpit, and the traffic management officer remembers that and remembers how hard it was for policemen to keep their arms in the right positions for all the time that they were on duty. A policeman for just two hours, five days a week, would not cost £700,000 a year and I would love to see that come back, but that is only a thought.

I hope that the Minister can reassure us that we are looking forward to an appropriate building to enhance this crucial entrance to Kidderminster and the Wyre forest. It could restore some of the romance and excitement of rail travel, because people are returning to the railways for environmental reasons and because of the cost of petrol. I look back to the day of E. M. Forster writing in “Howards End” about railway termini:

“They are our gates to the glorious and the unknown. Through them we pass out into adventure and sunshine, to them, alas! we return.”

We are looking for such a gate to the glories and the unknown features of Wyre Forest in the new station at Kidderminster.

1.46 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Mole):** It is good to be back again, Dr. McCrea. I congratulate the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Dr. Taylor) on securing this debate on what is clearly an important issue for him and his constituents, as well as for others travelling to and from Kidderminster station. I listened carefully to his points, and the Government share his vision for stations to have that gateway role both to the railway and to the community that they serve.

Kidderminster is one of London Midland’s busiest stations, with 1.2 million passenger journeys recorded in 2008-09. London Midland operates most of the services to and from the station. Kidderminster station has quite a history, as the hon. Gentleman outlined. It opened in 1852 with the extension of the Oxford, Worcester

and Wolverhampton railway from Worcester to Stourbridge by the Great Western Railway. I listened to the hon. Gentleman’s description of the former building. I am told that a station building of mock-Tudor design survived until 1968, when it was demolished and replaced by the small brick building that stands today. The Severn Valley railway’s southern terminus shares the same station approach road and is known as Kidderminster Town to distinguish it from Kidderminster station, for the reasons that the hon. Gentleman outlined.

Kidderminster was one of the original stations chosen in 2006 for the Access for All programme. Work commenced on a £2.5 million project in November 2007 and encompassed an entirely new footbridge and two lifts, which provide a fully accessible route to and between both platforms. The project was completed last July. I was sorry to hear the hon. Gentleman’s comments about the colour of the brickwork, but I understand that the project has generally been well received locally. Accessible stations make a huge difference to people’s journey experience. I am referring not only to those with reduced mobility but to those carrying heavy luggage or pushing unwieldy pushchairs.

I understand that there was some delay to completion of the works due to delays in obtaining listed building consent—I can understand that in the context of the area—but that those were resolved by cladding the new works with brick better to match the Victorian design of the station. A bid for funding from the Access for All small schemes fund in 2010-11 is under consideration.

More recently, as part of its franchise obligation, London Midland has secured 100 extra car parking spaces for passengers from the Severn Valley railway in return for enhancements to the car parking facilities. As part of a passenger benefits package, London Midland is investing an additional £4.4 million in new high-quality information equipment, which could include improvements at Kidderminster. In an attempt to persuade more people to use the railway, 50,000 day rover tickets were made available for travel over the Christmas period, and an additional 400,000 advance purchase tickets will be made available over the next two years on some of London Midland’s most popular routes. Again, passengers who use Kidderminster station may benefit from that initiative.

There are plans to rejuvenate Kidderminster station through a £3.5 million project that would provide a new layout of the station forecourt with improved facilities for bus services, and a new station building with improved passenger facilities. An improved walking connection from the new station building to the Severn Valley railway station building is also being proposed. I heard the hon. Gentleman’s comments about the traffic signals, but I can say little about that level of detail today, other than to encourage him to engage with the local authority and those with responsibilities for highways in Kidderminster to ensure that they are aware of his concerns and address them fully as the scheme develops.

There is also a proposal for £2.5 million from the west midlands regional funding allocation to be used to fund improvements outside the station, and for a £1 million contribution from the national stations improvement programme to be used to fund the new station building. Smaller contributions from partner local authorities are also anticipated.

[*Chris Mole*]

I understand that a project board of key stakeholders has been formed to consider the best option for rejuvenating Kidderminster station. The board includes representatives from Worcestershire county council, Wyre Forest district council, Network Rail, London Midland, the Severn Valley railway and the Kidderminster railway museum. Public consultation on the detailed design of the station forecourt, including road and public transport access, was launched on 29 March, and the hon. Gentleman has put his comments on road access on the record. The plans envisage a large bus exchange, and improved car parking and drop-off areas. Worcestershire county council is writing to stakeholders, and I understand that it is happy to arrange a meeting to brief the hon. Gentleman on the project's details.

We were happy to receive bids for small-scale rail schemes such as that at Kidderminster station in the refresh of the regional funding allocation advice that we requested from the regions last year. The west midlands region advised that the Kidderminster scheme was a priority for funding, and we responded positively to that advice in July last year.

The regional funding allocation programme, particularly local authority schemes, are benefiting from record levels of spend at present, but clearly we need to exercise due caution, as any responsible Government would do, when considering requests that would add to the current commitment. Although I appreciate the urgency of the project, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a guarantee that funding will be available for the scheme, but I can promise that the proposal is being carefully considered. Similarly, although the local delivery group responsible for the London Midland portfolio of stations has identified Kidderminster station as a candidate for the second tranche of funding from the national stations improvement programme, decisions on the second tranche schemes are not expected to be made until later in the year.

I understand that there has been quite a bit of debate about the design of the new station building, with a number of stakeholders keen to ensure that the design meets heritage objectives and provides a suitable gateway to Kidderminster. In particular, people have argued—the hon. Gentleman has done so eloquently today—that it should be more in keeping with the character and feel of the Severn Valley railway's Kidderminster Town station. I understand that Network Rail has been considering using its modular station design at Kidderminster. Although the system is still in its infancy, there are already a number of examples of modular stations on the network at Greenhithe, Mitcham Eastfields, Corby and, most recently, Uckfield. Modular stations may provide an economical way to build new stations or rebuild existing facilities, and by minimising energy use they offer an excellent example of sustainable design. That addresses one angle—environmental impact—that the hon. Gentleman asked about.

**Dr. Taylor:** I hope that I am mistaken, but the only module that I have seen is a hideous, glass, square box.

**Chris Mole:** I was worried that the hon. Gentleman might draw that conclusion, although I assure him that designs that I recently saw for a sustainable station at Accrington were a little less angular and, although

modern, it would fit into its setting. We realise that modular designs do not provide the appropriate solution for all stations—for example, where there are buildings of historic or architectural interest. I understand that a possible compromise at Kidderminster might be to provide a modular building in terms of functionality with a modular interior single-storey station building, with external aspects to complement the heritage themes associated with the Severn Valley railway and the local area. I hope that such a modular design would allow the newspaper shop about which the hon. Gentleman is concerned to be retained. I am sure that whenever possible Network Rail wants to retain a tenant that provides it with an income.

The year 2010 marks the 40th anniversary of the operation of the Severn Valley railway, which is one of the most popular heritage railways in the UK. The original Severn Valley railway linked Hartlebury near Droitwich with Shrewsbury, and was constructed around 1860. Ten years later, the line was absorbed into the Great Western Railway, and eight years after that a new spur was opened to Kidderminster. Trains to and from Kidderminster used the existing mock-Tudor station building on the existing line linking Birmingham, Stourbridge and Worcester. The Severn Valley railway carried both freight and passengers but, despite being popular with tourists from the west midlands, its fortunes declined after the second world war. Passenger services were withdrawn from most of the route in 1963, and freight was withdrawn in stages from the same year.

Thanks to the efforts of rail enthusiasts, much of the line has been reopened in stages and currently operates between Bridgnorth and Kidderminster. The Severn Valley Railway Preservation Society started in 1965, and operated its first trains five years later. The line was then extended towards Kidderminster, with the final stage opening in July 1984. Kidderminster Town station is a modern construction—there is a mock-Tudor theme here—in a traditional Great Western style and contains facilities suitable for a heritage railway, including catering and retail. The Severn Valley railway suffered a major setback in 2007 with severe flood damage leading to the closure of much of the preserved railway. Sterling efforts by many people and organisations have enabled reconstruction of the route, and last year those efforts paid off with almost 250,000 passengers, only marginally below the record level of patronage in 2005. The line now employs around 70 people, but much of the work that provides visitors with an excellent experience is done by the numerous volunteers who enable the railway to operate. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to everyone involved with the Severn Valley railway, including the hon. Gentleman, which is a wonderful example of successful local enterprise.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman has been reassured that, although it is not possible at this stage to give any guarantees on funding, work is progressing on plans to rejuvenate Kidderminster station so that passengers will be able to look forward to an improved end-to-end journey experience in future. We share that vision of the railway station as a gateway to both the community and the network.

*Question put and agreed to.*

1.58 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*

# Written Ministerial Statements

Tuesday 6 April 2010

## TREASURY

### Asset Protection Agency

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Sarah McCarthy-Fry):** On 7 December 2009 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the launch of the Asset Protection Agency (APA), an Executive Agency of HM Treasury.

The role of the APA and relationship with HM Treasury has been set out in the APA framework document, copies of which were deposited in the Libraries of both Houses at the time of the announcement.

After careful consideration of the APA's activities in managing the Asset Protection Scheme ("the Scheme") since its launch, the Chancellor has decided on a further delegation of decision making to them from HM Treasury. Previously the APA were authorised to make decisions or exercise rights delegated to them in furtherance of the asset management objective. Under the new delegation they will also be able to consider the reduction of risk to the taxpayer when making decisions or exercising any of the rights that have been delegated to them.

This change reflects our continued commitment to run the scheme efficiently and ensure tight management of the taxpayer's risk.

An amended framework document that reflects this change has been published today and deposited in the Libraries of both Houses. The document is also accessible via the HM Treasury website: [www.hm-treasury.gov.uk](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk).

### Building Society Capital

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Sarah McCarthy-Fry):** The Government have published a discussion paper on building society capital and related issues, as announced in the Budget 2010. It will be available from the House Libraries from today and is on the Treasury website.

The discussion paper seeks views on the issues raised by the building societies experts' group convened by the Government in 2009, including future options for capital raising by building societies in the light of ongoing regulatory reform.

### Double Taxation Agreement (United Kingdom and Germany)

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Timms):** A Double Taxation Agreement with Germany was signed on 30 March 2010. The text of the agreement has been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses and made available on HM Revenue and Customs' website. The text will be scheduled to a draft Order in Council and laid before the House of Commons in due course.

## Valuation Office Agency (KPI)

**The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Ian Pearson):** I have today set the following key performance indicators for the Valuation Office Agency for 2010-11:

### Customer Satisfaction

To achieve overall customer satisfaction of 90 per cent.

### Operations

To determine 95 per cent. of housing benefit claims where no inspection is required in three working days.

To enable prompt issue of tax assessments, for inheritance tax and capital gains tax, by clearing all HMRC initial appraisal cases within an average of five days.

To contain reductions in the 2005 rating lists to a maximum of 4.2 per cent. of the total compiled list rateable value, over the entire life of the lists.

To contain reductions in the 2010 rating lists to a maximum of 3.6 per cent. of the total compiled list rateable value, over the entire life of the lists.

To ensure that 96 per cent. of new council tax bandings are right first time.

To complete the compliance reviews of broad rental market areas in England for local housing allowance purposes.

To achieve income from non-statutory services of at least £19 million.

### Value for Money

To improve overall value for money on local taxation work by 3 per cent. a year.

To achieve full cost recovery reflecting a 5 per cent. reduction in budget for the year on all work for HMRC.

### Security

To have zero data incidents reportable to the Information Commissioner.

### Counter-Terrorist Asset-Freezing Regime (January to March 2010)

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Sarah McCarthy-Fry):** In a written ministerial statement on 10 October 2006, *Official Report*, column 11WS, the then Economic Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton (Ed Balls), undertook to report to Parliament on a quarterly basis on the operation of the UK's counter-terrorism asset-freezing regime. This is the 14th of these reports and covers the period January to March 2010<sup>1</sup>.

### Asset-freezing designations

In the quarter January to March 2010, the Treasury issued no directions designating persons under the Al-Qaeda and Taliban (United Nations Measures) Order 2006. As a result of the quashing of this order, the one extant direction under the order has no effect.

During this quarter, the Treasury gave no new directions under the Terrorism (United Nations Measures) Order 2009.

There were no financial sanctions designations of persons with links to the UK made at the UN or at the EU, in relation to the Terrorism or Al-Qaeda and the Taliban asset-freezing regimes.

As of 31 March 2010, a total of 226 accounts containing just over £370,000<sup>2</sup> of suspected terrorist funds were frozen in the UK.

### Reviews under the Terrorism Order 2006

The Treasury keeps domestic asset-freezing cases under review and completed three reviews in this quarter. All three persons had their designation revoked.

### *Licensing*

Maintaining an effective licensing system is important to ensure the overall proportionality and fairness of the asset-freezing regime, whether the individuals concerned are subject to an asset freeze in accordance with a UN or EC listing, or domestic terrorism legislation. A licensing framework is put in place for each individual on a case-by-case basis. The key objective of the licensing system is to strike an appropriate balance between minimising the risk of diversion of funds to terrorism and meeting the human rights and humanitarian needs of affected individuals and their families.

Twenty-four licences were issued this quarter in relation to 15 individuals and/or entities subject to an asset freeze under the al-Qaeda and Taliban and Terrorism regimes.

### *Proceedings*

On 9 February 2010, during the debate on the Terrorist Asset-Freezing (Temporary Provisions) Bill, the Treasury committed to reporting on proceedings taken for any offences under the asset-freezing regime.

In the quarter January to March 2010, there have been no proceedings taken for breaches of the prohibitions of the Terrorism orders or the Al-Qaeda and Taliban Order.

### *Developments*

The Supreme Court Judgment and the Terrorist Asset-Freezing (Temporary Provisions) Act 2010: As referred to in the 13th quarterly report to Parliament for the period October to December 2009, on 4 February 2010 the Supreme Court quashed the Terrorism (United Nations Measures) Order 2006. The Government fast-tracked temporary legislation to prevent suspected terrorists' assets from being unfrozen. The Terrorist Asset-Freezing (Temporary Provisions) Act 2010 came into force on 10 February 2010 and temporarily validates the Terrorism (United Nations Measures) Orders 2009, 2006 and 2001, ensuring that asset freezes under those orders remain in place. The Act expires on 31 December 2010. Before then, the Government intend to introduce more permanent legislation that will establish the terrorist asset-freezing regime in primary legislation. A draft of the legislation, the Terrorist Asset-Freezing Bill, was published on 5 February 2010. The Bill can be found at:

[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/fin\\_sanctions\\_terrorist\\_assetfreezingbill.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/fin_sanctions_terrorist_assetfreezingbill.htm)

On 11 March 2010, the Government published a public consultation document which sets out the Government's approach to terrorist asset freezing and their proposals for more permanent terrorist asset-freezing legislation and seeks the views of the public and other interested parties on the proposals. The consultation document can be found at:

[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consult\\_liveindex.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/consult_liveindex.htm)

Al-Qaeda and Taliban (Asset-Freezing) Regulations 2010: On 4 February 2010, the Supreme Court also quashed the Al-Qaeda and Taliban Order. Assets previously frozen under that order remain frozen under EC Regulation 881/2002. The EC regulation is directly applicable in UK law, but secondary legislation is required to provide for penalties for failing to comply with the prohibitions in the EC regulation and to establish a UK framework for the effective administration of asset freezes against persons listed by the EU as being associated with al-Qaeda or the Taliban.

In order to put in place penalties and establish such a framework, the Government laid new regulations before Parliament, the Al-Qaeda and Taliban (Asset-Freezing) Regulations 2010.

The regulations were laid on 25 February 2010 and debated in the House of Lords on 25 March and in the House of Commons on 30 March. They came into effect at midnight on 31 March.

<sup>1</sup>The detail that can be provided to the House on a quarterly basis is subject to the need to avoid the identification, directly or indirectly, of personal or operationally sensitive information.

<sup>2</sup>This figure reflects account balances at time of freezing and includes approximately \$58,000 of suspected terrorist funds frozen in the UK. This has been converted using exchange rates as of 30/03/10. Future fluctuations in the exchange rate may impact on the contribution this sum makes to future totals of suspected terrorist funds frozen.

## COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Local Government Investments (Revised Guidance)

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Barbara Follett):** The Government are grateful for the Communities and Local Government Committee's second report of session 2009-10, "Local authority investments: the role of the Financial Services Authority".

The Committee's primary recommendation is that—"the Government bring forward the necessary legislative changes to place within the remit of the Financial Services Authority the provision of advice or information relating to deposit taking..." (paragraph 16).

Having carefully considered the recommendation, the Government are not persuaded that such a course would be appropriate. The Department for Communities and Local Government has issued revised statutory guidance on investments that came into force on 1 April 2010. This includes a new recommendation that authorities' investment strategies should comment on their use of Treasury management advisers. This will encourage officers to make explicit their procedures for using advisers and will give elected Members the opportunity to scrutinise those arrangements.

The revised "Guidance on Local Government Investments" is available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1501971.pdf>

Copies of the guidance have been placed in the Library of the House.

### Sustainable Communities Act

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Mr. John Denham):** I am today updating the House on progress the Government have made in implementing the Sustainable Communities Act 2007.

The Government remain committed to the Sustainable Communities Act. Local authorities put forward proposals to improve their local area to the Local Government Association (LGA), in its capacity as the selector, last summer. In December the LGA produced a shortlist of 199 proposals which Government are required to consider and respond to under the Act. The Government are working to try to reach agreement with the LGA on which proposals should be implemented. My officials

worked very closely with their counterparts from the LGA to set up three discussion panels which provided an opportunity for the proposals to be discussed in further detail between LGA and Government officials. These panel meetings proved to be very helpful in clarifying issues behind proposals from both a Government and LGA perspective and gathering further useful evidence. Consideration of the proposals is ongoing with other Whitehall Departments. Many of the proposals are complex and the Government are investigating further issues raised by the LGA as part of the process. Once again I would like to thank the LGA for their continuing efforts in assisting the Government in this significant task.

In the meantime, I am pleased to inform the House that the Government will be taking action to make progress with the following proposals:

*The London borough of Islington* asked the Government to make it compulsory for owners of empty business premises (mainly shops) to talk to councils about the possibility of premises being used by the community, if they have been empty for six months. In response we will carry out a consultation, involving Islington and other relevant stakeholders, looking at the challenges behind engaging with landlords and owners.

*Wirral metropolitan borough council and South Hams district council* asked for communities to have the right to buy privately or publicly owned assets put up for sale in order to develop opportunities for communities to buy redundant buildings and land for community benefit. The Government will undertake an investigation into the challenges and barriers that a community right to buy approach would solve and what other solutions would help.

*The London borough of Redbridge*, who suggested relaxing the rules on the illumination of some road signs to reduce costs of installation, maintenance, energy consumption and light pollution. The Government are now considering further relaxations to lighting requirements beyond those they made in their 2002 review on this matter and will be undertaking further research into lighting through the national traffic signs policy review to assess the relative performances of lit and unlit signs in a number of environments.

*Brighton and Hove city council* put forward a proposal requesting a freedom that would allow surplus produce from allotments to be sold to local markets and shops. In response the Government have been able to clarify that there are no legal restrictions on allotment holders selling genuinely surplus produce. This clarification was made on 3 March within a package of measures that set out the Government's support for gardeners and growing food in the community. This package also provided clarification to the London borough of Waltham Forest, Birmingham and Sheffield city councils, who have also put forward proposals about allotments under the Act, highlighting existing powers around allotments and the opportunity offered by new "meanwhile" lease arrangements that will make it easier for people to take control of abandoned land while it is waiting to be used.

*Newcastle city council, Ryedale district council, and Darlington borough council* wanted action to address the problem of large pub and retail companies imposing restrictive covenants on pubs preventing them from operating as pubs when sold. The Ministry of Justice will consult on removing the right of pub owners to impose such restrictions that are leading to pub closure.

*Kettering borough council and Redcar and Cleveland borough council* asked for changes to rules that would allow the council's community protection officer service to carry out civil and crime related duties in a combined manner without fear of legal challenge and to improve the efficiency and quality of services provided. They want to change the statutory guidance to allow local authorities to employ single teams of wardens capable of dealing with all civil enforcement issues. The Government recognise this issue and the potential benefits of this request

and have committed to undertaking a review of the current rules and any changes that may be needed to allow this idea to move forward.

*Kent county council* asked for recourse to Government funding to build a lorry park with 3,000 parking places to address lorry traffic problems locally which arise when the Kent police implement "Operation Stack" which enables them to close the M20 in order to hold large volumes of freight traffic.

The Department for Transport and Highways Agency are currently reviewing the existing policy (circular 01/2008) on motorway service areas and other roadside facilities on motorways and all-purpose trunk roads and trying to find ways to remove barriers to the development and use of lorry park facilities, rest facilities and improved signing to existing lorry parks. A public consultation on the revised policy is expected to be published within the next few months.

The Government are also looking to review their approach to the use of powers under section 238 of the Highways Act 1980 to promote new roadside facilities for motorists and, in particular, provision for lorry drivers where appropriate to do so. While this will not directly fund developments such as the one proposed by Kent, the approach would help to overcome the hurdle of securing planning approval. Use of these powers would provide an alternative means of securing site approvals. The delivery of the facilities could then be franchised to private operators on a competitive basis which will represent the best outcome for the tax payer in terms of value for money.

There were a number of councils who put forward proposals pressing the Government to focus on improving energy efficiency and incentivising the development of renewable energy within communities. On 2 March we published the "Warm Homes, Greener Homes: A Strategy for Household Energy", which addresses many of the issues raised by the proposals under the SCA. The introduction by the Government of feed-in tariffs in April this year and the launch next April of the renewable heat incentive will also help to address these critical issues.

*West Devon borough council, Herefordshire county council* and a number of other councils asked for a much wider role for Post Offices in communities including banking and financial services. In response the Prime Minister has already committed to do just that, and as a result we carried out a consultation to find out what people think about existing products and services offered through the Post Office, and our proposals for the future of the Post Office banking. In response to the consultation the Secretary of State for Business Innovation and Skills made an announcement on the 29 March about the sort of services that Post Offices will be offering in the future.

*Wiltshire county council* asked for the Sustainable Communities Act process to be ongoing or annual. The existing Sustainable Communities Act requires that the process should not be a one-off. CLG officials have, however, been working closely with Local Works on the development of the Sustainable Communities (Amendment) Bill. The Government wholeheartedly support the current draft of the Bill which, if passed by Parliament, will provide a date for the next invitation for proposals to be issued, and will enable the process of submitting and considering proposals to be improved.

The Government continue to assess the 199 proposals on the shortlist submitted by the Local Government Association. I intend to make a formal decision on which proposals the Government believe should be implemented alongside the associated actions the Government will take, later this year.

## Planning

**The Minister for Housing (John Healey):** I am today publishing the Government's response to the consultation conducted last year on Housing and Planning Delivery Grant (HPDG) which closed on 23 June 2009. The document sets out a summary of the responses received and also confirms both the amount available for HPDG

in 2010-11 and the allocation mechanism for 2010-11 which has been considered in the light of the comments received.

The amount available for local authorities through HPDG will be £146 million, an increase from £135 million paid out in 2009-10. This reflects the importance the Government place on increasing housing supply and increasing the capacity of local authorities to support this by delivering viable land and an efficient planning service. The grant provides a direct incentive for councils to work with partners in the public and private sector to ensure that new homes are built where they are needed. It is additional to mainstream funding and councils have the freedom to decide how best to spend it locally.

In changes to the distribution mechanism we are reducing the threshold of net additional homes needed to qualify for the housing element in recognition of the more challenging conditions in the housing market. We are also introducing additional eligibility requirements for demonstrating land for housing in order to reinforce existing requirements in planning policy statement 3 and increase confidence in the land supply position across the county. This builds on the confirmation set out in the budget that the planning inspectorate will undertake comprehensive checks on land supply and publish the results.

I have placed a copy of the Government's response to the consultation document in the Library of the House. This will also be available on the Communities and Local Government website.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Legal Deposit Libraries (Consultation)

**The Minister of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Margaret Hodge):** I would like to thank the Legal Deposit Advisory Panel (LDAP) for their recommendations on digital legal deposit and thank everyone who took the time to respond to the consultation.

My Department has received 57 responses to the consultation from a broad range of stakeholders. This shows how important digital legal deposit is. The consultation, as Members may have expected, has brought up many interesting and varying views and ideas on what the regulations should cover.

Since the close of the consultation, LDAP have provided me with their next set of recommendations on UK Commercial and Protected Online Publications.

I will now be considering all the responses we have received and LDAPs latest recommendations with a view to going out to consultation in September on draft regulations and on UK Commercial and Protected Online Publications content.

## DEFENCE

### Service Medical and Dental Officers (Pay)

**The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Bob Ainsworth):** The supplement to the 2010 report of the Armed Forces' Pay Review Body (AFPRB) making recommendations on the pay of service medical and dental officers has been published today. I wish to express my thanks to the chairman and members of the review body for their report.

The AFPRB has recommended no increase in basic military salary for all defence medical services (DMS) accredited consultants and accredited general medical and dental practitioners. The AFPRB has also recommended a 1 per cent. increase for certain non-accredited officers and a 1.5 per cent. increase for junior non-accredited officers and cadets. In addition, the AFPRB recommended no increase in the values of national clinical excellence awards and distinction awards and a 1 per cent. increase for DMS trainer pay and general medical practitioner associate trainer pay.

The AFPRB recommendations are to be accepted in full, except for the 1.5 per cent. recommendation for junior non-accredited officers and cadets, which will be abated to 1 per cent. mirroring the decision on the Doctors and Dentists Review Body recommendation, with implementation effective from 1 April 2010.

Copies of the report are available in the Vote Office and the Library of the House.

### Gulf Veterans (Mortality Data)

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Kevan Jones):** As part of the Government's continuing commitment to investigate Gulf veterans' illnesses openly and honestly, data on the mortality of veterans of the 1990-91 Gulf conflict are published regularly. The most recent figures for the period 1 April 1991 to 31 December 2009 are published today as a National Statistic Notice on the Defence Analytical Services and Advice website.

The data for Gulf veterans are compared to those of a control group known as the "Era cohort" consisting of armed forces personnel of a similar profile in terms of age, gender, service, regular/reservists status and rank, who were in service on 1 January 1991 but were not deployed to the Gulf. As in the previous release, the "Era" group has been adjusted for a small difference in the age-profile of those aged 40 years and over, to ensure appropriate comparisons.

Key points to note in the data are:

There have been 1,095 deaths among the Gulf veterans and 1,111 in the age-adjusted Era comparison group.

The 1,095 deaths among Gulf veterans compare with approximately 1,828 deaths which would have been expected in a similar sized cohort taken from the general population of the UK with the same age and gender profile. This reflects the strong emphasis on fitness when recruiting and retaining service personnel.

These statistics continue to confirm that UK veterans of the 1990-91 Gulf conflict do not suffer an excess of overall mortality compared with service personnel that did not deploy.

The full notice can be viewed at <http://www.dasa.mod.uk>

## ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

### Beyond Copenhagen (International Climate Change Plan)

**The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Edward Miliband):** On 31 March I published "Beyond Copenhagen: The UK Government's International Climate Change Plan" (Cm 7850), setting out the key elements of UK strategy leading up to COP16 in Mexico and beyond.

The strategy reflects the fact there is much unfinished business following the outcome of the Copenhagen climate talks in December 2009. The conference made significant progress in some areas, but did not live up to our expectations, or those of many countries round the world.

“Beyond Copenhagen” argues that we should build on what was achieved at Copenhagen but also go further.

The main achievement at Copenhagen was agreement of the accord. The accord includes commitments to limit global temperature increases to no more than 2° Celsius, to climate finance approaching \$30 billion fast-start finance to 2012 with a long-term goal of \$100 billion a year by 2020 and for the first time provides a common international framework that includes all the world’s major economies. Since the summit more than 70 countries (accounting for around 80 per cent. of global emissions) have put forward mitigation targets and actions which, if they deliver at the high end of their ambitions, would be consistent with global emissions peaking before 2020, an important step towards achieving an emissions trajectory consistent with 2°.

The document affirms the importance of delivering against the commitments made in the accord. This includes commitments on emissions reductions, forestry, measurement, reporting and verification and on finance. It highlights the importance both of getting fast-start finance flowing and also of the work of the UN Secretary-General’s high-level advisory group on climate finance, co-chaired by the Prime Minister and Prime Minister Meles of Ethiopia.

The Government continue to believe that this action has to be backed by a comprehensive legally binding agreement. The UK wants to see progress in the United Nations framework convention on climate change (UNFCCC) negotiations towards a legally binding agreement, with progress under the Copenhagen accord built on in the formal negotiations. To ease that process we signal that we would agree to an appropriately designed second Kyoto commitment period provided others enter into a comparable legally binding arrangements.

We also believe we need to strengthen the UNFCCC process and will be working with the Government of Mexico among others to do so.

Copies of “Beyond Copenhagen” have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

## HEALTH

### Skipton Fund (Review)

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Gillian Merron):** Further to the Government’s response to Lord Archer of Sandwell’s report on NHS-supplied contaminated blood and blood products, which we published on 20 May 2009, I wish to inform the House that we have decided to bring forward a review of the Skipton fund, which makes ex-gratia payments to those infected with hepatitis C as a result of their treatment.

The unintended and tragic consequences of these treatments have seriously impaired the lives of many people, together with those of their families. We have listened carefully to the views of those infected, their families, carers and many in this House, who have told us that our intended review date of 2014 will be too late

for many of those affected. Consequently, we have decided that the review will begin as soon as possible this year.

It will be an independently chaired review. The terms of reference, membership and conduct of the review will be agreed in conjunction with the devolved Administrations.

I would also like to take this opportunity to confirm payment of £100,000 to the Haemophilia Society, as promised in our response of 20 May 2009.

I would like to reiterate this Government’s sympathy for those affected by these treatments many years ago, before screening tests and methods of viral inactivation became available. We remain fully committed to supporting them in the best way we can.

### Correction to Government Strategy Document

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Ann Keen):** “Maternity and Early Years—Making a Good Start to Family Life” published on 16 March 2010 contained an error on page 9 regarding the times when babies are offered immunisations. The correct sentence is:

“you will be offered immunisations for your baby when he or she is eight weeks, three months, four months, 12 months and 13 months old”.

An erratum note has been placed in the Library and in the copies that are available for hon. Members from the Vote Office. A corrected version of the document is also available at:

[www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyandGuidance/DH\\_114023](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyandGuidance/DH_114023).

### Valuing People Now (Delivery Plan 2010-11)

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Phil Hope):** I am placing in the Library today “Valuing People Now: The Delivery plan 2010-11” which was published on 31 March 2010, to support the implementation of “Valuing People Now, a new three-year strategy for people with learning disabilities” published in January 2009.

The delivery plan sets out the progress made in the first year. It also recognises that there is still more to do to improve the lives of people with learning disabilities and their family carers. The delivery plan sets out the key priorities for 2010-11, in particular, to improve employment and housing opportunities and better health outcomes for people with learning disabilities and their family carers.

Other materials, including person-centred planning guidance, Valuing Older Family Carers Now, the Valuing People Now Housing Delivery Plan and a range of housing resources are available at [www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople6.jsp](http://www.valuingpeople.gov.uk/dynamic/valuingpeople6.jsp)

Copies of “Valuing People Now: The Delivery plan 2010-11” are available to hon. Members from the Vote Office.

## Swine Flu Pandemic Response

**The Secretary of State for Health (Andy Burnham):** I have previously undertaken to update the House on the negotiations concerning the orders placed by the Government for H1N1 vaccine, at their conclusion. I am pleased to be able to inform the House that we have now reached a mutually satisfactory agreement with GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) to limit the Department's orders of swine flu vaccine, and that this settlement will result in savings of around a third of the original value of the total orders with GSK.

I am confident that the negotiated settlement both protects the public purse by obtaining full value for payments made without incurring a cancellation fee and ensures that the United Kingdom remains at the forefront of pandemic preparedness worldwide. The agreement involves the Department taking total deliveries of 34,838,500 doses of Pandemrix, including vaccine received so far. This will allow us to continue with ongoing vaccination programmes and keep a sizeable strategic reserve of vaccine in case the virus mutates. We are also planning to donate 3.8 million doses to the World Health Organisation to boost immunity in Africa before the rainy season.

In addition, the Department will purchase H5N1 "bird flu" vaccine and courses of the antiviral Relenza (to replace the amount of Relenza made available during the response to the swine flu pandemic) as part of the agreement. The probability of a more severe influenza pandemic has not diminished following the swine flu pandemic, and taking measures such as these now will help protect the population in the event of a future pandemic. However, as with other contracts, further details of the agreement are commercially confidential.

This negotiated settlement with GSK follows the decision to cancel the remaining orders with Baxter on 28 February 2010, utilising our break clause in the contract. We entered into more detailed negotiations with GSK because our contract with them did not contain a break clause, in line with their agreements with other countries. These discussions regarding limiting vaccine orders were necessary as our increased understanding of the virus demonstrated that less swine flu vaccines were required. This was partly because the virus has proved mild in most people (although more severe and, tragically, fatal in some instances), but also as scientists established that one dose of the vaccine was sufficient to confer immunity.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Independent Monitoring Commission

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Shaun Woodward):** I have today published and laid before Parliament my fifth annual report on the operation of the Agreement between the British and Irish Governments which established the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC). This report covers the period 18 September 2007 to 17 September 2008.

In line with a commitment made by my predecessor, this report also contains the audited accounts of the IMC for the 12-month period ending 31 March 2008.

The report covers the 17th and 18th report on paramilitary activity and the 19th report on the leadership of PIRA and assessment of the completion of the transformation of PIRA. It does not refer to the 20th report on paramilitary activity as this fell outside the 12-month period under review.

I am very grateful to the Commissioners of the IMC for the continued commitment, focus and dedication they have shown during this reporting period, and for their continued efforts in promoting and maintaining a peaceful society and a stable and inclusive devolved Government in Northern Ireland.

## SCOTLAND

### Commission on Scottish Devolution

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Jim Murphy):** The Government welcome the Scottish Affairs Committee's report on the inter-parliamentary recommendations made by the Commission on Scottish Devolution. The commission, established by the Scottish Parliament in December 2007 and supported by the UK Government, produced its final report in June 2009. The report set out a package of measures designed to review 10 years of experience of devolution and to recommend changes to enable the Scottish Parliament to serve the people of Scotland better, to improve the financial accountability of the Scottish Parliament and continue to secure the position of Scotland within the United Kingdom.

The Government welcomed the final report from the Commission on Scottish Devolution on its publication and responded formally with a White Paper "Scotland's Future in the United Kingdom" on 25 November 2009. Of the 63 recommendations, 42 were for Government to consider and 39 were accepted in the White Paper, including a radical package of reform to the financial accountability of the Scottish Parliament. The Government signalled their commitment to bring forward legislation as soon as possible in the next Parliament for those matters outlined in the White Paper that require it.

The Scottish Affairs Committee's consideration followed a letter from the Speaker of the House of Commons to both the Scottish Affairs Committee and the Procedure Committee to ask for their views on how the recommendations in part 4 of the Calman commission's final report might be taken forward. Part 4 of the commission's final report related to relations between Parliaments and Governments.

#### *Response to the Committee's Recommendations and Findings*

The Scottish Affairs Committee's report provides consideration of the recommendations made by the Commission on Scottish Devolution in relation to strengthening co-operation and communication between the House of Commons and the Scottish Parliament. These recommendations cover the following areas of co-operation and communication:

- Operation of the Sewel Convention between Parliaments;
- Increased involvement of Scottish MPs on Public Bill Committees where the Sewel Convention is engaged;
- Introduction of a regular "State of Scotland" debate and reconsideration of the "self-denying ordinance";
- Ensuring that Standing Orders allow greater co-operation between committees in the House of Commons and Scottish Parliament;

Consideration of a “Scottish Super Grand Committee”;  
 Examination of the access arrangements for MSPs and removal of the equivalent barriers in the Scottish Parliament;  
 Discretion for committees and Parliaments to invite Ministers to appear before committees of either Parliament;  
 Continued role for MPs and Scottish Affairs Committee in scrutinising the shape and operation of the devolution settlement;  
 Enhanced communication and co-operation between the House of Commons and the Scottish Parliament, including appropriate resourcing to enable this to happen and a recommendation for secondment and exchanges of staff.

All of these recommendations relate to the operation of effective inter-parliamentary relations. These are matters for the House, as acknowledged by the Government in the White Paper. Where the committee recommends changes to Standing Orders the Government will give consideration to bringing forward the necessary motions early in the next Parliament.

In the White Paper the Government agreed that a strong relationship between the UK Parliament and the Scottish Parliament was an essential part of a framework for co-operation within the UK. We also welcomed the support shown by the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament to consideration of how to strengthen their relationships in its White Paper.

The Government believe that the third report from the Scottish Affairs Committee provides a very positive response and a strong framework for improving co-operation in line with the recommendations from the Commission on Scottish Devolution.

## SOLICITOR-GENERAL

### HM Customs and Excise Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions

**The Solicitor-General (Vera Baird):** My right hon. Friend the Attorney-General has made the following written ministerial statement:

On 15 July 2003 Lord Goldsmith, then Attorney-General, announced to the House the publication of the report and recommendations of the Hon. Mr. Justice Butterfield following his review of the then practices and procedures relating to disclosure, associated investigation techniques and case management in Her Majesty’s Customs and Excise’s criminal cases. Lord Goldsmith and the then Economic Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (John Healey), had invited him to examine the circumstances that led to the termination of a number of prosecutions relating to London City Bond (LCB) in respect of alleged alcohol diversion fraud, in Liverpool Crown court on 25 November 2002.

During the course of the Butterfield inquiry, a number of unrelated prosecutions in respect of alleged money laundering collapsed in circumstances which gave rise to the same issues, and Mr. Justice Butterfield was invited to examine the additional cases as part of his inquiry.

At the same time, the Metropolitan police were conducting a criminal investigation (Operation Gestalt), which initially commenced in relation to the (LCB) prosecutions but which developed additional strands (Operation Tappert) as their inquiries progressed. As a result, Mr. Justice Butterfield suspended the second part of his inquiry into the money laundering prosecutions (to avoid prejudicing the police inquiry) but completed and published his report of the main part of his inquiry in 2003.

The criminal investigations proceeded until their eventual conclusion in 2009 when, in respect of each strand of the investigations, the Crown Prosecution Service concluded that criminal proceedings were not justified.

The Attorney-General, with the agreement of the present Financial Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. Friend the Member for East Ham (Mr. Timms), has concluded that it is not necessary or desirable to invite Lord Justice Butterfield (as he now is) to complete the second part of his inquiry. Among other reasons, the passage of time means that any review would be focusing on practices which existed some years ago that have long since changed, and which were essentially of a similar kind to those examined in the report published in 2003. Moreover, the functions of HM Customs and Excise have since passed to Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs—which is subject to the same inspection and complaints regimes as other law enforcement bodies such as the police—to the Serious Organised Crime Agency and the UKBA.

Finally, a key recommendation of the Butterfield Report, that the prosecution function of HM Customs and Excise should be carried out by a wholly independent prosecuting authority to restore confidence in fair and effective prosecutions, has been implemented successfully under the leadership of David Green QC. The Revenue and Customs Prosecutions Office, established in 2005, now forms an important part of the Crown Prosecution Service under the Director of Public Prosecutions.

## TRANSPORT

### Service Stations (Consultation)

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Mole):** I am publishing today a consultation document seeking views on revisions to Department for Transport (DFT) circular 01/2008 on Service Areas and Other Roadside Facilities on Motorways and All-Purpose Trunk Roads in England.

This circular sets out the Department’s policy on the provision, standards and signing of roadside facilities on the strategic road network (SRN), including motorway service areas (MSAs), motorway rest areas (MRAs), truckstops, and services and lay-bys on all-purpose trunk roads (APTRs).

The Department is now reviewing these policies and as part of this process needs to understand better the views and experiences of those that are affected by them.

The consultation document proposes making a number of changes to existing policy, such as allowing new dedicated lorry parking facilities to be located directly off motorways and requiring roadside facilities to provide recharging facilities for electric vehicles. The responses received during the consultation will inform the consideration of the policy options.

Copies of the consultation have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

### Maritime and Coastguard Agency

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Paul Clark):** I am pleased to announce the targets for the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) for 2010-11.

These are;

1. Maintain the quality of maritime emergency co-ordination and response by the Coastguard.
- 2a. Helicopters tasked to respond to incidents will be airborne within 15 minutes during daylight hours and 45 minutes at night in at least 98 per cent. of cases.

2b. At each MCA search and rescue helicopter base, a helicopter will be available at least 98 per cent. of the contracted time to respond to incidents.

3. Meet the internationally required targets to inspect foreign vessels in UK ports under port state control arrangements, with an increasing emphasis on inspecting available ships judged to be high risk.

4. Maintain the quality of the UK Ship Register by reducing the level of deficiencies recorded on UK ships inspected abroad, and maintain a position on the Paris MOU white list which is comparable to registers of a similar size and reputation.

5. As a category 1 responder, continue to meet the provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act including engagement with local resilience forums (LRF).

6. Respond promptly to potential and actual pollution from ships around the UK coast, drawing effectively on resources including our emergency tugs, and following the procedures set out in the national contingency plan.

The MCA will also continue with their programme of work covering the following safety themes:

*Seafarer Fatigue*—working with the shipping industry and seafarer unions on a coherent strategy to reduce seafarer fatigue.

*Fishing Vessel Safety*—working with the fishing industry to improve the safety of small fishing vessels (under 15 metres).

*Recreational Safety*—working with the agency's partner organisations (including the Royal National Lifeboat Institute and the Royal Yachting Association), to promote the wearing of lifejackets within the leisure sector and recreational safety more generally.

*Vessel Traffic Management*—identifying the future requirements of sea space management and the role the agency may perform.

The agency will also monitor its performance through a range of service standards and measured outcomes which will be reported in its published annual report and accounts.

## JUSTICE

### Her Majesty's Land Registry (Key Performance Indicators and Targets)

**The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Mr. Michael Wills):** The following list sets out the key performance indicators and targets that have been set for Her Majesty's Land Registry for 2010-11.

#### *Customer Service*

##### *Speed*

Percentage of all registrations processed within 15 working days: 80 per cent.

##### *Accuracy*

Percentage of registrations processed free of any error: 98.5 per cent.

##### *Quality*

Percentage of manually processed registrations on which key aspects<sup>1</sup> of internal quality measures were achieved: 97 per cent.

##### *Overall Satisfaction*

Percentage of customers who rate the overall service provided by Land Registry as excellent, very good or good: better than 95 per cent.

##### *Financial*

Percentage return on average capital employed: 3.5 per cent.

##### *Efficiency*

Cost per unit in cash terms<sup>2</sup> (real terms<sup>3</sup>): £33.65 (£21.70).

##### *Other strategic targets*

Percentage of transactions<sup>4</sup> delivered through e-channels: 65 per cent.

Through voluntary registration, add a further 250,000 hectares of land to the total areas of registered freehold land in England and Wales.

Earn a contribution from add value products and services of 8 per cent. of its income net of direct costs and apportioned product development costs.

Increase gross incremental revenue from all add value products and services by a further £2.6 million above 2009-10 actual.

Deliver the key Accelerated Transformation Programme milestones as detailed in the Accelerated Transformation Programme Plan.

To increase the percentage of staff positively engaged with Land Registry to 50 per cent.

To increase the percentage of staff satisfied with Land Registry's leadership and change management to 45 per cent.

<sup>1</sup>The specified key areas are (a) the index map (b) the proprietorship entry and (c) easements.

<sup>2</sup>Based on the GDP deflator issued by HM Treasury on 24 March 2010 (base year 1992/3).

<sup>3</sup>The real term unit cost in the base year of 1992/3 was £30.65.

<sup>4</sup>Transactions are defined as any request for a statutory service provided by Land Registry. Although a transaction has a unit value, this measure reflects the actual number of transactions and not their unit value.

# Petitions

*Tuesday 6 April 2010*

## PRESENTED PETITIONS

*Petitions presented to the House but not read on the Floor*

### Badman Report (Teignbridge)

*The Petition of persons resident in the Teignbridge 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.—[Presented by Richard Younger-Ross.]

[P000819]

### Equitable Life (Teignbridge)

Declares that the Petitioners either are or they represent or support members, former members or personal representatives of deceased members of the Equitable Life Assurance Society who have suffered maladministration leading to injustice, as found by the Parliamentary Ombudsman in her report upon Equitable Life, ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 16 July 2008 and bearing reference number HC 815; and further declares that the Petitioners or those whom they represent or support have suffered regulatory failure on the part of the public bodies responsible from the year 1992 onwards, but have not received compensation for the resulting losses and outrage.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to uphold the constitutional standing of the Parliamentary Ombudsman by complying with the findings and recommendations of her Report upon Equitable Life.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Richard Younger-Ross.]

[P000820]

## OBSERVATIONS

### COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

#### Decent Homes Programme (Funding)

*The Petition of the tenants of Sutton Housing Partnership and others,*

Declares that the decision to postpone and cut back funding to support home improvement works to meet the Government's decent homes standard will condemn thousands of tenants to a future in poor and inadequate housing while continuing to pay millions of pounds in rent as a negative subsidy to the Treasury.

Further declares that the decision to switch funds from improvement to new build is misjudged and was made without consultation with local authorities, Arms Length Management Organisations or tenants.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons calls upon Her Majesty's Government not to renege on its promises and stand by their pledge to tenants by fully funding the decent home programme

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. Paul Burstow, *Official Report*, 21 July 2009; Vol. 496, c. 855.]

[P000401]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government:*

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government is aware that a petition was received relating to the decision likely to defer Decent Homes funding in the London Borough (LB) of Sutton as a contribution to fund the Housing Pledge initiative.

London Borough of Sutton has now formally withdrawn from the Judicial Review proceedings issued against the Department. The Judicial Review challenged the likely deferral of Decent Homes ALMO funding in Sutton.

The Home and Communities Agency which manages the ALMO Decent Homes programme has concluded negotiations with Sutton. Decent Homes funding has now been made available to Sutton in 2010-11.

### ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

#### Footpath Closure (Hadleigh, Castle Point)

*The Petition of Doug Beard, residents of Shipwrights Drive, Highfield Avenue, Castle Point and others,*

Declares that they object to the link footpath between Shipwrights Drive and Highfield Avenue, Hadleigh; that this footpath is a focus for vandalism to adjacent residents' properties and close residents, resulting in hundreds of pounds of damage to roof tiles, walls, security lights, and regular attendance of police officers; further, that this footpath does not provide sufficiently significant convenient access for local residents to outweigh the considerable loss of quality of life caused 24/7 to residents; that for these and many other valid reasons residents of Shipwrights Drive and Highfield Avenue, Hadleigh call for the complete closure of the link footpath since this is, on balance, in the public interest.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to press Castle Point Borough Council, the Highways Authority and all

Councillors, to ensure the immediate closure of the link footpath between Shipwrights Drive and Highfield Avenue, Hadleigh.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Bob Spink, *Official Report*, 16 March 2010; Vol. 507, c. 847.]

[P000767]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs:*

There are two ways in which local residents may seek the closure of a public footpath for reasons of crime prevention.

One is to ask the local authority to make an order under section 118B of the Highways Act 1980. Such an order, if confirmed, would permanently extinguish the public right of way. However, the local authority would first have to apply to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to have the area designated for the purposes of crime prevention. A section 118B order would have to be advertised by the local authority and if there were any objections, the order would have to be submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation. Further information is available through the following link:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/countryside/prow/extinguish.htm>

The other way is to ask the local authority to make a “gating order” under sections 129A to 129G of the Highways Act 1980. A gating order enables a local authority to restrict public access to a footpath and gate it (at certain times of the day if applicable), without removing the underlying highway status. Local authorities are able to make “gating orders” on grounds of antisocial behaviour as well as crime. There is no legal obligation to submit a gating order to the Secretary of State where there are objections. Further information is available through the following link:

<http://www.asb.homeoffice.gov.uk/members/article.aspx?id=7924&terms=gating+orders&searchtype=2&fragment=False>

## HEALTH

### Newborough Pharmacy (Peterborough)

*The Humble Petition of Sharmeen Datoof of 1317 Lincoln Road, Peterborough, PE4 6LW,*

Sheweth,

that Newborough Pharmacy in Newborough, Peterborough be supported and kept open. This pharmacy provides a valuable and much needed service. It will be a great loss to the community if the pharmacy is to close on account of lack of your support.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House asks the Secretary of State for Health that he does all in his power to ensure that the Pharmacy in Newborough, Peterborough remains open. Furthermore that he asks the Peterborough Primary Care Trust to review its decision to grant dispensing permissions to another Practice in the City to dispense in Newborough.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.—[Presented by Mr. Stewart Jackson, *Official Report*, 24 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 346.]

[P000776]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Health:*

The Government are committed to ensuring that people have access to NHS pharmaceutical services. For Newborough village, NHS Peterborough is responsible for the provision of such services in accordance with the National Health Service (Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations 2005.

The Government understand that this specific case is currently the subject of an appeal. It would therefore not be appropriate to comment while this process is under way.

## LEADER OF THE HOUSE

### Parliamentary Reform

*The Petition of the people of Croydon,*

Declares that Andrew Pelling has served as an effective Member of Parliament for Croydon Central putting Croydon first and would serve Croydon well again if he were to be persuaded to stand for re-election in the upcoming General Election.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons uses the powers of the new Business Committee to table further debates on Parliamentary reform to allow discussion on the advantages of independence in the House.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. Andrew Pelling, *Official Report*, 30 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 790.]

[P000815]

*Observations from the Leader of the House of Commons:*

On 22 February and 4 March, the House of Commons agreed to a series of reforms to enhance how the House of Commons operates. These reforms included the establishment of a Back Bench Business Committee, the election of chairs and members of Select Committees, and engaging the public with Parliament.

## TRANSPORT

### Bus Routes (Croydon)

*The Petition of the people of Croydon,*

Declares that they would support the introduction of a 24 hours a day service on the 64 bus route.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to encourage Transport for London in this proposal of a 24 hours a day 64 bus route.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. Andrew Pelling, *Official Report*, 30 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 789.]

[P000809]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Transport, received Thursday 1 April 2010:*

The Mayor of London has overall responsibility for transport in the capital, including all London bus services.

The Department already provides substantial funding to TfL, which has risen dramatically since 2000, more than doubling to £3.3 billion in 2010-11. This funding is not ring-fenced to specific projects. It is for the Mayor

to make best use of the funding available to him to deliver transport services (existing or new) where this offers value for money or addresses an identifiable transport demand.

### **Bus Service (Essex)**

*The Petition of Carol Tebbutt, members of Age Concern Canvey Island, the residents of Castle Point and others,*

Declares that they object to the reduction in frequency of low-floor buses operating on the number 21 bus route between Southend and Canvey Island, operated by FirstGroup; that this reduction in the number of low-floor buses discriminates against passengers with greater accessibility needs, including the elderly, infirm, adults accompanying small children and those with limited mobility; further, that this route is used by residents travelling to and from Southend Hospital and requiring frequent, accessible, reliable and comfortable bus services; that for these and many other valid reasons only low-floor buses be operated by FirstGroup on this route and at greater frequency.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to press FirstGroup to operate only low-floor buses and at shorter intervals on the number 21 bus route between Southend and Canvey Island.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Bob Spink, *Official Report*, 30 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 783.]

[P000800]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Transport:*

The Government recognise that buses are, and will remain, the most important public transport option for most local journeys. Our overall aim is to drive up standards to provide a better quality service for those who already use buses and to make buses an attractive alternative for those who currently drive for short journeys.

Since deregulation of the bus industry in 1985, the majority of bus services outside London are provided on a commercial basis by private operators. Decisions such as where to run services, the frequency of those services, the type of vehicle used, and the level of fares charged are mainly a matter for the commercial judgment of the operator concerned. But it is of course in the commercial interest of bus operators to ensure that they provide a service that meets demand, and to ensure that the quality of their service is good. The Government recently introduced the Local Transport Act, which strengthens the powers to local authorities to work in partnership with bus operators and specify improvements to services on particular routes.

The Government want to make sure that everyone, especially those from disadvantaged groups and areas, can gain access to jobs, services and social networks. As part of this commitment all buses used on scheduled services with more than 22 seats will be required to be fully compliant with the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations 2000 by 2016. The transition will take place over time and transport operators will inevitably use a mixed fleet of accessible and non-accessible vehicles. It is important that the regulations are affordable and sustainable. Following both informal and statutory consultation, which included a full Regulatory Impact Assessment, this date was considered to represent a

reasonable compromise between the needs of disabled and other passengers, and the vehicle manufacturers and operators.

[I will ensure the concerns raised about the use of low floor buses on this route are brought to the attention of the operator of this service.]

### **Central Parade (New Addington, Croydon)**

*The Petition of the people of New Addington,*

Declares that that they seek a speedy improvement in the street environment so as to rid Central Parade, New Addington, of muddy paths from the bus stop to the shops, rotted posts, broken paving, collapsed kerbs and run down street furniture.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to take steps to secure a response from Croydon Council undertaking to invest in the improvement of the street environment at Central Parade, New Addington.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. Andrew Pelling, *Official Report*, 29 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 605.]

[P000794]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Transport:*

We would always encourage good practice in street design and this is reflected in the guidance we produce. We recognise the importance of well designed high quality public places and their ability to improve quality of life.

However, Central Parade in New Addington is a local road for which the London Borough of Croydon has responsibility. It is for the Borough to decide on policies and priorities for improving local roads, and the Government have no power to intervene in its decisions.

### **East Croydon Station**

*The Petition of the people of Croydon,*

Declares that the slopes at East Croydon station can be an especial challenge for the frail and unwell.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to encourage Network Rail to work to improve accessibility at East Croydon station.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. Andrew Pelling, *Official Report*, 24 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 348.]

[P000780]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Transport, received on Wednesday 31 March 2010:*

The six existing ramps at East Croydon station have lengths between 38 metres and 75 metres and gradients of between 1:11 and 1:12. This falls outside the standards set out in the Department's Code of Practice for accessible station design. Any major work being carried out to the ramps at East Croydon station would have to redress this, or apply to DfT for a dispensation from the Code of Practice.

However, I am advised by Network Rail that there are proposals to provide a new bridge and lifts at East Croydon station using third party land. This would create level stepfree access to and between platforms. Network Rail is working with Croydon Council on this

and has secured funding from the HLOS (High Level Output Specification), with works scheduled to take place by 2014. The plan is currently at outline design stage. I also understand that, for people who have difficulty using the ramps, there is an electric wheelchair available at the station, as well as manual wheelchairs. If passenger assistance is needed, it is recommended to book it in advance using the train operator's customer services. Even if assistance has not been booked, East Croydon station always has staff available on platforms and at the ticket hall, who will be able to provide assistance where practicable.

### **Featherbed Lane Pinch Point (Croydon)**

*The Petition of the people of Addington and Forestdale,*

Declares that the current highways arrangements at the pinch point at Featherbed Lane pose a danger to pedestrians and other road users and notes that narrow pavements put pedestrians at risk of collision with wider commercial vehicles and is concerned that current practice in Croydon on providing road safety measures requires fatalities and injuries before action is taken.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to take steps to secure an investment by Croydon Council in improving safety at the Featherbed Lane pinch point that slows traffic for the safety of all road users.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. Andrew Pelling, *Official Report*, 29 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 606.]

[P000796]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Transport, received on Wednesday 31 March 2010:*

The Road Traffic Act 1988 placed a duty on local highway authorities to prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety.

All roads in London, except the motorways, are the responsibility of Transport for London (TfL) or the London Boroughs. The relevant highway authority is responsible for studying the occurrence of casualties and taking preventative measures in accordance with their local objectives and the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy.

The Department is keen to see local authorities taking positive action to improve road safety, in the light of local casualty data, conditions and priorities.

### **Freedom Pass (Croydon)**

*The Petition of the people of Croydon,*

Declares that the Freedom Pass is essential to the quality of life of many Croydon residents, and that the change in funding of the Freedom Pass may compromise the scheme.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to take such steps as are necessary to ensure the scheme continues.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. Andrew Pelling, *Official Report*, 24 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 347.]

[P000778]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Transport, received Thursday 1 April 2010:*

I would like to clarify the situation regarding the future of the Freedom Pass as there have been a lot of misleading reports on this subject. There are currently no plans either to withdraw or amend the mandatory England-wide concessionary travel scheme or the mandatory elements of the Freedom Pass scheme.

Since April 2008, the statutory minimum bus concession has provided free off-peak local bus travel anywhere in England to eligible older and disabled people resident in England. The purpose of the concession is to ensure that no older or disabled person resident in England need be prevented from bus travel by cost alone. Local buses are the most commonly used mode of public transport, particularly for older people. Indeed, for many older and disabled people a free local bus service can be a lifeline, providing access to employment, healthcare and other essential services, as well as allowing people to visit family and friends.

The right to free bus travel for older and disabled people is enshrined in Primary Legislation. This includes the Freedom Pass scheme in London, which is operated by London Councils on behalf of the London Boroughs and is the largest and most generous concessionary travel scheme in the country. Some of the scheme's characteristics are at the discretion of the London Boroughs, and London Councils is able to change these providing there is unanimous agreement amongst the Boroughs and the changes do not contravene the statutory minimum required by legislation. However, as a minimum, the scheme in London must provide free travel on the London Local Transport Network between 9.30am and midnight and the period from midnight to 4.30am on weekdays, and at any time at weekends and on Bank Holidays.

I can assure the hon. Member that the recent redistribution of special grant funding for the additional costs of the England-wide concession does not affect the ability of London Boroughs to fund their obligations for concessionary travel. They will still be left with significantly more funding than the actual burden imposed following the introduction of the extended concession in April 2008.

### **Potholes (New Addington, Croydon)**

*The Petition of people of New Addington and Croydon,*

Declares that the road conditions of Parkway, New Addington has been left in such a poor state of repair that a proper repair needs to take place to the foundations of the road instead of patching repairs

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to secure Croydon Council's commitment to providing a thorough going long lasting repair of the major potholes in Parkway, New Addington

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. Andrew Pelling, *Official Report*, 29 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 604.]

[P000792]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Transport, received Thursday 1 April 2010:*

Maintenance of the highways in New Addington is a matter for Croydon Council, within the direction set by the Mayor's transport strategy. It has a duty, under section 41 of the Highways Act 1980, to maintain the highways in its charge. The Act does not specify standards to which highways should be maintained; this is a matter for each local highway authority, taking into account local priorities and resources. Local government democratic processes provide opportunities for the public to make their views known to the council.

The Department for Transport encourages local highways authorities to develop Transport Asset Management Plans. These set out an inventory of the assets under the council's control, the condition they are in, the service levels the council intends the assets to deliver, and their plans to maintain the assets so as to deliver that service. The Department also encourages authorities to adopt the good practice set out in the UK Roads Liaison Group's code of practice for highways maintenance management, "Well-maintained Highways" (available from [www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org](http://www.ukroadsliaisongroup.org)). The code is not mandatory, but together with complementary codes on highways structures and street lighting, provides good practice advice across the whole range of maintenance activities.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in the 2010 Budget that local authorities in Great Britain would receive £100 million to assist with repairs to their highway network necessitated by this year's severe winter weather. The London Borough of Croydon will receive £164,000 as part of this. In addition, the council can also apply funding from Transport for London, Revenue Support Grant provision from the Department for Communities and Local Government, and their own resources such as Council Tax or Supported Borrowing, to the maintenance of their highways assets.

### **Rail Capacity (Croydon)**

*The Petition of the people of Croydon,*

Declares that the service provided between Croydon and London stations is insufficient to meet demand, with unacceptable levels of overcrowding for hard working commuters and late night travellers.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to increase rail capacity to Croydon.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. Andrew Pelling, Official Report, 24 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 348.]

[P000781]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Transport, received on Wednesday 31 March 2010:*

It is certainly true that the rail routes between Croydon and London are busy and popular.

A number of initiatives are in hand to provide additional capacity on these routes:

1. On 23 May 2010, Transport for London's East London Line extension will open, which will provide four trains per hour all day every day (except Sunday mornings) between West Croydon and Dalston Junction with interchanges with Underground lines at Whitechapel and Canada Water.

2. The Southern Train Operating Company is committed in its Franchise Agreement to increase the lengths of peak trains, in a number of stages, during the course of its franchise. These include, for example, the lengthening of peak East Grinstead trains from 8 to 12 cars by December 2011. This will provide considerable additional capacity for commuters travelling between East Croydon and both London Victoria and London Bridge in peak hours.

3. New rolling stock for the Thameslink route is being procured by Government. Many of these trains, when they are delivered in 2014 and 2015, will be of 12-car formation, replacing the 4 and 8-car trains at present in use on the Thameslink route between East Croydon and St. Pancras International and beyond.

### **Soundproof Fencing (A50 Staffordshire)**

*The Petition of residents in Staffordshire regarding the failure of the Highways Agency to have provided the promised and effective soundproof fencing along the A50 running next to their properties,*

Declares that the petitioners recognise the Highways Agency promised effective soundproof fencing along the A50, that the Agency's plans for fencing was either not erected or where it was erected made little or no difference, that this has left a constant noise so that it is no longer possible to sit out in their gardens, or sleep in bedrooms closest to the A50, and which has left many with a poor quality of life.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Secretary of State for Transport to do all in his power to ensure that the Highways Agency deliver the promised soundproof fencing which runs along the Blythe Bridge area of the A50.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. William Cash, Official Report, 24 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 346.]

[P000775]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Transport, received Thursday 1 April 2010:*

The Secretary of State acknowledges the concerns of the petitioners.

A meeting was held on 14 December 2009 with local residents, representatives from the Highways Agency and the hon. Member for Stone (Mr. Cash) to discuss the recently replaced noise fence on the A50 at Blythe Bridge and the overall concerns by residents about noise. At the meeting it was agreed that the Highways Agency would review the effectiveness of the fence and other noise-related matters and report back their findings. The Highways Agency is now in the process of finalising this report.

### **Traffic (Orchard Avenue, Croydon)**

*The Petition of people of Shirley, Croydon,*

Declares that traffic on Orchard Avenue speeds and is dangerous to all road users

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to take steps to secure support from the relevant authorities for the introduction of road safety and road calming measures

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. Andrew Pelling, Official Report, 29 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 604.]

[P000791]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Transport, received on Wednesday 31 March 2010:*

The Road Traffic Act 1988 placed a duty on local highway authorities to prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety.

All roads in London, except the motorways, are the responsibility of Transport for London (TfL) or the London Boroughs. The relevant highway authority is responsible for studying the occurrence of casualties and taking preventative measures in accordance with their local objectives and the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy.

The Department is keen to see local authorities taking positive action to improve road safety, in the light of local casualty data, conditions and priorities.

#### **Traffic (The Glade, Croydon)**

*The Petition of People of Shirley, Croydon,*

Declares that traffic on The Glade speeds and is dangerous to all road users

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to take steps to secure

support from the relevant authorities for the introduction of road safety and road calming measures

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr. Andrew Pelling, Official Report, 29 March 2010; Vol. 508, c. 604.]

[P000790]

*Observations from the Secretary of State for Transport, received on Wednesday 31 March 2010:*

The Road Traffic Act 1988 placed a duty on local highway authorities to prepare and carry out a programme of measures designed to promote road safety.

All roads in London, except the motorways, are the responsibility of Transport for London (TfL) or the London Boroughs. The relevant highway authority is responsible for studying the occurrence of casualties and taking preventative measures in accordance with their local objectives and the Mayor of London's Transport Strategy.

The Department is keen to see local authorities taking positive action to improve road safety, in the light of local casualty data, conditions and priorities.

# Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 6 April 2010

## SOLICITOR-GENERAL

### BAE Systems: Fraud

**David Howarth:** To ask the Solicitor-General whether information obtained by the Serious Fraud Office during its investigations into BAE Systems about possible false declarations relating to (a) Romania and (b) South Africa have been passed to the Export Credits Guarantee Department. [321330]

**The Solicitor-General:** The Serious Fraud Office has no record of passing information during its investigations into BAE Systems about possible false declarations relating to (a) Romania and (b) South Africa to the Export Credits Guarantee Department.

## WALES

### Departmental Food

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what account his Department's food procurement policy takes of animal welfare. [325524]

**Mr. Hain:** My Department does not have any catering facilities, and therefore does not routinely procure food.

### Departmental Information Officers

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the cost to his Department was of employing press and media officers in the last 12 months for which figures are available; and what the cost to his Department was of employing such staff in the financial year 1996-97, expressed in real terms. [324803]

**Mr. Hain:** It would not be possible to obtain this information without incurring disproportionate cost.

### Departmental Marketing

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much his Department spent on promotional items carrying the Department's branding and logo in the last five years; and what such items were. [324711]

**Mr. Hain:** The cost of any items bought in the last five years, carrying the Wales Office logo could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Departmental Official Hospitality

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the five most expensive hospitality events hosted by his Department was in the last three years; and what (a) the cost and (b) purpose was of each. [324663]

**Mr. Hain:** The five most expensive receptions hosted by the Wales Office were as follows:

	Receptions	Cost (£)
July 2008	Summer reception in London	3,284
February 2008	St. David's Day reception in London	2,797
July 2008	Summer reception in Cardiff	2,609
December 2007	Christmas reception in London	2,594
December 2007	Christmas reception in Cardiff	2,464

## SCOTLAND

### Departmental Food

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what account his Department's food procurement policy takes of animal welfare. [325527]

**Ann McKechin:** The Scotland Office does not procure any meat or dairy products, with the exception of a very small quantity of milk.

### Departmental Internet

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints his Department received regarding difficulties using its website in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325191]

**Ann McKechin:** We do not hold the information in the format requested. However, there were a small number of complaints regarding teething difficulties experienced when the Scotland Office website was re-designed in 2008-09. These arose as a result of broken links to Scotland Office web pages and the problems were subsequently addressed.

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department spent on external website design consultants in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325209]

**Ann McKechin:** Figures are only available for each year as a total amount spent on web maintenance and include annual hosting fees. These costs represent the hosting, updating and development of the site.

Financial year	Cost (£)
2007-08	2,990
2008-09	119,292
2009-10	3,500

<sup>1</sup> The increase in 2008-09 includes a complete redesign and redevelopment of the website, hosting package for the site and full content management system for in-house staff to manage content.

### Departmental Official Hospitality

**Mr. MacNeil:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what (a) receptions and (b) other functions have been held at (i) Melville Crescent and (ii) Dover House since 1 October 2008; what the date was of each; who attended each; and what the cost of the catering was for each. [325394]

**Ann McKechin:** The receptions and functions held in Dover House and Melville Crescent since October 2008 are listed in the following table. Where a reception was hosted by Scotland Office Ministers the cost to the Scotland Office of so doing is detailed in this table. Records are not routinely kept of those guests who attend a reception although such receptions usually attract a cross party representation of Scottish MPs, Peers, lobby correspondents and other stakeholders. Where a reception has been arranged by a third party attendees and the cost of catering are matters for the third party.

<i>Dover House</i>		£
1 October 2008	National Fraud Strategic Authority	—
8 October 2008	CBI Scotland	—
15 October 2008	Poppyscotland	—
21 October 2008	David Torrance book launch	—
23 October 2008	Royal Caledonian Schools Trust	—
12 November 2008	UKBA	—
18 November 2008	Commission on Scottish Devolution	—
26 November 2008	Secretary of State's lunch for the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland	3,718
27 November 2008	Scottish Development International	—
15 December 2008	Community Service Volunteers	—
16 December 2008	Scotch Whisky Association	—
20 January 2009	250th anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns: launch of Royal Mail commemorative stamps and Royal Mint commemorative coins	152
26 January 2009	Association of Scottish Colleges	1,938
24 February 2009	Scottish North American Business Council	—
17 March 2009	CBI Scotland	—
23 March 2009	Institute of Chartered Accountants Scotland	—
1 April 2009	Reception for media attending the G20 summit	5,065
6 May 2009	MG ALBA	—
13 May 2009	Hamish McDonnell book launch	—
14 May 2009	University of Stirling Alumni	—
19 May 2009	Scottish Financial Enterprise	—
6 June 2009	King's Own Scottish Borderers Association	—
9 June 2009	Spouses in the Houses	—
10 June 2009	National Trust for Scotland	—
11 June 2009	Poppyscotland	—
13 June 2009	Secretary of State's reception for Trooping the Colour	6,311

<i>Dover House</i>		£
17 June 2009	Scottish Council for Development and Industry	2,030
6 July 2009	John Smith Memorial Trust	—
15 September 2009	International Capital Conference China	—
14 October 2009	Poppyscotland	—
21 October 2009	Federation of Small Businesses Scotland	—
27 October 2009	CBI Scotland	—
3 November 2009	Institute of Chartered Accountants Scotland	—
25 November 2009	Secretary of State's lunch for the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland	4,123
8 December 2009	Scotch Whisky Association	—
9 December 2009	Crown Estate	—
16 March 2010	CBI Scotland	—

<i>Melville Crescent</i>		£
18 December 2008	Annual reception for the Scottish media	207
26 June 2009	Armed Forces Day and Veterans Scotland	2,312
23 June 2009	Ministerial dinner	751
18 August 2009	Secretary of State's reception for Edinburgh Festivals	2,426
8 October 2009	Ministerial dinner	754
27 November 2009	Women's National Commission	68
3 December 2009	Annual reception for the Scottish media	858
10 December 2009	Ministerial dinner	799
28 January 2010	Ministerial dinner	754

**Mr. MacNeil:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many receptions and functions he has hosted at locations other than Melville Crescent and Dover House since 1 October 2008; on what date each was held; what the location was of each function; who attended each; and what the cost of hire was of the facilities and the catering for each. [325395]

**Ann McKechin:** None.

### Departmental Pay

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was paid in reimbursable expenses to special advisers in his Department in (a) 2008-09 and (b) 2009-10 to date. [325105]

**Ann McKechin:** The total reimbursable expenses paid to special advisers are as follows:

	<i>Amount reimbursed (£)</i>
2008-09	10,751
2009-10 (April 2009 to February 2010)	7,564

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Conservation Areas: Waste Disposal

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst of 12 October 2009, *Official Report*, column 270W, on conservation areas: waste disposal, if he will place in the Library a copy of the written advice provided by English Heritage to local authorities on household wheeled refused containers in conservation areas. [324528]

**Margaret Hodge:** English Heritage has not provided standard advice to local authorities on household wheeled refuse containers in conservation areas. English Heritage's Streets for All manuals offer guidance on accommodating modern needs to reduce the impact of street clutter on conservation areas.

The manuals are available to download from the English Heritage website at:

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/nav.8682>

### Departmental Food

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what account his Department's food procurement policy takes of animal welfare. [325532]

**Mr. Sutcliffe:** The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has no canteen facilities which use meat or fresh dairy products.

### Departmental Internet

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many complaints his Department received regarding difficulties using its website in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325201]

**Mr. Sutcliffe:** The information is as follows:

2007 (0)

2008 (3)

1. No print format on press releases 2. Use of lower case initial letters on DCMS website 3. Usability of contact us form 4. Request to remove consultation response 5. Broken RSS feed.

2009 (6)

1. Broken RSS feed 2. Inaccessibility and usability of contact us form 3. Broken link to DCMS document 4. Request to remove consultation response 5. Usability of contact us form 6. Missing DCMS document 7. Request to remove consultation response 8. Badly redacted document. 9. Inaccessible document format. No facility to auto forward information by e-mail.

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much his Department spent on external website design consultants in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325219]

**Mr. Sutcliffe:** Over the last three years, the only spend on external website design consultants has been in the current financial year. The Department spent £13,000

on external website design consultants to update and enhance the homepage and improve user journey and digital functionality.

### Museums and Galleries: Newcastle upon Tyne

**Jim Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what (a) capital and (b) revenue assistance was provided by the Arts Council to Newcastle city council for the (i) purchase and (ii) redevelopment of derelict buildings in High Bridge, Newcastle for the Waygood Art Gallery in the last five years; and how much has been spent to date. [325180]

**Margaret Hodge** [*holding answer 30 March 2010*]: Arts Council England has paid Newcastle city council £871,281 in capital funds to support the redevelopment of the Waygood Gallery. Revenue funding has gone directly to the gallery.

### Sports: Training

**Mrs. Dean:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport by what means the national sporting governing bodies plan to undertake their consultation on the review of the UK Coaching Certificate; and what partner organisations in each sport each governing body plans to support. [324943]

**Mr. Sutcliffe:** The UK Coaching Certificate (UKCC) Review is being led by Sportscoach UK, Sport England and SkillsActive. The review will be conducted in partnership with National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of Sport, the Home Country Sports Councils and UK Sport. The NGBs will be consulted throughout this process and, following the completion of the review, the NGBs may choose to reassess the construction of their coaching awards should they feel it is necessary.

This review incorporates the following elements:

National Occupational Standards and Common Units

UKCC endorsement criteria

UKCC endorsement process

UKCC support to sports

UKCC Communication and Marketing

UKCC Costings.

**Mr. Betts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when he expects Sportscoach UK to issue guidance on the preferred structure for sports awarding bodies. [324965]

**Mr. Sutcliffe** [*holding answer 30 March 2010*]: The UK Coaching Certificate (UKCC) Review is being led by Sportscoach UK, Sport England and SkillsActive. The national governing bodies (NGBs) of sport will be consulted throughout this process and following the completion of the review the NGBs may choose to reassess the construction of their coaching awards should they feel it is necessary.

The findings from the UK Coaching Certificate Review are due to be announced during the UK Coaching Summit at the end of June this year.

**Tourism: Finance**

**Mr. Ellwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans he has for the future level of funding for tourism. [322496]

**Margaret Hodge** [*holding answer 16 March 2010*]: Beyond the current spending round, no decisions have been taken on the future funding levels for tourism.

**ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS****Agriculture: Research**

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much funding was allocated by his Department for agricultural research and development in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [324236]

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** DEFRA funding of research on agriculture and food (including animal health and welfare) over the last three financial years is shown in the following table:

	<i>£ million</i>
2008-09	63
2007-08	68
2006-07	75

*Source:* DEFRA Science Information System.

Figures for 2009-10 will not be available till after the end of the financial year but the expenditure is expected to be in the region of £64 million. This includes DEFRA's contribution to the new Technology Strategy Board (TSB), DEFRA and BBSRC innovation platform for sustainable agriculture and food (SAF), which will invest up to £90 million over five years in match-funding for industry for agricultural research. The TSB contribution represents £50 million of additional sponsorship for the agricultural sector.

**Coastal Erosion**

**Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what compensation is payable to owners of land lost as a result of the Environment Agency's Managed Realignment programme. [325455]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** Where the Environment Agency has carried out the managed realignment of existing raised defences any land owner who considers that they have been adversely affected can make a claim for compensation. The legal provisions for this are set out in section 177 and Schedule 21 of the Water Resources Act 1991.

The value of damages and losses is assessed by professional valuers acting for the Environment Agency and it pays for the costs of a professional valuer to act on behalf of the landowner. All claims are assessed on their own merits and if agreement cannot be reached the matter can be referred to the Lands Tribunal. The level of compensation paid will vary depending upon the local circumstances and the damage suffered.

If the Environment Agency secures agreement to buy the land then it is purchased at the market value.

**Dairy Farming**

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent representations he has received on proposals for large-scale dairy units. [324742]

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** DEFRA has recently received correspondence on one particular proposal for a large-scale dairy unit.

**Departmental Buildings**

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many smoking shelters have been built for his Department's staff in the last five years; and at what cost. [324355]

**Dan Norris:** The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has not built nor incurred any expenditure on smoking shelters for staff in the last five years.

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much his Department and its agencies have spent on rooms for staff leisure in each of the last five years. [324438]

**Dan Norris:** The Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and its agencies have spent the amounts shown as follows on rooms for staff leisure:

Foss House: Kings Pool, York—£171,800 (gym and pool room): 2008-09

Nobel House: London—£65,000 (gym): 2008-09.

These are the only amounts spent in the last five years.

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether his Department provides subsidised gym facilities for its staff. [324562]

**Dan Norris:** DEFRA does not provide directly subsidised gym facilities for its staff. There are several such facilities on the core-DEFRA estate, but all these are managed by volunteer staff committees and paid for through membership subscriptions.

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much his Department spent on interior design in relation to office refurbishments undertaken in each of the last five years. [324676]

**Dan Norris:** Identifying expenditure on interior design in relation to office refurbishment in each of the last five years incurred by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when undertaking office refurbishment could be done only at disproportionate cost.

**Departmental ICT**

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what information technology projects initiated by (a) his Department and (b) its agencies were cancelled prior to completion in the last 12 months; and what the cost of each such project was to the public purse. [320427]

**Dan Norris:** The Department has not cancelled any IT projects since April 2009.

The Rural Payments Agency cancelled the Microsoft Project Server project at a cost to the public purse of £183,140.76, and postponed the Customer Communications Improvement programme at a cost of £60,843.48. The Food and Environment Research Agency cancelled an IT project to extend the Laboratory Information Management System for use in a Forensic DNA profile facility. FERA spent a total £70,000 of staff time configuring existing IT systems. No other departmental agency has cancelled any IT projects since April 2009.

### Departmental Legislation

**Mr. Paice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many regulations have been (a) introduced and (b) revoked by his Department in each year since its establishment.

[323111]

**Dan Norris:** The information requested is tabled as follows:

	<i>SIs introduced</i>	<i>Number SIs revoked</i>
2000	92	39
2001	143	82
2002	115	60
2003	105	45
2004	133	45
2005	139	32
2006	144	18
2007	165	21
2008	87	110
2009	96	57
2010	136	122

<sup>1</sup> As at March 2010.

### Departmental Marketing

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much his Department and its agencies spent on promotional items carrying the Department's branding and logo in the last five years; and what those items were. [324712]

**Dan Norris:** The Departmental Communications Directorate's spend on promotional items carrying the Department's branding and logo is detailed in the table.

Detailed spend by DEFRA agencies is not held centrally and could be collated only at disproportionate cost.

<i>Item description</i>	<i>Cost (£)</i>
<i>2005</i>	
T-Shirts	475
<i>2006</i>	
T-Shirts	475
Toothbrush travel set	435
Pens	3,550
Travel wallets	13,025
<i>2007</i>	
Pens	1,600
Travel wallets	6,650

<i>Item description</i>	<i>Cost (£)</i>
<i>2008</i>	
T-Shirts	500
Pens	1,600
Mugs	2,700
Travel wallets	7,500
<i>2009</i>	
T-Shirts	497.50
Pens	2,980
Mugs	2,670
Travel wallets	6,375

### Departmental Pay

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what records his Department maintains of the reimbursable expenses paid to its special advisers. [325116]

**Dan Norris:** DEFRA records payment of reimbursable expenses made to special advisers in its financial system.

### Departmental Theft

**Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps his Department is taking to deter theft from within the Department. [322647]

**Dan Norris:** Measures to deter, prevent and detect theft are an essential feature of the Department's protective security controls. These controls reflect the standards set out in the HMG Security Policy Framework (SPF) issued by the Cabinet Office and available at:

[www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/spf.aspx](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/spf.aspx)

It would not be appropriate to provide details of specific controls as this could undermine their effectiveness.

### Departmental Written Questions

**Mr. Stephen O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what methodology his Department used to determine whether answers to questions in the formulation if he will set out with statistical information related as directly as possible to the tabling hon. Member's constituency the effects on that constituency of his Department's policies since 1997 could be provided without incurring disproportionate cost; and if he will make a statement. [323863]

**Dan Norris:** Where the total cost to the Department of obtaining an answer to a parliamentary question is over £800, this is considered to be a disproportionate cost.

### Environment Protection: Coastal Areas

**Mr. Swire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) whether his Department allocates funding to coastal local authorities for tackling the effects of coastal erosion; [323695]

(2) how much his Department spent on tackling coastal erosion in each of the last five years. [323700]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** The majority of the investment for all flood and coastal erosion risk management activity is now delivered through grants from DEFRA to the Environment Agency. The Environment Agency invests directly in coastal flood risk management and also gives grants to local authorities and internal drainage boards.

The following table shows the grants that were allocated to coastal local authorities for coastal erosion risk management in the last five financial years. Levels of grant allocation for coastal erosion in part reflect the number and nature of schemes coming forward in any one year. For example, 2006-07 and 2007-08 were characterised by a number of large schemes such as that in Blackpool which was allocated £12 million and £17 million in 2006-07 and 2007-08 respectively.

	<i>£ million</i>
2005-06	52
2006-07	65.7
2007-08	49
2008-09	32
2009-10	30

*Source:*

DEFRA website and Environment Agency financial records.

Local authorities can also fund coastal erosion risk management using a number of sources, including central Government specific grants, council tax and formula grant from central Government. The following table gives final outturn estimates of local authority revenue expenditure and financing (i.e. formula grant) for coast protection for the last five financial years. Further details on this expenditure are not held centrally.

*Local authority revenue outturn for coast protection, net current expenditure*

	<i>£ million</i>
2005-06	13.8
2006-07	13.6
2007-08	14.5
2008-09	14.8
2009-10	<sup>1</sup> 14.3

<sup>1</sup> Budget not outturn.

*Source:*

Department for Communities and Local Government, revenue expenditure and financing Statistics.

The Government have also directly allocated £11 million funding to 15 coastal local authorities through the coastal change pathfinder programme that was announced in December 2009. The pathfinders, working in partnership with their local communities, are exploring a range of new and innovative approaches to help communities adapt to the effects of coastal change (including coastal erosion).

### Horses

**Mr. Gray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what his latest estimate is of the number of horses in England; and how that estimate was calculated. [324876]

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** The latest estimate of the horse population is taken from the British Equestrian Trade Association (BETA) National Equestrian Survey 2005-06.

This survey estimates the horse population of Great Britain to be 1.3 million. There are no estimates available for England only.

### Horses: Travel

**Mr. Gray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many horses entered the UK with no requirement for a UK passport in the latest year for which figures are available; what his latest assessment is of the effectiveness of horse passports and the National Equine Database; and if he will make a statement. [324880]

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** Information is not collected on the number of horses entering the UK without a valid passport. Horse passports legislation requires any horse without a valid passport to have an application submitted to an EU-approved issuing body within 30 days of arrival in the UK.

The National Equine Database contains details of all horse passports issued and amended in the UK. Information is uploaded on a monthly basis.

### Incinerators

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent representations he has received on safety concerns regarding the inclusion of incinerator bottom ash in road building and other construction materials; and if he will make a statement. [324235]

**Dan Norris:** DEFRA has not received any direct representations on the use of incinerator bottom ash in road building and construction materials. However, a technical advisory group has been established, which is currently pooling evidence to demonstrate whether end-of-waste criteria can be met. The Environment Agency is working closely with industry to obtain additional data to help this process.

More information is available on the Environment Agency's website at:

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/waste/114416.aspx](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/business/topics/waste/114416.aspx)

### Inland Waterways

**Michael Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will publish the assessment made by British Waterways of (a) its waterways network infrastructure and (b) the elements of its waterways network infrastructure not categorised as principal assets; and if he will make a statement. [325335]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** British Waterways categorises the condition of its principal and most significant non-principal assets using a five-point condition grading system of A (very good) through to E (bad) in order to establish priorities for maintenance work. The latest information available as at 31 March 2009<sup>1</sup> is as follows:

<sup>1</sup> Information provided by British Waterways.

	Grade description (Percentage)					Assets assessed
	A: Very good	B: Good	C: Fair	D: Poor	E: Bad	
Principal assets	3.6	22.3	54.1	17.6	2.4	10,516
<i>Significant non-principal assets</i>						
Towpath	19.1	26.7	35.2	15.3	3.7	2,718 km
Bank protection	10.8	33.2	38.4	12.7	4.9	5,220 km (both sides of canal)
Lock gates	13.8	21.9	40.9	15.8	7.6	3,362

British Waterways take a risk-based approach in using the funding available to maintain the network. They concentrate on those assets in the poorest condition and that have the highest consequence of failure e.g. in terms of safety or the impact on the wider network.

**Michael Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if his Department will provide funds to British Waterways to restore to good condition its assets assessed as (a) already defective and (b) at risk of becoming defective; and if he will make a statement. [325336]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** The level of grant funding for the waterways will be a decision for the next Spending Review and will need to balance long-term sustainability of the waterways with the overall fiscal position at the time. Government grant are, however, not the sole factor in determining what is spent on the waterways—efficiency savings, third party funding and commercial income are also very important.

Spend on maintenance of the network is a priority for British Waterways who take a risk-based approach in using the funding available to maintain the network. They concentrate on those assets in the poorest condition and that have the highest consequence of failure e.g. in terms of safety or the impact on the wider network.

### Marine Conservation Zones

**Andrew George:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what use will be made of scientific evidence in identifying marine conservation zones under the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009; [325467]

(2) whether the seven principles of ecological coherence will be adhered to in the designation of marine conservation zones; [325468]

(3) whether the minimum conservation objective for marine conservation zones will be that of favourable condition. [325469]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sherwood (Paddy Tipping) on 29 March 2010, *Official Report*, columns 609-10W.

### Marine Management Organisation

**Linda Gilroy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many staff there will be in each coastal office of the Marine Management Organisation from 1 April 2010. [325067]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** The Marine Management Organisation is due to vest on 1 April 2010 and will manage coastal offices currently under the control of the Marine and Fisheries Agency. On 1 April 2010 there will be 102 staff employed in coastal offices. The following table details the number of staff in each of these coastal offices:

Staff in post at location	
Location	Number
Amble	1
Blackpool (coastal office, training centre)	12
Brixham	10
Grimsby	8
Hartlepool	2
Harwich	2
Hastings	5
Kings Lynn	2
Lowestoft	7
Newlyn	10
North Shields	8
Penryn	4
Plymouth	9
Poole	6
Portsmouth	2
Scarborough	7
Shoreham	5
Whitehaven	2

### Nature Conservation: Crime

**Mr. Benyon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many people have been charged with offences related to wildlife crime since July 2009. [325343]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** Information on how many people were charged with offences related to wildlife crime since July 2009 is not held centrally.

### Nitrate Vulnerable Zones

**Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what changes he plans to make to his Department's policy on nitrate vulnerable zones; and if he will make a statement. [325278]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** The Nitrates Directive requires each member state to review its nitrate vulnerable zone (NVZ) designation and Nitrates Action programme every four years. Any changes as a result of the next review in England will be implemented from January 2013.

DEFRA will be working closely with the farming industry, other interested parties and the European Commission over the next two years to consider what changes might be necessary.

### Opposition

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether his Department has undertaken costings of the policies of the (a) Conservative Party and (b) Liberal Democrat Party at the request of Ministers or special advisers in the last 36 months. [324249]

**Dan Norris:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, North (Sarah McCarthy-Fry) on 30 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1044W.

### Pets: Vaccination

**Mr. Todd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent representations the Veterinary Medicines Directorate has received on pet vaccination intervals. [324873]

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** Canine Health Concern (CHC) sent an open letter on pet vaccination intervals dated 10 February 2010 to the Chief Executive of the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

Following the open letter from CHC the VMD has received 39 additional letters from concerned members of the public either directly or via their MPs referring to it. The VMD has placed the CHC's open letter and its response on the VMD website

[www.vmd.gov.uk](http://www.vmd.gov.uk)

### Recycling: Greater London

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs with reference to page 47 of the Office for Government Commerce publication, *The State of the Estate in 2009*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the documentation produced for staff on his Department's bin the bin initiative. [324816]

**Dan Norris:** A copy of the 'Bin the Bin' Business Case will be placed in the Library.

### Rights of Way: Cycling

**Mr. Grogan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment he has made of the effects of the provisions of section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 on access to open countryside for equestrians and cyclists. [325130]

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** There have been no instances where dedication of land under section 16 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 has had an effect on access to open countryside for equestrians and cyclists.

### Waste Disposal: EU Action

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Peterborough of 2 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1003W, on waste disposal: EU action, if he will place in the Library a copy of each document for the two workshops held on 2 April and 14 September 2009 on the establishment of a Waste Implementation Agency that are held by his Department. [324837]

**Dan Norris:** I have placed the following documents produced by the European Commission in the Library:

- (a) The Study on the feasibility of the establishment of a Waste Implementation Agency—Overview;
- (b) The Waste Agency study—April workshop—summary;
- (c) The Summary of the study's interim report; and
- (d) The Waste Agency study—September workshop—summary.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Peterborough of 2 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1003W, on waste disposal: EU action, if he will place in the Library a copy of the Government's response to the questionnaire on the feasibility of establishing a Waste Implementation Agency. [324838]

**Dan Norris:** I have placed the UK's response of 8 April 2009 to the European Commission's informal "Questionnaire for Member State Officials" on the feasibility of establishing a Waste Implementation Agency in the Library.

### TRANSPORT

#### A5: Shropshire

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport (1) what plans he has to widen the A5 between Wolfshead and Queen's Head; and if he will make a statement; [325443]

(2) what recent assessment he has made of the condition of the A5 between Shrewsbury and the Shropshire/Wales border; and if he will make a statement. [325541]

**Chris Mole:** There are currently no plans to widen the A5 between Wolfshead and Queen's Head. The A5 Queen's Head to Wolfshead Widening scheme was submitted in the Regional Funding Advice submission to the Government at the end of February 2009. The West Midlands Regional Assembly's decision was not to prioritise the scheme for funding in the period 2009-19.

The A5 between Wolfshead Roundabout and Shotatton is currently in good condition. The section of carriageway from Shotatton to Queens Head is due to be surface dressed between June and July 2010 to improve the condition of the surface. A survey is currently programmed to identify the causes of a surface water drainage issue approximately 400 metres south of the Queenshead Junction.

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport (1) how many people have been injured on the A5 between Shrewsbury and the Shropshire/Wales border in each of the last 12 years; [325542]

(2) how many people have been killed on the A5 between Shrewsbury and the Shropshire/Wales border in each of the last 12 years. [325543]

**Chris Mole:** The following table shows the number of people killed or injured on the A5 between Telford and Shropshire/Wales border, in each of the last 12 years. These figures have been provided by the police and validated by the Department. It has not been possible to disaggregate the data to only report on Shrewsbury to Shropshire/Wales border casualties.

	<i>Fatal</i>	<i>Serious</i>	<i>Number Slight</i>
1997	5	28	108
1998	1	22	94
1999	6	23	82
2000	2	23	102
2001	2	18	104
2002	6	14	86
2003	2	14	74
2004	2	13	107
2005	1	11	73
2006	3	10	84
2007	0	3	107
2008	1	6	85

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport (1) how many times the A5 between Shrewsbury and the Shropshire/Wales border has been closed for road works in each of the last five years; [325544]

(2) how many times the A5 between Shrewsbury and the Shropshire/Wales border has been closed following a road traffic accident in each of the last five years. [325545]

**Chris Mole:** The following table show the number of times the A5 between Shrewsbury and the Shropshire/Wales border has been closed for roadworks and following a road traffic accident, for each of the last five years:

	<i>Total number of closures in both directions due to roadworks</i>	<i>Total number of closures due to road traffic accident (figures include closures in one or both carriageways)</i>
2005	1	5
2006	4	6
2007	3	10
2008	1	6
2009	0	4

### Bexley

**Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport on how many occasions Ministers of his Department and its predecessors have visited the London borough of Bexley on official business since 1997. [325774]

**Chris Mole:** The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Cycling: Shropshire

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what recent steps his Department has taken to increase the number of people using bicycles in Shropshire. [325439]

**Mr. Khan:** Shropshire benefits from four main streams of departmental funding to encourage cycling in England.

#### *Local Transport Plan funding*

Shropshire received £4,011,000 integrated transport funding for 2009-10. Funding for other years is available on the Department for Transport website under "Funding for local transport". Local authorities have discretion to spend their allocations in line with their priorities. The Department does not keep records of local funding decisions.

#### *Cycle City and Town funding*

Shrewsbury was chosen as a cycle town in June 2008 and is funded until 2010-11. Departmental funding is used to encourage cycling in the town. The funding is match funded by Shropshire council.

	<i>Shrewsbury (£)</i>
2008-09	600,000
2009-10	800,000
2010-11	665,000
Total	2,065,000

#### *Links to schools*

The Department funds links to schools to encourage cycling and walking to schools, as a contribution to the total cost, with the rest of the funding coming from the local authority.

	<i>Location</i>	<i>DfT fund (£)</i>	<i>Total cost (£)</i>
2004-05	Shrewsbury	28,000.00	201,571.00
2004-05	Whitchurch	1,589.00	3,177.92
2004-05	Albrighton	27,000.00	61,533.08
2004-05	Market Drayton	1,756.00	3,512.00
2004-05	Oswestry	35,000.00	70,504.00
2006-07	Shrewsbury	38,000.00	344,000.00
2006-07	Shifnal	5,000.00	35,607.00
2006-07	Shawbury	10,000.00	76,420.00
2009-10	Oswestry	46,531.56	159,870.90
2009-10	Wem	10,000.00	20,000.00

#### *Cycle training grants*

Local authorities apply for grants to train school children in Bikeability level 2. Bikeability level 2 is an approved cycle training course normally undertaken by children in years five to six (ages 10-11).

Shropshire received the following:

	<i>Shropshire (£)</i>
2008-09	20,000.00
2009-10	31,996.00

### Departmental Food

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what account his Department's food procurement policy takes of animal welfare. [325526]

**Chris Mole:** The Department for Transport conducts its procurement in accordance with UK Government's value for money policies and principles, utilising collaborative arrangements where these are available and in accordance with the legal and regulatory framework.

The Department and its agencies generally provide staff catering and vending services via estates private finance initiative or facilities management contracts. These provisions are typically provided on a commercial basis and are not directly subsidised, and they operate in a very competitive environment.

For example, the Department's headquarter facilities management contract requires the contractor to comply with Government guidance on sustainable food and farming in the delivery of the contract. The contract also requires the contractor to take into account the Government's commitment to the public sector food procurement initiative, and directs them to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs websites. Thus the contractor is encouraged to consider higher level schemes for food standards and animal welfare.

Another example is the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's estates private finance initiative contract, which requires the service provider to comply with the sustainable food procurement initiative and other Government guidance on food and farming in delivery of the service.

As and when each of the Department's catering contracts needs to be renewed, consideration will be given to emerging higher level welfare standards when specifying replacement contracts.

#### **Hang Gliding and Paragliding: EU Action**

**Jacqui Smith:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what assessment he has made of the possible effects on the sports of hang gliding and paragliding of proposals in the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation consultation on the draft Standardised European Rules of the Air; and if he will meet the British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association to discuss the proposals. [325387]

**Paul Clark:** Eurocontrol is preparing the draft implementing rule on Standardised European Rules of the Air on behalf of the European Commission under the umbrella of the Single European Sky (SES) initiative.

The preliminary view of the Department for Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is that the proposals will not impact adversely on hang gliding and paragliding activities as the CAA, as the Competent Authority for the purposes of the legislation, will retain the discretion to permit visual flight rule flights. However, the UK will continue to seek clarity from Eurocontrol on the intent of the element of the regulation which concerns the British Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association (BHPA).

The Department has set up a UK European Air Traffic Management Stakeholders Forum, as a requirement of the SES legislation, at which policy officials directly concerned in this work update aviation stakeholders across the board on SES proposals and elicit views. The BHPA are on the invitee list for the Forum which will next be convened in late spring. In the meantime, Eurocontrol's consultation is still open till 12 April for the BHPA to express its concerns directly to the Agency.

#### **Humber Bridge**

**Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport when he expects all lanes of the Humber Bridge to be open to traffic. [325708]

**Mr. Khan:** The lane restrictions are a matter for the Humber Bridge Board. My understanding is these are currently in place at the Humber Bridge and are essential for traffic management for the dehumidification work on the bridge, and that they will need to be implemented on a regular basis over the next two years.

The works have been carefully planned to avoid contraflow on the bridge other than when absolutely essential and generally only on weekends.

#### **Humber Bridge: Tolls**

**Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport if he will consider requiring the Humber Bridge Board to reduce the level of toll on the Humber Bridge during periods when lane closure is in force. [325705]

**Mr. Khan:** There are currently lane restrictions in place at the Humber Bridge to allow dehumidification work to take place. The Board is monitoring closely the impact of the lane closures on congestion on the bridge. Toll levels are a matter for the Bridge Board. The tolls are levied for the crossing of the estuary and that service is being maintained.

#### **Lorries: Testing**

**Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many tests of heavy goods vehicles the Vehicle and Operator Services Agency conducted outside core business hours between April 2009 and February 2010. [325709]

**Paul Clark:** The total number of heavy goods vehicles tested (both motor vehicles and trailers) outside normal working hours between April 2009 and February 2010 is 9,963. This consists of first and annual tests and retests.

**Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what research his Department has (a) undertaken and (b) evaluated on levels of demand for conducting annual tests of heavy goods vehicles outside standard working hours. [325710]

**Paul Clark:** Customer input into the requirements for, and likely uptake of, extended opening hours for annual tests of heavy goods vehicles has been provided from direct customer feedback and through quantitative customer research with 500 service agents in 2009-10 and a similar survey in 2008.

#### **Public Transport: Shropshire**

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what estimate he has made of the average daily number of people using (a) buses and (b) trains in Shropshire in each of the last five years. [325442]

**Mr. Khan:** For bus usage, data for Shropshire are available from the local government National Indicator Set. The following table shows the figures for Shropshire for the relevant National Indicator (number 177—local bus and light rail passenger journeys originating in the authority area).

*Local bus journeys originating in Shropshire, 2004-05 to 2008-09*

	Thousand	
	Total journeys <sup>1</sup> during year	Average journeys <sup>1</sup> per day <sup>2</sup>
2004-05	6,458	17.7
2005-06	6,359	17.4
2006-07	6,678	18.3
2007-08	6,723	18.4
2008-09	6,793	18.6

<sup>1</sup> The national indicator definition includes bus and light rail journeys in these totals, although there are presently no light rail systems in Shropshire.

<sup>2</sup> Average journeys per day for all days in the year, including weekends, school holidays and public holidays. The working day average is likely to be higher than shown here.

Source:

National Indicator Set

These data are not necessarily consistent with the Department for Transport's published official statistics on bus patronage, and they have not gone through the same reconciliation and consistency checks. Department for Transport bus patronage statistics cannot be released at local authority level, owing to the assurances of commercial confidentiality given to local bus operators.

The Department for Transport does not hold any corresponding data on passenger rail journeys.

### Railways: Construction

**Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport (1) whether he has made an estimate of the number of business premises in (a) the parish of Coldharbour, (b) the parish of Aylesbury, (c) the parish of Stoke Mandeville, (d) the parish of Ellesborough, (e) the parish of Wendover, (f) the parish of Great Missenden and (g) the County of Buckinghamshire which lie within (i) 100, (ii) 200, (iii) 300, (iv) 400 and (v) 500 metres of his Department's preferred route for High Speed Two; and if he will make a statement; [322932]

(2) whether he has made an estimate of the number of dwellings in (a) the parish of Coldharbour, (b) the parish of Aylesbury, (c) the parish of Stoke Mandeville, (d) the parish of Ellesborough, (e) the parish of Wendover, (f) the parish of Great Missenden and (g) the County of Buckinghamshire which lie within (i) 100, (ii) 200, (iii) 300, (iv) 400 and (v) 500 metres of his Department's preferred route for High Speed Two; and if he will make a statement. [322934]

**Chris Mole** [holding answer 18 March 2010]: The effects of the recommended route on properties will be made available as part of the Appraisal of Sustainability (AoS), on which work is continuing. The AoS will be published later in the year in order to inform the formal public consultation which we expect to launch in the autumn. The Government will write to the owners of relevant properties at this time. Additional design work will be required to refine HS2 Ltd's proposals, and this would be likely to reduce the number of properties affected.

**Tony Baldry:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport if he will send a copy of the consultation document on the Exceptions Hardship Scheme for the London-Birmingham high speed rail link to (a) each franchise that his Department considers may qualify for the scheme and (b) each parish council in which one or more such household is located. [325177]

**Chris Mole** [holding answer 30 March 2010]: Copies of the consultation document on the proposed Exceptional Hardship Scheme have been sent to the parties listed at Annex B in the consultation document. The National Association of Local Councils, which represents the 8,500 town and parish councils in England, was sent copies of the consultation materials. Any interested party can respond to the consultation.

Copies of the consultation document are available on the Department for Transport's website at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/2010-18/>

and can be ordered free of charge from DfT Publications (0300 123 1102) or

[www.dft.gov.uk/foi/dftps/howtoobtaindftpublications/form](http://www.dft.gov.uk/foi/dftps/howtoobtaindftpublications/form)

**Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport (1) if he will publish the reports of all passenger demand modelling (a) undertaken and (b) commissioned by his Department on the proposed HS2 routes; [325389]

(2) if he will publish the results of the investigations which have been made into the effect of modal switch in the context of passenger demand modelling for HS2; what methodology was used in the investigation; and if he will make a statement. [325390]

**Chris Mole:** All work commissioned and undertaken on demand modelling and on modal switch for HS2 Ltd.'s report was published alongside the Government's Command Paper on 11 March. In particular, I refer the hon. Member to HS2 Ltd.'s "Demand and Appraisal Report", published on the Department for Transport website at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/pi/highspeedrail/hs2Ltd/demandandappraisal/>

### Railways: Shropshire

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what recent discussions he has had with rail operators on rail services between London and stations in Shropshire. [325441]

**Chris Mole:** There have been recent discussions at official level with Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone Railway and Chiltern Railways regarding services between London and stations in Shropshire. These discussions are ongoing.

### Roads: Accidents

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many fatal road accidents there have been in North Shropshire constituency in each month of each year since 1997. [325440]

**Paul Clark:** The information requested is shown in the following table:

*Reported fatal personal injury road accidents in North Shropshire constituency<sup>1</sup>, by month: 1997 to 2008*

Year/month													Fatal accidents	
	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	
1997	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	5	
1998	1	1	1	0	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	9	
1999	3	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	10	
2000	0	0	3	3	2	2	0	3	0	2	0	0	15	
2001	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	0	3	1	2	12	
2002	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	3	2	0	2	10	
2003	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	2	0	0	1	0	7	
2004	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	5	
2005	4	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	2	12	
2006	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	
2007	1	1	0	0	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	7	
2008	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	6	

<sup>1</sup> Based on 2004 parliamentary constituency boundaries.

### Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

**Anne Milton:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how much his Department spent on (a) road building and (b) road maintenance in the latest year for which figures are available.

[325396]

**Mr. Khan:** In 2008-09 the Department for Transport allocated £246 million to local authorities for local major road schemes. The Highways Agency (an agency of this Department) spent £725 million on road building.

In 2008-09 the Highways Agency spent £914 million on maintenance of the strategic road network. The Department does not directly maintain local authority roads. However, it provides capital maintenance funding to local authorities (outside London) as part of the Local Transport Plan settlement; and funding as part of the private finance initiative. Information about the amounts allocated can be found at:

[www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/localauthorities/funding/fundingstreams/capital/](http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/localauthorities/funding/fundingstreams/capital/)

### Sea Rescue: Flamborough Head

**Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of the works required to make Flamborough Head coastguard station compliant with safety regulations.

[325706]

**Paul Clark:** Following a recent inspection by the local fire and rescue service, the estimated cost to improve safety in the Flamborough Head property is £4,200. The cost to install an external fire escape to the three storey property is in the region of £20,000.

### Thameslink Railway Line

**Kelvin Hopkins:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what assessment he has made of the merits of the provision of more than one additional train maintenance depot for Thameslink stations. [R]

[325778]

**Chris Mole:** The Thameslink Programme will enable the operation of a high frequency service through central London to destinations both North and South of London. In recognition of this, the train maintenance strategy is based on there being two new depots, one North of London and the other South of London. A two depot strategy will provide the most efficient means of servicing the new Thameslink fleet.

**Kelvin Hopkins:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what assessment he has made of the likely effect on the introduction of the new Thameslink trains of the time taken to construct the additional train maintenance depots. [R]

[325779]

**Chris Mole:** The current programme for the introduction of the new fleet of trains shows the first trains entering passenger service in early 2014. Our plans assume that at least one of the two new depots proposed for this new fleet of trains will be operational before this date. There will therefore be sufficient depot servicing facilities in time for the introduction of these first trains by this date.

There will be a point in the production cycle for the new fleet of trains when the second new depot will be required. Our plans assume that the second depot will be operational before this production cycle milestone is realised.

**Kelvin Hopkins:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport whether (a) a local authority and (b) other organisations have powers to block the development of additional train maintenance depots for the new Thameslink rolling stock. [R]

[325781]

**Chris Mole:** Network Rail has commenced the process for progressing planning consents for the two new train maintenance depots for the new Thameslink rolling stock with the relevant local authorities.

It would be inappropriate to comment on the outcome of these discussions at this stage.

### Transport: Sustainable Development

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport how many representations he has received in response to the draft guidance to regions on his Department's Delivering a Sustainable Transport System programme. [325444]

**Mr. Khan:** A number of responses to the consultation on Delivering a Sustainable Transport System in spring 2009 referred to the draft guidance to regions, including two specifically relating to the guidance. The Department for Transport published a response to the consultation on 28 April 2009 at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/archive/2009/planning/consultresponses/>

The final guidance issued to the regions last July may be found at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/strategy/dasts/guidance/>

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what recent assessment he has made of progress in his Department's Delivering a Sustainable Transport System programme; and if he will make a statement. [325445]

**Mr. Khan:** Details of the regional study programme for Delivering a Sustainable Transport System are on the Department for Transport website at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/regional/strategy/dasts/>

and details on the national studies are at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/about/strategy/transportstrategy/nationalnetworksstudy?view=Standard>

The Department is monitoring progress closely through representation on all study steering groups. It is anticipated that a full interim assessment of the work to date will be reported to Ministers in the summer of 2010.

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Transport what discussions he has had with representatives of (a) Shropshire council and (b) Advantage West Midlands on his Department's review, Delivering a sustainable transport system. [325490]

**Mr. Khan:** I meet the chair of Advantage West Midlands (AWM) from time to time to discuss 'Delivering a Sustainable Transport System' and other matters.

Officials from my Department and from Government offices also meet regularly with representatives of both AWM and Shropshire council.

## OLYMPICS

### Olympic Games 2012: Birmingham

**Richard Burden:** To ask the Minister for the Olympics what steps she is taking to ensure that Birmingham obtains a legacy from the London 2012 Olympics. [325284]

**Tessa Jowell:** The Government and the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) have established the Nations and Regions Group to ensure UK-wide engagement

and to maximise the legacy for London 2012. This group works directly with representatives from each of the nations and English regions to maximise the sporting, economic, and cultural benefits of the 2012 games. Some examples of how Birmingham and the West Midlands region are benefiting from the games are given as follows.

Both the American and Jamaican track and field teams will be based in Birmingham in the run up to the games.

West Midlands businesses are already benefiting from the games. To date, 213 businesses in the region have won contracts through CompeteFor. To date 53 businesses have won direct contracts with the Olympic Delivery Authority. This includes a contract for the construction of the Olympic Park's primary sewer and pumping station, and for the manufacture and installation the security fence and gates around the park.

The region has been awarded 20 Inspire Marks, the non-commercial brand for programmes inspired by the games. So far, the West Midlands region has also had over 1,046 schools register on 'Get Set', LOCOG's domestic education programme for London 2012.

Over £6 million worth of funding has been secured to support an extensive programme of events and cultural activity across the West Midlands region in the run up to 2012 including £2.2 million from the Legacy Trust to fund programmes to bring people together for community activities of all kinds.

### Olympic Games 2012: Tickets

**Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Minister for the Olympics whether ballot arrangements for tickets for events in the London 2012 Olympics will prioritise allocations to (a) UK taxpayers and (b) UK residents; what obligations there are upon the organisers in respect of EU citizens and ballot arrangements; by what mechanism priority in ticket allocation will be given to those who have provided funding for the Games; and if she will make a statement. [324992]

**Tessa Jowell:** The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games Ltd. (LOCOG) is responsible for ticketing for the London 2012 games. LOCOG's ticketing plan will ensure that it raises the funds to stage the games and that it provides affordable and accessible tickets to deliver full venues.

Under EU competition law, LOCOG must ensure that all EU citizens, including UK residents, are given fair and equitable opportunities to purchase London 2012 tickets.

LOCOG has committed to making 75 per cent. of London 2012 tickets available via a public ballot process. The ballot will be open to all residents of the EU but LOCOG's promotional work around ticketing will be focused on the UK. LOCOG has already launched 'Sign-Up' encouraging all UK residents to register their details to receive information on ticket opportunities in advance of tickets going on sale in 2011. I hope all Members of the House will encourage their constituents to sign-up to receive this information and to enter the ballot in 2011.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Trade Unions

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Prime Minister which staff in Downing Street work on policy relating to trade unions. [324542]

**The Prime Minister:** The staff in my Office work on a wide range of policies with a range of institutions.

### YouTube

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Prime Minister with reference to the answer of 9 September 2009, *Official Report*, column 1897W, on the Internet, for what reason the decision was taken to disable the function on the YouTube channel to allow comments; and if he will amend the functionality to allow the public to post comments on its YouTube channel. [324200]

**The Prime Minister:** I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave on 9 September 2009, *Official Report*, column 1897W.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITY

### Equality and Human Rights Commission

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Minister for Women and Equality pursuant to the answer of 24 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 644W, on departmental communications, if she will place in the Library a copy of each document provided by APCO Worldwide to the Equality and Human Rights Commission on its campaign programme and awareness campaign. [324300]

**Maria Eagle:** The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is independent and manages its own affairs; the following is based on information it has provided.

APCO Worldwide produced a campaign book for the EHRC. A copy of this document has been placed in the Library as requested.

### Equality and Human Rights Commission: Hotels

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Minister for Women and Equality pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Ruislip Northwood of 10 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 1008W, on hotels, for what dates each of the five star hotels were booked; and the name of each of the senior officials in whose name the bookings were made. [319746]

**Maria Eagle:** The dates of stays in five star hotels are shown as follows.

<i>Date of stay</i>	<i>Number of nights</i>
8 July 2008	1
6 October 2008	1
6 October 2008	1
8 October 2008	1
30 April 2008	2

<i>Date of stay</i>	<i>Number of nights</i>
19 January 2009	1
16 July 2008	1
17 June 2008	2
16 February 2009	1
16 February 2009	2
16 February 2009	1
16 February 2009	1
16 February 2009	1

The names of the staff are confidential but the grades of the staff staying and number of bookings were as follows:

	<i>Number of bookings</i>
Group Director	1
Director	5
Level 5	3
Level 4	2
Level 3	1
Level 2	1
Level 1 (support worker)	1
Investigating Commissioner	1

### Rape: Criminal Proceedings

**Paul Holmes:** To ask the Minister for Women and Equality what steps the Government Equalities Office plans to take in response to the recommendations made in the Stern Review of how rape complaints are handled by public authorities in England and Wales. [324089]

**Maria Eagle:** The Government welcome Baroness Stern's report and have recently published an interim response to her recommendations. Her report poses a number of challenges, as well as 23 recommendations, which need to be carefully considered before a fuller response is issued later this year.

## LEADER OF THE HOUSE

### Members' Staff: Pensions

**Lynne Jones:** To ask the Leader of the House what the total monetary value of employer contributions towards the pensions of staff of hon. Members was in the most recent financial year. [325721]

**Barbara Keeley:** The total pension contributions paid by the House in the 2009-10 financial year to the Portcullis Pension Plan for staff of Members was £5.49 million.

In addition, pension contributions totalling £254,453 were paid by the House to individual pension arrangements for staff of Members.

### Public Duty Costs Allowance

**John Mason:** To ask the Leader of the House (1) how much in public duty costs allowance has been paid to former Prime Ministers in each year since 1991; [311222]

(2) what the limit is of the public duty costs allowance for former Prime Ministers; and when that limit will next be reviewed; [311223]

(3) what rules apply to claims made by former Prime Ministers from the public duty costs allowance; [311224]

(4) which office administers the public duty costs allowance for former Prime Ministers; and what checks are made to ensure that claims against the allowance meet the criteria for funding from the allowance; [311225]

(5) what guidance is provided to former Prime Ministers on claiming from the public duty costs allowance; and if she will place a copy of that guidance in the Library. [311226]

**Tessa Jowell:** I have been asked to reply.

The public duties cost allowance which is administered by the Cabinet Office, is paid in respect of office and secretarial expenses incurred by former Prime Ministers in connection with their public duties. All claims must be supported by documentary evidence. The allowance is not payable if the former Prime Minister is occupying the position of Leader of the Opposition. The allowance is linked to the ceiling of the centralised arrangements for payment of staff and secretarial support for MPs with London constituencies.

Information on payments before the 1997-98 financial year is obtainable only at disproportionate cost. The total amount reimbursed each year, on a cash basis, on the public duties costs allowance is:

	<i>Maximum allowance which can be claimed by each former Prime Minister (£)</i>	<i>Total claimed by former Prime Ministers (£)</i>
1997-98	47,568	171,827
1998-99	49,232	175,402
1999-2000	50,264	171,984
2000-01	51,572	167,955
2001-02	52,760	186,922
2002-03	72,310	278,615
2003-04	74,985	235,809
2004-05	77,534	274,794
2005-06	84,081	294,546
2006-07	87,276	244,638
2007-08	90,505	174,551
2008-09	100,205	190,888

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### Administration of Justice

**Mr. Gregory Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what review mechanisms have been put in place for future spending on the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland following the recent criminal justice inspection report. [325028]

**Paul Goggins:** The Northern Ireland Office already has processes to review expenditure on consultants across the Department and its arm's length bodies.

The use of external consultants and professional services is reported in the annual departmental report which is laid in Parliament.

## Departmental Energy

**Gregory Barker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what (a) voltage optimisers and (b) equivalent technologies are used within buildings occupied by his Department. [324971]

**Paul Goggins:** Voltage optimisers or equivalent technologies are not used within buildings occupied by the Department.

## Departmental Furniture

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much his Department has spent on antique furniture in each of the last five years; and what items were purchased. [325114]

**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 incurred no expenditure on antique furniture in the last five years.

## Departmental ICT

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which ICT projects initiated by his Department were cancelled before completion in each year since 1997; what costs were incurred on each of those projects; who the contractors were of each of those projects; what the date of (a) commencement and (b) cancellation was of each of those projects; and if he will make a statement. [325472]

**Paul Goggins:** There has been one ICT project cancelled by the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) before completion since 1997. The Product Logging ICT Project was cancelled by the Forensic Science Agency at a cost of £8,500. The contractors were ICS Computing. The project commenced in June 2006 and was abandoned in November 2006.

## Departmental Information Officers

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what the cost to his Department was of employing press and media officers in the last 12 months for which figures are available; and what the cost to his Department was of employing such staff in the financial year 1996-97, expressed in real terms. [324799]

**Paul Goggins:** The total cost to the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) of employing press officers during 2008-09 was £579,343. No figures are available for the 1996-97 financial year.

## Departmental Internet

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints his Department received regarding difficulties using its website in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325192]

**Paul Goggins:** The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) has received no complaints regarding difficulties using the website.

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much his Department spent on external website design consultants in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325210]

**Paul Goggins:** A review of my Department's website was conducted during the 2006-07 financial year to optimise the site and improve performance and download speeds. This review cost £15,677.

### Inquiries

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) which legal firms have worked (*a*) for and (*b*) with the Historical Enquiries Team; and how many hours of work each such legal firm had undertaken on the latest date for which figures are available; [325475]

(2) what his most recent estimate is of the final cost to the public purse of the Historical Enquiries Team; [325477]

(3) when he expects the Historical Enquiries Team to have completed its work; [325479]

(4) how much the Historical Enquiries Team had spent on legal fees on the latest date for which figures are available; [325480]

(5) how many people the Historical Enquiries Team has employed in each type of post in each month since its inception; [325481]

(6) how many cases the Historical Enquiries Team has closed; [325483]

(7) what mechanisms the Historical Enquiries Team uses to measure its effectiveness; [325484]

(8) in respect of how many cases which the Historical Enquiries Team has declared closed, families of those whose deaths were under investigation have subsequently requested more information; [325485]

(9) how many and what proportion of cases within its remit the Historical Enquiries Team has examined since its inception; [325486]

(10) how much the Historical Enquiries Team has spent on security (*a*) for legal companies, (*b*) for witnesses and (*c*) in total since its inception; [325487]

(11) how much the Historical Enquiries Team has spent on (*a*) accommodation and (*b*) advertising since its inception; [325488]

(12) how many cases the Historical Enquiries Team has completed to the satisfaction of the families of those whose deaths were under investigation; [325489]

(13) how much the Historical Enquiries Team has spent on IT since its inception; [325520]

(14) how much the Historical Enquiries Team has spent on IT consultants since its inception; [325521]

(15) what the budget is of the press office for the Historical Enquiries Team in (*a*) 2009-10 and (*b*) 2010-11; [325522]

(16) what the cost to the public purse had been of the Historical Enquiries Team on the latest date for which figures are available. [325478]

**Paul Goggins:** The Historical Enquiries Team is an operational matter for the Chief Constable. I have asked him to reply directly to the hon. Member, and copies of his letters will be placed in the Library of the House.

### Prisons: Mental Health Services

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much was spent on mental health services for prisoners in each (*a*) prison and (*b*) health authority area in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years; and how many prisoners received such treatment in each such year. [325426]

**Paul Goggins:** Matters relating to all aspects of prisoners' health care in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety which falls within the remit of the devolved Northern Ireland Administration.

## JUSTICE

### Alcoholic Drinks: Misuse

**Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many new criminal offences relating to the purchase, production, sale or misuse of alcohol have been enacted in each year since 1998. [321162]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** I have been asked to reply.

The following Acts, which received Royal Assent between 1 May 1997 and 1 January 2010 and for which the Home Secretary has policy responsibility and contained references to the purchase, production, sale or misuse of alcohol are listed as follows:

Confiscation of Alcohol (Young Persons) Act 1997  
Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001  
Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006  
Policing and Crime Act 2009

A total of nine new offences relating to the purchase, production, sale or misuse of alcohol are included within the Acts above. The new offences are listed as follows:

Persistent possession of alcohol in a public place (s30 of Policing and Crime Act 2009)  
DPPO—refusal to comply with request (s12(4) of Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001)  
Closure Orders (s25(3) of Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001)  
Closure Orders (s25(4) of Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001)  
Closure Orders (s25(5) of Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001)  
Closure Orders (s26(1) of Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001)  
Confiscation Act (s1(3) of Confiscation of Alcohol (Young Persons) Act 1997)  
Breach of a Drinking Banning Order (s11(1) of Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006)  
Directions to leave—failure to comply with direction (s27(6) of the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006)

### Cemeteries

**Mr. Dunne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what guidance his Department provides to local authorities on (*a*) communal graves and (*b*) burial arrangements for paupers. [325321]

**Bridget Prentice:** Our current guidance reminds burial ground managers not to discriminate in the way common graves are provided in cemeteries and encourages them to be treated with as much sensitivity and respect as any other graves.

#### Departmental Official Hospitality

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the five most expensive hospitality events hosted by his Department and its agencies were in the last three years; and what (a) the cost and (b) purpose was of each. [324659]

**Mr. Straw:** The provision and offering of hospitality is governed by the Department's internal hospitality policy, which is consistent with the principles of Managing Public Money and the HM Treasury handbook on Regularity, Propriety and Value for Money at:

[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/psr\\_governance\\_valueformoney.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/psr_governance_valueformoney.htm)

The guiding principle of the Department's internal policy is that gifts and hospitality must only be provided or accepted in exceptional circumstances where they:

- are appropriate to the circumstances; and
- are modest and appropriate

For example:

- token items such as promotional pens; or
- routine hospitality such as coffee and biscuits; or
- a light working lunch where there are external attendees, meetings are lengthy or internal attendees have travelled long distances.

Attendance at, and hosting of, hospitality events by Department and agency staff is recorded in local hospitality registers, in accordance with Ministry of Justice policy. These data are not collated centrally, and gathering information from local registers (including operational establishments) would be possible only at disproportionate cost.

Therefore, a list of the five most expensive events during the last three years could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

However, at the start of the legal year the Lord Chancellor hosts a breakfast after a service at Westminster Abbey. This event is attended by senior judiciary from the UK and overseas and this event is likely to be one of the higher value events hosted by the Ministry of Justice. The expenditure for the past three years is as follows:

Accounting year	£
2009-10	29,953
2008-09	50,391
2007-08	29,952

In 2008-09 there was a switch from the House of Lords Refreshments Department to the House of Commons Catering and Retail Services. The usual function rooms and catering services were not available and consequently the costs of staging the event were higher. The choice of menu/catering has since been reviewed and economies made, enabling a reduction in costs for 2009-10.

#### Departmental Pay

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer of 16 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 833W, on legal costs, how many employees have instigated legal proceedings against his Department in cases concerning remuneration in each month of the last three years. [325258]

**Mr. Wills:** Details of the number of employees instigating legal proceedings against the Ministry of Justice (excluding NOMS) are contained in the following table.

	Number
<i>2007-08</i>	
May	0
June	0
July	0
August	0
September	1
October	3
November	0
December	2
January	1
February	157
March	1
<i>2008-09</i>	
April	2
May	1
June	0
July	0
August	0
September	0
October	0
November	0
December	1
January	2
February	0
March	0
<i>2009-10</i>	
April	1
May	0
June	0
July	1
August	1
September	2
October	1
November	234
December	0
January	1

<sup>1</sup> Including one Employment Tribunal claim with 54 claimants.

<sup>2</sup> Including one Employment Tribunal claim with 34 claimants.

The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) is an agency of the Ministry of Justice. It has not been possible to obtain information covering NOMS in answer to this question without incurring disproportionate cost.

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer of 16 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 833W, on legal costs, in how many cases concerning remuneration of employees the final ruling was (a) in favour of and (b) against his Department in each month of the last three years. [325259]

**Mr. Wills:** In the core Ministry of Justice (excluding NOMS) none of the cases whose legal costs or compensation values reported in my answer of 16 March were subject to a final ruling.

All cases were either withdrawn by the claimants or where applicable, settlement was agreed by the Ministry in advance of a ruling.

The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) is an Agency of the Ministry of Justice. It has not been possible to obtain information covering NOMS in answer to this question without incurring disproportionate cost.

#### Magistrates: Age

**Jacqui Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what steps are taken to ensure that appointments of magistrates avoid discrimination on grounds of age. [325386]

**Mr. Straw:** The Lord Chancellor appoints magistrates with the concurrence of the Lord Chief Justice. They are recruited and selected by 101 local advisory committees. The following steps are designed to avoid all forms of discrimination in that process:

appointment is strictly on merit; eligible candidates are assessed solely against the key qualities required of all magistrates, irrespective of factors such as age

all advisory committee members undertake mandatory training on how to avoid bias or discrimination during the selection process

the selection process has been reviewed by my Department's legal advisers to ensure compliance with applicable anti-discrimination legislation.

#### Opposition

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice whether his Department has undertaken costings of the policies of the (a) Conservative Party and (b) Liberal Democrat Party at the request of Ministers or special advisers in the last 36 months. [324251]

**Mr. Wills:** I refer the hon. Member to answer given by my hon. Friend, the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Sarah McCarthy-Fry) on 30 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1044W.

#### Political Parties: Finance

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Horsham of 26 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 795W, on political parties: finance, what response he made to Sir Hayden Phillips' request on release of the minutes and background papers. [324408]

**Mr. Straw:** My response to Sir Hayden Phillips consented to the release of the minutes and background papers from the inter-party talks on party funding.

#### Prisoners: Mobile Phones

**David Howarth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many prosecutions there have been for offences relating to pornographic or violent images discovered on telephones seized from inmates in prisons in England and Wales in the last 12 months; [324863]

(2) whether his Department has evidence of the transfer of violent or pornographic images from telephone to telephone by inmates in prisons in England and Wales. [324864]

**Maria Eagle:** The court proceedings database holds information on defendants proceeded against, found guilty and sentenced for criminal offences in England and Wales. The court proceedings database does not hold specific information on offences beyond descriptions provided by the statutes under which prosecutions are brought. Information available centrally on defendant's proceeded against does not identify if the defendant is a prisoner. While data are extracted from mobile phones by a central unit, action taken as a result of that data is a matter for individual establishments and their partners. This is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

David Blakey's report and the Government response were published on 7 July 2008. The report emphasised the difficulties inherent in reducing contraband supply in prisons, and highlighted the link between drug supply and mobile phone availability in prisons.

Good progress has been made in implementing Blakey's recommendations and the Government are committed to reducing the number of mobile phones in prisons and addressing the risks that mobile phones present both to prison security and to the safety of the public. We have implemented a strategy to minimise the number of mobile phones entering prisons, to find phones that do get in and to disrupt mobile phones that cannot be found.

As part of this we have already strengthened the law through the Offender Management Act 2007, which made it an offence with a penalty of up to two years' imprisonment to bring a mobile phone or component into a prison. We are also taking forward legislation to criminalise the possession of devices including mobile telephones within a prison without authorisation.

Due to the covert nature of mobile phone use in prisons, the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) is not able to estimate the number of mobile phones or component parts in circulation. NOMS is also unable to assess their usage.

Prisons in England and Wales are instructed to send mobile phones and SIM cards found to a central unit and the data extracted from these mobile phones are then shared with establishments so that appropriate action can be taken locally. A record of these local actions is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

#### Prisons: Organised Crime

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people convicted of offences relating to involvement in organised crime were in prison when charged with those offences in each of the last three years. [325661]

**Maria Eagle:** The data requested are not held.

There is no list of offences that relate to involvement in organised crime. Therefore, to provide these data would require an investigation into each individual conviction where the offender was in prison custody

when charged, and in many cases a subjective assessment as to whether the offence related to serious organised crime. This would be at disproportionate cost.

The National Offender Management Service is also fully engaged in action to address serious and organised crime strategically, including the work identified in the Government report 'Extending Our Reach: A Comprehensive Approach to Tackling Serious Organised Crime' to develop a strategy to manage serious organised criminals while in prison.

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what estimate the Prison Service has made of the incidence of organised crime carried out by serving prisoners over the last three years. [325663]

**Maria Eagle:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 30 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1086W.

Covert criminal activity is, of its nature, very difficult to quantify. Prisons have a well established security information reporting framework. Where concerns are identified about a prisoner's potential criminal activity, prisons can draw on a range of measures to identify and disrupt that activity.

The National Offender Management Service is also fully engaged in action to address serious and organised crime strategically, including the work identified in the Government report 'Extending Our Reach: A

Comprehensive Approach to Tackling Serious Organised Crime' to develop a strategy to manage serious organised criminals while in prison.

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many prisoners were charged with a serious crime carried out while they were in prison in 2008-09. [325664]

**Maria Eagle:** While the number of serious offences, as defined by Schedule 1 to the Serious Crime Act 2007, are recorded, data as to whether the offender was imprisoned at the time of charge are not held. To provide the data would require an investigation into each such offence, which would be at disproportionate cost.

The National Offender Management Service is also fully engaged in action to address serious and organised crime strategically, including the work identified in the Government report "Extending Our Reach: A Comprehensive Approach to Tackling Serious Organised Crime" to develop a strategy to manage serious organised criminals whilst in prison.

#### Protection of Badgers Act 1992

**Martin Horwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many (a) prosecutions and (b) convictions there have been for offences under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 in each year since 2006. [325344]

**Claire Ward:** The requested information is shown in the following tables:

*The number of persons proceeded against at magistrates courts and found guilty at all courts for selected offences, England and Wales, 2006 to 2008<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>*

	Statute	Offence description	2006			2007		
			Proceeded against	Found guilty	Sentenced	Proceeded against	Found guilty	Sentenced
10822	Badgers Act 1973 as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 1991, s.26 and Badgers Act 1991, s.1	Offences of cruelty to badgers and special protection for badgers and their setts.	10	3	3	20	6	6
11120	Badgers (further protection) Act 1991	Failing to give up a dog for destruction or having custody of a dog while disqualified.	12	4	4	10	5	5

  

	Statute	Offence description	2008 <sup>3</sup>		
			Proceeded against	Found guilty	Sentenced
10822	Badgers Act 1973 as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 1991, s.26 and Badgers Act 1991, s.1	Offences of cruelty to badgers and special protection for badgers and their setts.	22	11	11
11120	Badgers (further protection) Act 1991	Failing to give up a dog for destruction or having custody of a dog while disqualified.	14	11	11

<sup>1</sup> The figures given 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Excludes data for Cardiff magistrates court for April, July and August 2008.

Source:

Justice Statistics Analytical Services in the Ministry of Justice.

### Trade Unions

**Mr. Grieve:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer of 11 March 2010, *Official Report*, columns 383-84W, on trade unions, if he will place in the Library a copy of the secondment agreement between his Department and the PCS trade union. [322745]

**Mr. Straw:** Agreements are not generic documents, but are specific to the individual on secondment. We currently have two employees on secondment to PCS, and copies of their agreements will be placed in the Library.

### Tribunals: Disability Living Allowance

**Mr. Vara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many appeal tribunals relating to disability living

allowance took place in each of the smallest administrative areas for which figures are available in each of the last five years. [324599]

**Bridget Prentice:** The Tribunals Service is only able to provide figures for each administrative area from 2007-08. Prior to this, disability living allowance appeals were administered by the Appeals Service, an agency of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The DWP is unable to break down its figures in the way the hon. Member has requested.

The First-tier Tribunal—Social Security and Child Support has seven administrative centres across the country. The following information is the most comprehensive that the Tribunals Service Management Information system can provide.

*Disability living allowance: clearances at hearing by centre*

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10 (up to 28 February 2010) <sup>1</sup>
Birmingham (East and West Midlands and East of England Government Office Regions) and (London Government <sup>2</sup> Office Region)	*	*	6,445	8,846	9,054
Cardiff (Wales) and South West Government Office Region	*	*	7,931	7,285	7,269
Glasgow (Scotland)	*	*	9,601	8,220	6,803
Leeds (Yorkshire and the Humber Government Office Region)	*	*	5,095	5,382	4,330
North West (North West Government Office Region)	*	*	8,034	8,563	8,090
Newcastle (North East Government Office Region)	*	*	3,535	3,452	3,228
Nottingham <sup>3</sup>	*	*	12,847	8,824	5,021
Sutton <sup>4</sup> (South East and London <sup>2</sup> Government Office Regions)	*	*	4,342	3,308	4,282
Total	71,125	65,088	57,830	53,880	48,077

“\*” = Figures for April 2006 to March 2007 are unavailable.

<sup>1</sup> Figures provided for April 2009 to February 2010 are provisional and subject to further change.

<sup>2</sup> Covers whole of Government Office Region London except Hillingdon, Harrow, Barnet, Enfield, Haringey, Islington, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, Hackney which are covered by Birmingham.

<sup>3</sup> The Nottingham office transferred its caseload which covered the East Midlands, East of England and part of the London region (see 2 above) to the Birmingham office on 18 December 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Prior to 29 June 2009, part of Sutton's caseload was administered by the Nottingham office and is included in the Nottingham figures up until that date.

#### Notes:

1. Figures provided for financial years April 2007 to February 2010 were extracted from GAPS 2 (Generic Appeals Processing System) Statistical Summary Reports dated 25 March 2010.

2. Figures prior to April 2007 supplied by DWP. From April 2006 there was a transitional period when DWP recorded data on more than one computer system (GAPS 1 and GAPS 2). Some information was not updated on the system and as a result a breakdown by area is not available.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### Children: Maintenance

**Mr. Vara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many cases were processed by the Child Support Agency in each of the last 10 years. [324690]

**Helen Goodman:** The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission is responsible for the child maintenance system. I have asked the Child Maintenance Commissioner to write to the hon. Member with the information requested and I have seen the response.

*Letter from Stephen Geraghty:*

In reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission, the Secretary of State promised a substantive reply from the Child Maintenance Commissioner.

You asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many cases were dealt with by the Child Support Agency in each of the last 10 years. [324690]

The number of live and assessed cases being handled in each of the last 10 years is provided in the table below. This includes old scheme cases with a full or interim maintenance assessment as well as current scheme cases with a full maintenance calculation or default maintenance decision. Figures include cases processed off the system from 2008. Information on these cases prior to this date is not included as this information can not be broken down into those live or assessed.

*Table 1: Caseload by scheme: live and assessed cases*

Period as at:	Old scheme	Current scheme	Overall agency
November 2000	1,044,500	—	1,044,500
November 2001	1,054,800	—	1,054,800
November 2002	1,079,500	—	1,079,500
December 2003	935,400	65,200	1,000,700
December 2004	868,300	169,600	1,037,900
December 2005	816,400	293,700	1,110,100

Table 1: Caseload by scheme: live and assessed cases

Period as at:	Old scheme	Current scheme	Overall agency
December 2006	747,600	418,700	1,166,300
December 2007	669,700	556,700	1,226,400
December 2008	607,300	656,200	1,263,500
December 2009	521,900	691,200	1,213,100

*Notes:*

1. Figures from December 2008 accurately reflect the performance of cases processed off the system. Prior to 2008, the clerical caseload cannot be broken down to show the number of live and assessed cases.
2. Figures include old Scheme cases with a full or interim maintenance assessment as well as current Scheme cases with a full maintenance calculation or default maintenance decision.
3. From 2003, changes were made to the quarterly periods in which figures were recorded.
4. Figures have been rounded to the nearest 100.

I hope you find this answer helpful.

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many enquiries made to the Child Support Agency (CSA) were responded to (a) over the telephone and (b) in writing in the latest period for which figures are available; and what the policy is of the CSA on responding to requests that details of a telephone conversation be confirmed in writing. [325397]

**Helen Goodman:** The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission is responsible for the child maintenance system. I have asked the child maintenance commissioner to write to the right hon. Member with the information requested and I have seen the response.

*Letter from Stephen Geraghty:*

In reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission, the Secretary of State promised a substantive reply from the Child Maintenance Commissioner.

You asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many enquiries made to the Child Support Agency (CSA) were responded to (a) over the telephone and (b) in writing in the latest period for which figures are available; and what the policy is of the CSA on responding to requests that details of a telephone conversation be confirmed in writing. [325397]

Information on how the Child Support Agency (CSA) responded to enquires made by (a) over the telephone and, (b) in writing is not available as the purpose of calls and correspondence is not recorded for management information purposes. There is no specific policy on how the CSA handle requests for written confirmation of a conversation. Management encourage employees to use the telephone when contacting clients as this is the fastest and most effective means of communication, however we will provide written confirmation to clients where there is a valid need.

I hope you find this answer helpful.

**Council Tax Benefits**

**Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what (a) representations she has received from and (b) discussions she has had with (i) the Royal British Legion, (ii) other third sector organisations and (iii) other interested parties on the renaming of council tax benefit as council tax rebate. [325458]

**Helen Goodman:** During the passage of the Welfare Reform Bill the Royal British Legion met with Ministers and officials a number of times to discuss the merits of the case for changing the name of council tax benefit and, subsequently, on how to take forward the change of name to council tax rebate. The Department has continued to receive some correspondence from interested parties concerning the name change.

**Departmental Food**

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what account her Department's food procurement policy takes of animal welfare. [325523]

**Jonathan Shaw:** The Department does not procure food directly, but has a contract for the provision of fully serviced accommodation which includes catering. The contract is with Telereal Trillium and their catering services supplier is Eures (part of the Compass Group UK and Ireland). Since 2003, the Department has been working with these suppliers, actively pursuing a Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative action plan and one of the key objectives of this initiative is to raise farming standards.

Compass Group has confirmed that they endorse the Farm Animal Welfare Council's Five Freedoms concept and provide full traceability of products and suppliers within their approved supply chain to ensure animals reared for meat, fish, milk and eggs are raised to high standards of animal welfare.

Compass Group has also confirmed a long-standing commitment to source its seafood as sustainably as possible. They were the first foodservice company to achieve the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Chain of Custody certification enabling them to serve certified sustainable, MSC labelled seafood choices. Within the DWP contract many of their sites are buying products to these standards and promotional activities are run to encourage DWP staff to purchase the more ethically sourced products.

**Departmental Internet**

**Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 2 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1023W, on departmental internet, what the cost was of the website redesign. [321921]

**Jim Knight:** The cost of the DWP Corporate website redesign was £216,000. The website was redesigned as part of our response to the Sir David Varney transformational government recommendations that customer facing content should move to Directgov and employer facing content to Business Link. We therefore redesigned the corporate site for its refined corporate audience and removed all customer facing content, while at the same time implementing new Cabinet Office guidelines for Government websites.

### Employment Schemes: Birmingham

**Richard Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people in Birmingham have received (a) the in-work credit, (b) the return to work credit and (c) pathways to work since that scheme was introduced. [325241]

**Helen Goodman:** 1,480 lone parents in the Birmingham local authority area have received in-work credit since it became available there in April 2008.

15,190 individuals received provider led Pathways to Work support in the Birmingham local authority area up to the end of July 2009.

1,120 individuals received the return to work credit in the Birmingham local authority area up to the end of October 2009.

### Employment Schemes: Voluntary Organisations

**Tim Farron:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment she has made of the likely effects on the voluntary sector of the decision to reduce the number of prime contractors under the Work Choice Programme. [325464]

**Jonathan Shaw:** Smaller, specialist organisations including those from the faith based, voluntary and third sector already play an important role in delivering support to our customers. For example, as of 1 March 2010, 29 per cent. of the Department's Welfare to Work contracts were with providers from the third sector, compared to 38 per cent. from the private sector and 33 per cent. from the public sector.

As we move to longer, larger contracts with prime contractors, it is important that we do all we can to ensure that organisations from the voluntary and third sector are engaged and made aware of the opportunities to work as sub-contractors/partners with the prime contractors. Prime contractors will be expected to ensure that DWP provision is joined up with local partnership arrangements, working with smaller, specialist providers many of whom will be third sector or voluntary organisations dealing with disadvantaged groups in the local area.

Specifically, as part of the procurement of the Work Choice programme, DWP established a database to facilitate the networking between prospective prime contractors and delivery partners. This was published on the DWP website; updated on an ongoing basis and included the contact details of all organisations who agreed to have these details published. Additionally, two events took place in September 2009, to further facilitate networking between potential prime providers and those organisations seeking to deliver at sub-contractor level. Nearly 600 people attended these events.

DWP are taking every public and private opportunity to stress to potential Prime providers that they are taking a keen interest in observing how organisations are taking forward their partnering strategies and the care with which they are engaging with third sector organisations.

### Future Jobs Fund

**Mrs. May:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many jobs in each employment sector (a) were originally expected to be created by Future Job Fund funding and (b) are expected to be created as a result of successful bids for such funding. [324516]

**Jim Knight:** The Future Jobs Fund does not include targets for the creation of jobs in specific sectors. The Future Jobs Fund is a challenge fund and we are therefore unable to provide any detail about the volumes of jobs that might be created in each sector.

The Department and HMT agreed an aspiration of creating 10,000 'green jobs' through the Future Jobs Fund. This includes jobs in environmental sectors, renewable energy technologies, and emerging low-carbon sectors.

Of the 117,000 Future Jobs Fund jobs we've agreed to fund to date, around 17,000 have been green jobs.

### Incapacity Benefit

**Sandra Gidley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the average processing time of incapacity benefit applications was in (a) the UK and (b) each of the smallest geographical areas for which figures are available in each quarter of the last five years; and if she will make a statement. [321456]

**Jim Knight:** 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 asking what the average processing time of incapacity benefit applications was in (a) the UK and (b) each of the smallest geographical areas for which figures are available in each quarter of the last five years; and if she will make a statement. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of Jobcentre Plus.

The average actual clearance time (AACT) is calculated from our benefit processing system and is a result of taking all the claim volumes processed within any given month against the total number of days each claim has taken to process. The system conducts a simple division calculation using these data sets to provide us with the AACT.

The two dates used to calculate the AACT for incapacity benefit were from the date a properly complete claim form is received by Jobcentre Plus to the date a decision is made.

I have provided the AACT data for the last five years and current performance to January 2010. For 2005/06 the data is displayed by district level and from 2006/07 onwards the data has been gathered by Benefit Delivery Centre. This is the lowest geographical area we can provide. For national level performance we have provided in month performance from April 2005 to January 2010. I have arranged to have this information placed in the House of Commons Library.

We do not record the requested data quarterly as the data is not collated in this way. However, we have provided information in monthly and yearly tables.

I hope this information is helpful.

### National Insurance: Gurkhas

**Nick Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many National Insurance numbers her Department has issued to Gurkha veterans settling in the United Kingdom since August 2009; [325688]

(2) how long on average it has taken to issue a National Insurance number to a Gurkha veteran settling in the United Kingdom since August 2009. [325689]

**Helen Goodman:** The information is not available.

### New Deal for Young People

**Steve Webb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of (a) early and (b) normal entrants to the New Deal for Young People left in order to take up employment in each of the last five years; and if she will make a statement. [318469]

**Jim Knight:** The jobseeker support regime delivered by Jobcentre Plus has been very successful and the new deal programmes have helped some 2.25 million people into work since they were introduced in 1998. This includes 915,650 jobseekers who have been helped into work by the new deal for young people.

None the less, the labour market has changed significantly over the last decade and the programme needs to evolve to ensure it is ready for the challenges of the next 10 years. This is why we are introducing the refreshed jobseekers regime and the flexible new deal which will offer a four-stage programme of support, with increasing levels of customer responsibility at each stage.

The introduction of the flexible new deal will support the Government's aim of helping more people secure sustained employment through tailored, flexible help and support, particularly for people who experience repeated cycles of unemployment.

Implementation of the new jobseekers regime and the flexible new deal began in April 2009 as part of a phased approach across the country. This programme will be available to jobseekers in most areas of the country by October 2010.

The recording of destinations of new deal participants in 2009 has been affected by the transition to the refreshed jobseeker's allowance and flexible new deal.

The information requested is shown in the following tables:

<i>Leavers from the new deal for young people (early entrants)</i>		
<i>Destinations from 2004 up to August 2009 (latest data available)</i>		
<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>Number to employment</i>	<i>Proportion of entrants (percentage)</i>
2004	17,000	45.6
2005	13,690	40.3
2006	11,140	36.0
2007	12,030	35.8
2008	11,110	34.1
2009 <sup>1</sup>	7,680	24.8

### *Leavers from the new deal for young people (other than early entrants)*

*Destinations from 2004 up to August 2009 (latest data available)—number*

<i>Calendar year</i>	<i>Number to employment</i>	<i>Proportion of entrants (percentage)</i>
2004	53,730	40.8
2005	43,830	36.7
2006	51,560	35.4
2007	57,490	35.8
2008	41,920	33.1
2009 <sup>1</sup>	33,360	24.8

<sup>1</sup> The 2009 figures are to August 2009 only, the last month for which figures are available.

*Notes:*

1. Definitions and conventions: Case load figures are rounded to the nearest 10. Percentages are rounded to one decimal point.

2. Those not recorded as leaving the new deal programmes to take up employment include those leaving to benefits, people who have gone abroad, people who have taken up jobs without notifying the jobcentre, or those who have left and not notified Jobcentre Plus of their destination.

3. The employment category includes leavers for whom information indicated that they had both a job start and a new benefit claim within two weeks of leaving new deal.

*Source:*

Department for Work and Pensions, Information Directorate

### New Deal Schemes: Birmingham

**Richard Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much funding in total has been received under New Deal programmes for (a) young people, (b) 25+, (c) 50+, (d) lone parents, (e) partners and (f) disabled people in Birmingham; and how many people in Birmingham have received assistance from each such scheme. [321575]

**Jim Knight:** The most recent data can be found in the following table.

<i>Programme funding and New Deal starters in Birmingham and Solihull district</i>		
<i>Programme</i>	<i>2008-09 Outturn (£ million)</i>	<i>2008-09 Starts</i>
New Deal for Young People	5.004	7,150
New Deal for 25 Plus	1.866	2,200
New Deal for Lone Parents	1.590	5,400
New Deal for Partners	—	0
New Deal for Disabled People	—	0
Total	8.461	14,800

*Notes*

1. Figures may not sum due to rounding

2. The figures only reflect provision costs and spend on in work training grants there is no estimation of the costs of Jobcentre Plus adviser time which is substantial for some programmes.

3. New Deal for Young People and New Deal for 25 Plus figures for funding include New Deal for the Self Employed and New Deal for Musicians.

4. New Deal for 50 Plus spend and starts are incorporated in the New Deal for 25 Plus figures.

5. Funding for the New Deal for Disabled People is not available below national level. This figure is published in the Departmental Report 2009, which is available in the Library.

6. Because of the small numbers involved, we do not have reliable data for the starts and spend for the New Deal for Partners in this district. National data are published in the Departmental Report 2009, which is available in the Library.

7. Starts figures are rounded to the nearest 50.

8. Latest data on starters are from the introduction of the New Deal programmes to August 2009.

9. New Deal for Disabled People starters (individuals) data are not available; Job Broker Registrations (individuals) has been used instead.

10. Spells (period of time spent on the programme) are not available for New Deal for 50 Plus and New Deal for Partners so individual level data are used instead. Spells data is used for New Deal for Young People, New Deal for 25 Plus and New Deal for Lone Parents.

*Source:*

Department for Work and Pensions, Information Directorate.

The jobseeker support regime delivered by Jobcentre Plus has been very successful and the New Deal programme has helped more than 2.25 million people into work since it was introduced in 1998.

### Social Security Benefits: Disabled

**Andrew George:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of people are in receipt of the (a) (i) care and (ii) mobility component of disability living allowance and (b) attendance allowance in the (A) South West and (B) UK. [325466]

**Jonathan Shaw:** The information is in the tables.

*Disability living allowance: cases in payment—care award type by south-west Government office region*

	Higher rate	Middle rate	Lower rate	Nil rate	Total
GB caseloads	710,110	1,021,440	859,510	502,050	3,093,090
GB proportions (percentage)	1.2	1.7	1.4	0.8	5.2
South-west caseloads	45,970	81,290	66,250	37,070	230,580
South-west proportions (percentage)	0.9	1.6	1.3	0.7	4.4

*Disability living allowance: cases in payment—mobility award type by south-west Government office region*

	Higher rate	Lower rate	Nil rate	Total
GB caseloads	1,763,930	923,250	405,910	3,093,090
GB proportions (percentage)	3.0	1.5	0.7	5.2
South-west caseloads	124,510	71,030	35,040	230,580
South-west proportions (percentage)	2.4	1.4	0.7	4.4

*Attendance allowance: cases in payment—care award type in south-west Government office region*

	Higher rate	Lower rate	Total
GB caseloads	896,750	708,380	1,605,120
GB proportions (percentage)	1.5	1.2	2.7
South West caseloads	72,570	92,600	165,170
South West proportions (percentage)	1.4	1.8	3.2

**Notes:**

1. Caseload figures are rounded to the nearest ten. Totals may not sum due to rounding.
2. “—” = Nil or negligible, n/a = Not applicable.
3. Cases in payment show the number of people in receipt of an allowance, and exclude people with entitlement where the payment has been suspended, for example if they are in hospital.
3. Recipients of disability living allowance can be in receipt of both the care and mobility component.

**Source:**

DWP Information Directorate: Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study

**Andrew George:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of the population in St. Ives constituency are in receipt of each level of (a) attendance allowance and (b) the (i) care and (ii) mobility component of disability living allowance. [325470]

**Jonathan Shaw:** The information is in the tables.

*Disability living allowance: cases in payment by care award—August 2009*

Care award type	Higher rate	Middle rate	Lower rate	Nil rate	Total
St. Ives—caseloads	1,230	1,910	1,740	920	5,790
St. Ives—percentage of population	1.2	1.9	1.7	0.9	5.8

*Disability living allowance: cases in payment by mobility award—August 2009*

Mobility award type	Higher rate	Lower rate	Nil rate	Total
St. Ives—caseloads	3,410	1,570	810	5,790
St. Ives—percentage of population	3.4	1.6	0.8	5.8

*Attendance allowance: cases in payment by attendance allowance award type—August 2009*

Attendance allowance award type	Higher Rate	Lower Rate	Total
St. Ives—caseloads	1,650	2,030	3,690
St. Ives—percentage of population	1.7	2.0	3.7

**Notes:**

1. Caseload figures are rounded to the nearest 10.
2. Cases in payment show the number of people in receipt of an allowance, and exclude people with entitlement where the payment has been suspended, for example if they are in hospital.
3. Recipients of disability living allowance can be in receipt of both the care and mobility component.

**Source:**

DWP Information Directorate: Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study

### State Retirement Pensions

**Steve Webb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate she has made of the number of recipients of the state second pension whose entitlement includes years past 2002 when they were in receipt of incapacity benefit; how much extra state second pension is paid per week per recipient in respect of such years; and what estimate she has made of the expenditure on such accrued rights in 2009-10. [324417]

**Angela Eagle [holding answer 25 March 2010]:** State second pension expenditure in 2009-10 due to the accrual of rights via receipt of incapacity benefit is estimated at around £300 million in 2009-10 price terms.

We are unable to provide information relating to the number of people to whom this expenditure relates or the average amounts in payment as modelling of state second pension expenditure is performed on an aggregate basis and does not take account of individual entitlements.

In 2007-08, the latest period for which data is available, 900,000 women and 1,300,000 men of working age accrued rights to state second pension through receipt of incapacity benefit.

**Notes:**

1. Figures have been rounded to the nearest £10 million.
2. Forecasts of state second pension/state earnings related pension scheme are based on the Budget Report 2010 forecasts. Published expenditure tables can be found at the following link:

[http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd4/medium\\_term.asp](http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd4/medium_term.asp)

3. Figures for 2007-08 are provisional as they will be subject to change as further information about national insurance contributions becomes available.

Sources:

Strategy Directorate modelling and Lifetime Labour Market Database, 2007-08.

### Unemployment

**Mr. Allen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 15 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 605, if she will estimate the savings in unemployment benefits and other benefits from unemployment being 650,000 lower in 2010 than the average predicted by independent forecasts; and if she will make a statement. [323436]

**Jim Knight [holding answer 22 March 2010]:** Between the Budget 2009 and the Budget 2010, the expected level of UK unemployment was reduced. By the end of 2009, the actual UK unemployment claimant count was already nearly 500,000 less than expected at the Budget 2009.

Unemployment is now expected to be 700,000 lower in 2010 than in the Budget 2009. The savings in benefits across 2010-11 to 2014-15 compared with what was assumed at Budget 2009 is around £14 billion. This includes spend relating to housing benefit and council tax benefit as well as jobseeker's allowance.

### Winter Fuel Payments

**Steve Webb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions with reference to Budget 2010, HC 451, if she will estimate the saving to the Exchequer in each of the next five years of increasing the age of entitlement to winter fuel payments to 65 years. [325346]

**Angela Eagle:** Following a European Court of Justice Judgment in December 1999, the winter fuel payment scheme was extended to all those aged 60 and over.

The requested information is in the following table:

<i>Savings (2009-10 price terms)</i>	
	£ million
2010-11	600
2011-12	420
2012-13	340
2013-14	270
2014-15	220

Notes:

1. Expenditure for GB only, rounded to the nearest £10 million.
2. The European Court of Justice ruled that, by not paying winter fuel payments to men aged 60 to 64, but paying eligible women from age 60, the scheme was discriminatory. The ruling was applied from the beginning of the scheme, the winter of 1997-98.
3. Savings are modelled using current policy of increasing age of entitlement to winter fuel payments to 65 by 2020, against a scenario if age entitlement to winter fuel payments was increased to 65 immediately in each of the next five financial years. Modelling assumes anyone 60-64 currently receiving winter fuel payment would no longer receive it.
4. A winter fuel payment of £250 per household is modelled for 2010-11. For subsequent years a winter fuel payment of £200 per household is modelled.
5. Savings are for each financial year and become smaller as the age of entitlement increases with current policy. The drop in savings from 2010-11 to 2011-12 is also due to the decrease in winter fuel payment amounts assumed.

## DEFENCE

### Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations

**Nick Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which items of equipment procured since 2001 and made available to operations in Afghanistan were procured as part of his Department's core equipment programme. [322846]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** The following table, which is based on centrally held records, lists the majority of equipment projects with a cost of £20 million or over that were procured from the core equipment programme since 2004 and made available to operations in Afghanistan. A number of equipment projects have not been included as their disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the armed forces.

Details of equipment projects procured prior to 2004, and projects costing less than £20 million for the entire period covered by the question, are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Equipment</i>
Land Equipment	Battle Group Thermal Imaging Trojan
	Panther Command and Liaison Vehicle (CLV) <sup>1</sup>
	Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System
	Future Fire Control System
	Wheeled Tankers
	Pinzgauer 4x4 Truck Utility Medium Fitted For Radio
	Dismounted Counter Mine Capability—Vallon handheld mine detector
	Support Vehicle (SV)
	C Vehicle PFI—Crane Terex 35 Tonne
	C Vehicle PFI—Light Wheel Tractor All Arms JCB 3CX
	C Vehicle PFI—Light Wheeled Tractor JCB 4CX
	C Vehicle PFI—Medium Wheeled Tractor
	C Vehicle PFI—Bulldozer Cat D5N
	C Vehicle PFI—Heavy Well Drills
	C Vehicle PFI—Rough Terrain Forklift 2400 kg JCB
C Vehicle PFI—Rough terrain Forklift 4000 kg JCB	
Operational Field Catering System (OFCS)	
Mobile Artillery Monitoring Battlefield Radar	
Weapons	Light Forces Anti-Tank Guided Weapon
	Javelin Follow-On Buy
Air Support	C-17 (5th Aircraft)
	C-17 (6th aircraft)
Information Systems and Services	Bowman
	UIC/TSC503 Transportable SATCOM Terminals
Helicopters	Chinook Coherence

<sup>1</sup> The Panther CLV was procured through the core equipment programme but a number of the vehicles underwent a modification, funded as an urgent operational requirement, to enable them to operate in Afghanistan.

Other equipment projects are planned to be procured from the core equipment programme to be made available for operations in Afghanistan. These include land equipment, information systems and services and helicopter projects and the 7th C17. Many other equipment projects procured from the core equipment programme have delivered capability in support of other operations.

**Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Operation Eagle's Summit in 2008 necessitated the redeployment of British forces from elsewhere in Helmand Province. [325239]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** While extensive support was provided by British forces to Operation Oqab Tsuka (Eagle's Summit), to move a turbine from Kandahar to Kajaki, it did not require the long-term redeployment of British troops from elsewhere in Helmand Province.

**Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what role the Scout vehicles will carry out in Afghanistan; and what the cost of each such vehicle will be on deployment in theatre. [325452]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** The Scout vehicles will be the principal reconnaissance vehicles of the British Army and will replace Scimitar vehicles which are currently deployed in Afghanistan. The final numbers and costs will be determined at the manufacture investment decision point.

**Ann Winterton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what main weapons systems Scout vehicles will have on deployment in Afghanistan; which companies are the (a) manufacturers and (b) suppliers of the ammunition for the vehicle's main weapons systems; what the cost is per round of ammunition; and what estimate he has made of the lifespan of the barrel of the main weapon system per number of rounds fired. [325453]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** The intent is for the Scout vehicle's main weapon system to be the 40 mm Cased Telescoped Cannon provided by Cased Telescoped Ammunition International, a joint private venture between BAES and Nexter. On current plans, BAES will produce the ammunition for the cannon at their facilities in Glascoed, South Wales under the Department's Munitions Acquisition Supply Solution (MASS) contract. The cost of each round of ammunition will be determined during commercial negotiations before the MASS contract is amended to incorporate the 40 mm ammunition. The lifespan of the barrel will be established during the qualification programme for the cannon and ammunition. The qualification programme consists of an extensive series of tests and trials to ensure that the cannon and ammunition are safe, reliable and effective for use by the British Army.

#### Air Force

**Dr. Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to retain the Royal Air Force as a separate service after the next Strategic Defence Review. [325552]

**Bill Rammell:** Yes, it is my policy to retain the three services.

#### Aircraft Carriers

**Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what (a) contracts and (b) sub-contracts related to the construction of two aircraft carriers for the Royal Navy have been let; in which constituencies he expects work arising from such contracts and sub-contracts to take place; and if he will make a statement. [324990]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** In July 2008, the MOD placed a contract with the Aircraft Carrier Alliance (ACA) for the manufacture of two Queen Elizabeth (QE) Class aircraft carriers. Work on the QE Class Aircraft Carriers is now under way in five UK shipyards—Appledore, Rosyth, Govan, Portsmouth and Tyne, with work due to start at the sixth and final yard, Birkenhead, in the next few months.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 21 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 437W. An updated list of sub-contracts will be placed in the Library of the House, which includes the constituencies where work will be carried out.

#### Armed Forces: Health Services

**Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much funding his Department has allocated for the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder in soldiers returning from active duty to (a) England and (b) Wales in each year since 1997; and if he will make a statement. [325311]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** Financial information is not held in the format requested. Owing to the number of different internal budgets to which costs would be attributable, any detailed analysis of Departments of Community Mental Health (DCMH) finances would therefore incur disproportionate costs. The majority of mental healthcare for service personnel is provided through MOD's 15 military-run DCMHs in the UK (with additional centres in Germany, Cyprus and Gibraltar), which have since 2004 provided out-patient mental healthcare for members of the armed forces.

In-patient care, when necessary, is provided in specialised Mental Health units under contract with an external provider. Between April 2004 and March 2009, this was provided by the Priory Healthcare Group, and costs in each financial year are contained in the following table:

	<i>Contract value (£ million)</i>
1 December 2003 to 31 March 2004	0.4
1 April 2004 to 31 March 2005	4.2
1 April 2005 to 31 March 2006	4.5
1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007	3.4
1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008	3.9
1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009	3.3

These figures take into account the cost of assessing patients as well as any in-patient treatment programmes provided; the individual care needs of each patient will vary depending on their particular medical circumstances. They also include services provided by the Priory Group between 1 December 2003 and April 2004 prior to the formal contract start date.

The contract with the Priory Group has been replaced by one awarded in November 2008 to a partnership of seven NHS trusts led by South Staffordshire and Shropshire NHS Foundation Trust. They admitted their first patients under this contract in February 2009. Costs for its first year of operation will be available in summer 2010. Prior to April 2004, in-patient care was provided at MOD's Duchess of Kent psychiatric hospital at Catterick; full historic costs back to 1997 are not available.

The Ministry of Defence takes the mental health of its personnel very seriously. While post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a serious issue, and one we are making every effort to address, PTSD itself makes up only around 5 per cent. of the mental health burden of the armed forces. The majority of service personnel who do develop a mental health condition will suffer from less serious conditions, such as neurotic or adjustment disorders. But we offer assessment and treatment to individuals who might be concerned about any aspect of their mental health.

The DCMHs are located to be convenient for major centres of military population, and support the provision of healthcare that is available through service primary care facilities. Many of the less serious mental health disorders are managed by primary care providers; sometimes cases are co-managed by DCMH staff and primary care staff.

While there are no DCMHs located in Wales itself, we nevertheless have arrangements in place to ensure that mental healthcare can be provided conveniently and flexibly, while reflecting the number of service personnel in the principality and their wide dispersion. Staff from the DCMH at Donnington in Shropshire run regular clinics in locations which cover all the major concentrations of personnel in Wales, namely Valley, St. Athan, Brawdy and Brecon, as well as at locations on the Welsh border such as Chepstow and Hereford. They will additionally visit individual patients as required at their home or other location. Personnel based in Wales who do need to attend a DCMH will usually be referred to that at Donnington, although other units, such as those in Portsmouth and Plymouth, may be used if more convenient.

#### Armed Forces: Housing

**Willie Rennie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service family accommodation properties in England and Wales were identified as awaiting disposal or demolition in each year since 2004; and how much rent was paid to Annington Homes for those properties in each of those years. [322038]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** It will take more time to collate and verify the information requested. I will write to the hon. Member.

*Substantive answer from Kevan Jones to Willie Rennie:*

In my answer of 12 March (Official Report, column 479W) I undertook to write to you with details of how many service family accommodation properties in England and Wales were identified for disposal or demolition in each year since 2004; and how much rent was paid to Annington Homes Ltd (Ltd) for those properties in each of those years.

The following number of properties were handed back to AHL in each year financial year since 2004-05. I also provide the following number of MOD owned properties that were disposed of, normally by open market sale, or demolished:

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>Number of properties handed back to AHL</i>	<i>Number of MOD properties disposed of</i>	<i>Number of properties demolished</i>
2004-05	676	76	0
2005-06	307	24	0
2006-07	460	5	0
2007-08	260	45	0
2008-09	475	1	1

It has not been possible to determine from records held how much rent was paid to AHL for each property from the point it was identified as being surplus to the MOD's requirements to when it was actually handed back to the company.

#### Armed Forces: Manpower

**Willie Rennie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many soldiers subject to manning control have been downgraded to Grade P 4 since 2007. [325136]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** Decisions on the particular regiments and service roles on which soldier Manning Control Points will be focused have not yet been made by the Army. Each individual case will be considered on its merits, irrespective of gender.

#### Armed Forces: Merseyside

**Mrs. Curtis-Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 22 March 2010, *Official Report*, columns 9-10, on armed forces: Merseyside, how many young people in the UK cadet forces were recruited into the armed forces in each of the last five years. [325005]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** There is no requirement for recruits into the armed forces to specify whether they had previously been a member of any cadet force.

The cadet forces organisations seek to raise the awareness of opportunities for personal development in young people and support their career. They are not recruiting organisations, although it is acknowledged that where the cadet experience leads to a young person joining the armed forces, this is a benefit to defence.

#### Armed Forces: Training

**Chris Huhne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the effect of the planned closure of the research and assessment facility at the Defence Academy; and if he will make a statement. [321500]

**Bill Rammell:** The Defence Academy Research and Assessment Branch undertook broad non-technical research in an evolving range of geo-strategic studies and cross-cutting global issues which centred around Statecraft and Governance. The Academy is currently assessing how non-technical research capability can still be delivered by reviewing the arrangements that it has in place with its academic providers Cranfield University and Kings College London to optimise the Academy's research in a manner which supports its primary activity (to enhance Defence capability by providing high quality, relevant, progressive training and education underpinned by research to the four services) as well as contributing to the MOD's broader research effort.

The Academy is also looking at closer integration with activity sponsored or conducted by the Directors Defence Studies, Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) and the Defence Concept and Doctrine Centre in order to mitigate any loss of capability through the closure of the research and assessment branch.

### Defence Medical Services

**Sir Menzies Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) which private companies Defence Medical Services uses to hire civilian medical locums to work at UK medical facilities on deployed operations; [324582]

(2) how many civilian medical locums have been employed by Defence Medical Services to provide support to Operation Herrick; and what the (a) specialism, (b) length of deployment and (c) cost was of each such locum. [324583]

**Mr. Kevan Jones** [holding answer 20 March 2010]: The company with which the Defence Medical Services (DMS) holds an enabling contract for contracted medical support (nursing, medical support services and doctors) is Frontier Medical. Each deployment is ordinarily for a three month period and cover has only been required for up to eight posts at any one time.

Set out in the following table are the total costs of the locums employed on Operation Herrick for each financial year since April 2007 to August 2009, together with the total numbers of individual personnel who have deployed at any time between the dates shown.

Financial year	Total individuals deployed at any time in period as civilian locums	Operation	Total cost £ million
April 2007-March 2008	16	Herrick (Afghanistan)	0.612
April 2008-March 2009	35	Herrick	2.34
April 2009-August 2009	26	Herrick	0.79

The service chiefs have decided that detailed data will no longer be published where this would highlight potential pinch points within the armed forces, including the DMS. I am withholding information on pinch points as its disclosure would, or would be likely to prejudice the capability, effectiveness or security of the armed forces.

In order to maintain appropriate external scrutiny of such data, the Department will continue to provide comprehensive restricted manning data to the House of Commons Defence Committee.

### Defence: Scotland

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department incurred in (a) equipment expenditure, (b) non-equipment expenditure, (c) service personnel costs and (d) civil personnel costs in Scotland in (i) 2007-08, (ii) 2008-09 and (iii) 2009-10. [324959]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth** [holding answer 29 March 2010]: Estimated direct Ministry of Defence (MOD) expenditure

for Scotland in the categories requested for the years where data are available are presented in the following table:

	2007-08 current prices (£ million)
(a) Equipment expenditure	510
(b) Non Equipment expenditure	280
(c) Service personnel costs	590
(d) Civilian personnel costs	190

#### Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest £10 million.
2. Figures relate to expenditure in the whole Scottish Government office region rather than to any individual military or civilian establishments.
3. Indirect expenditure, such as subcontracted work, is not reflected in the figures.
4. Personnel costs exclude contributions made by MOD to the Armed Forces Pensions Scheme and War Pensions Scheme.

Since 2008 the MOD has not collected estimates of regional expenditure on equipment, non-equipment, or personnel costs as they do not directly support policy making or operations. The last estimates for 2007-08 were published in UK Defence Statistics in September 2009. As a result, the complex analysis required to produce the underlying regional expenditure data is no longer performed. Information for a comparable time series beyond 2007-08 could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Departmental Buildings

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department and its agencies have spent on rooms for staff leisure in each of the last five years. [324436]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department provides subsidised gym facilities for its staff. [324564]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** All members of the armed forces are required to maintain a level of physical fitness that allows them to fulfil their service obligations. As a result, gymnasiums located on military establishments are free to use by service personnel and in certain circumstances, where capacity allows, by civilian staff. In those isolated locations where a service gymnasium is not available, local subsidised arrangements are put in place, if possible, solely for service personnel.

While MOD also allows existing on-site accommodation in some establishments to be used for fitness purposes and in doing so meets the cost of changing facilities, lighting, heating and any other utilities, it does not use public money to subsidise the running or equipping of gymnasiums for civilian staff. These gyms are run either through the auspices of the Civil Service Sports Council (CSSC) and funded by member subscription, or from other subscriptions from the users of the individual gym. Grants are also available from the Defence Sports and Recreation Association, which is the MOD departmental association of the CSSC, and is funded by grant from the CSSC and a local lottery.

### Departmental Energy

**Gregory Barker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what (a) voltage optimisers and (b) equivalent technologies are used within buildings occupied by his Department. [324978]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** Given that the aim of voltage optimisation (VO) is to reduce energy consumption while maintaining the performance of equipment, MOD is interested in these devices. However, we are currently seeking to validate the claims of equipment providers and a trial of these relatively new technologies is in progress at Lymptstone. The outcome of the trial will inform our approach to the application of the technology across the estate.

While opportunities exist for the installation of VO equipment, for the reasons given these have not in the main yet been taken up. That said, to assist the installation of the technology we have recently issued internal guidance on VO. This covers the factors to be considered before installation.

### Departmental Internet

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been spent on (a) strategy and planning, (b) design and build, (c) hosting and infrastructure, (d) content provision and (e) testing and evaluation for his Department's websites in each of the last three years; and how much has been allocated for each such category of expenditure in 2009-10. [310761]

**Bill Rammell:** The Ministry of Defence and armed forces collectively maintain four principal websites. These sites are key channels to enable MOD to keep the public informed of Defence activities, provide information about MOD and support recruitment.

In support of the Transformational Government agenda, we have made significant progress in rationalising other Defence websites. The closure of some 53 websites has enabled us to make savings and improve the clarity and effectiveness of the departmental web presence. A further 19 sites are committed to close by 31 March 2011.

The four remaining principal Defence websites register a high volume of web traffic. Annual page views for the corporate MOD site, www.mod.uk, have increased by 65 per cent. from 2006-09, from 17.5 million to 29 million.

Annual unique visitor numbers for www.mod.uk have increased by 34 per cent. over the same period, from 3.2 million to 4.3 million.

Expenditure for the four remaining principle sites over the last three financial years is summarised in the following table. Expenditure on these has increased while other websites have closed. Expenditure breakdown by category is not available for these financial years as this requirement was not introduced until 1 April 2009, when the "Measuring Website Costs: TG128" guidance issued by the Central Office of Information (COI) came into effect. It should be noted that the expenditure figures shown are not directly comparable year on year as costs were captured differently in each year.

Website	Financial year		
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
MOD corporate website: www.mod.uk	177,875	325,600	464,853
Royal Navy: www.royalnavy.mod.uk	270,000	283,000	283,000
British Army: www.army.mod.uk	235,000	426,500	501,814
Royal Air Force: www.raf.mod.uk	173,859	155,000	425,241

Projected expenditure broken down by category for the 2009-10 financial year for the four principal websites is detailed in the following table. Figures are exclusive of internal staff costs.

Website	Expenditure by category					Total
	Strategy and planning	Design and build	Hosting and infrastructure	Content provision	Testing and evaluation	
Ministry of Defence: www.mod.uk	0	<sup>1</sup> 417,900	126,000	<sup>2</sup> 292	8,070	<sup>1</sup> 552,262
Royal Navy: www.royalnavy.mod.uk	100,000	<sup>3</sup> 74,000	109,000	0	<sup>4</sup> —	283,000
British Army: www.army.mod.uk	15,875	24,870	118,651	<sup>2</sup> 1,704	25,300	186,400
Royal Air Force: www.raf.mod.uk	22,085	147,691	49,675	0	2,938	222,389

<sup>1</sup> This figure also includes expenditure on MOD's internal Defence intranet.

<sup>2</sup> Translation services.

<sup>3</sup> Includes testing and evaluation.

<sup>4</sup> Included in design and build.

A number of other websites are run by different parts of the Ministry of Defence, but these are not managed centrally. Information on these sites could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints his Department received regarding difficulties using its Department's website in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325200]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** The Ministry of Defence and armed forces collectively maintain four corporate websites:

*Ministry of Defence*

www.mod.uk

*Royal Navy*

www.royalnavy.mod.uk

*British Army*

www.army.mod.uk

*Royal Air Force*

www.raf.mod.uk

The MOD takes the provision of usable, accessible, quality websites very seriously and we continually evaluate the services provided in light of feedback received from members of the public. Each website provides feedback mechanisms such as 'Contact Us' forms. Feedback provided via these forms covers a number of topics, and complaints are not captured separately from other feedback. Details of the number of complaints received could therefore be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spent on external website design consultants in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325218]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** The Ministry of Defence and armed forces collectively maintain four corporate websites. Expenditure on design consultancy cannot be separated from website redesign and implementation costs overall. Costs for redesign and implementation in the last three years, including design consultancy and other costs, are shown in the following table.

Website and URL		Cost (£)
MOD corporate website: <a href="http://www.mod.uk">http://www.mod.uk</a>	2007-08	150,000
Royal Navy: <a href="http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk">http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk</a>	2007	110,000
British Army: <a href="http://www.army.mod.uk">http://www.army.mod.uk</a>	2008 <sup>1</sup>	266,500
Royal Air Force: <a href="http://www.raf.mod.uk">http://www.raf.mod.uk</a>	2006-07	119,579

<sup>1</sup> The British Army website redesign launched on 30 May 2008; the redesign project launched in 2006 and preparatory design work was carried out between 2006 and 2008.

### Departmental Location

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spent on the relocation of staff from posts in (a) Essex and (b) Castle Point constituency in each of the last five years. [321432]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** The Ministry of Defence offers a wide range of relocation assistance to civilians transferring at public expense but this information is not held in the format requested.

### Departmental Pay

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff in his Department received bonus payments in each of the last five years for which information is available; what proportion of the total work force they represented; what the total amount of bonuses paid was; what the largest single payment was; and if he will make a statement. [300284]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** An element of the Ministry of Defence overall pay award is allocated to non-consolidated variable pay related to performance. Non-consolidated variable pay awards are funded from within existing pay bill controls, and have to be re-earned each year against pre-determined targets and, as such, do not add to future pay bill costs.

For details on the maximum and average payments for staff in the senior civil service (SCS) I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr. Leech) on 26 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 796W. These are also the maximum payments made to any MOD civil servant. In 2006-07, 271 SCS staff were eligible for a non-consolidated performance payment. 181 received one. In 2007-08, 266 were eligible and 186 received an award. In 2008-09, 268 were eligible and 187 received an award.

For staff below the SCS, performance awards are paid to those who meet the eligibility criteria. Higher levels of award are available for those who have contributed most to the business. These awards are distributed on the basis of relative assessment among peers and are designed to encourage continuous high attainment against stretching objectives. All MOD broader banded and Skill Zone staff below the SCS are eligible for a non-consolidated performance payment. The majority of MOD civilian staff earn less than £20,000 per year.

The MOD also operates an in year non-consolidated payment scheme—the Special Bonus Scheme—which rewards eligible MOD civilians for exceptional performance in a specific task or for the achievement of a professional qualification the use of which benefits MOD and the individual. Additionally Ministry of Defence police officers may be awarded a payment for exceptional performance when dealing with particularly demanding, unpleasant, or important one-off tasks or situations.

The following tables detail how many people received a non-consolidated performance related pay award (both in year and end of year), and the proportion of the total work force they represented, for the five most recent financial years.

	Number of staff receiving a bonus payment	
	Performance award	Special bonus
2004-05	36,195	10,074
2005-06	38,962	10,131
2006-07	46,592	8,747
2007-08	54,881	6,997
2008-09	62,261	9,679

	Proportion of the work force receiving an award	
	Performance award	Special bonus
2004-05	37.1	10.3
2005-06	40.7	10.6
2006-07	51.4	9.6
2007-08	65.4	8.3
2008-09	79.3	12.3

*Note:* The criteria for awarding performance-related pay has changed significantly during the period 2004-05 to 2008-09. It is therefore difficult to make direct comparisons of the annual figures although the trend has been towards more civil servants receiving smaller individual performance related payments.

For the total amount of bonuses paid to all civilian staff, I refer the hon. Member to the ministerial correction dated 25 March 2010, *Official Report*, columns 3-4 MC.

This response excludes information on staff below the SCS in MOD Trading Funds, which have separate pay delegations.

**Mr. Scott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much has been paid in bonuses to civil servants in his Department in each year since 2006. [306431]

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) year-end and (b) in-year bonuses were paid to officials in his Department in each of the last three years; and how much was paid in such bonuses in each such year. [307096]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** I refer the hon. Members to the answer I gave today to the hon. Member for Twickenham (Dr. Cable).

#### Departmental Security

**Nick Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date his Department ceased to maintain a database of passes issued to major defence contractors. [323686]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** The Ministry of Defence has never maintained a comprehensive database of passes issued to Defence contractors for the whole of the Defence estate. The information is not held centrally and could therefore be provided only at disproportionate cost. For information about passes issued to employees of private defence companies for access to London buildings, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 29 March 2010, *Official Report*, columns 641-42W.

#### Electronic War

**Mr. Swire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department has undertaken research on whether terrorist groups are seeking to obtain the capability to carry out electromagnetic pulse attacks on the UK. [325553]

**Bill Rammell:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 12 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 479W. I have nothing further to add.

**Mr. Swire:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had on the threat of an electromagnetic pulse attack on the UK in the context of the National Security Strategy. [325554]

**Bill Rammell:** The Government's National Security Strategy and the Cyber Security Strategy of June 2009 provide a view of potential state and non-state led threats against the UK into the future including the possible use of high power radio frequency transmissions or electromagnetic pulses to damage or disrupt unprotected electronics. The Ministry of Defence was fully involved with the development of this work.

#### Falkland Islands

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he plans to increase the level of defence spending on the Falkland Islands. [324892]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** We keep the level of defence spending on the Falkland Islands under regular review to ensure that it remains appropriate to fund the tasks required.

#### Falkland Islands: Land Mines

**Harry Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Government expects full mine

clearance in the Falkland Islands to be completed; and what relevant contracts to effect such clearance have been entered into. [325548]

**Bill Rammell:** The UK was granted a 10-year extension to its obligations under the Ottawa convention in November 2008. De-mining of the Falkland Islands therefore has to be completed by March 2019.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is currently funding a four-site de-mining programme in the Falkland Islands. Clearance of these sites started in December 2009 and is expected to complete by July 2010. To date over 1,100 mines have been located and destroyed. Analysis of this project will inform future clearance work.

#### Future Rapid Effect System

**Nick Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what export potential was claimed by (a) BAE Systems and (b) General Dynamics as part of their proposals to upgrade the Future Rapid Effects System armoured reconnaissance vehicle contract. [325159]

**Mr. Quentin Davies:** Neither BAE Global Combat Systems or General Dynamics UK made any specific claims with regard to export potential as part of their tender for the Specialist Vehicle programme.

#### Inquiries: Northern Ireland

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much the Ministry of Defence had spent under each budget heading on the (a) Rosemary Nelson, (b) Robert Hamill, (c) Billy Wright and (d) Saville Inquiry on the latest date for which figures are available. [325474]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** As at the end of February this year the Ministry of Defence had incurred a total of approximately £35.6 million in expenditure on the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, of which £32.5 million represented legal costs and the remainder other costs. I gave the latest available figures on costs incurred by the Department in connection with the Rosemary Nelson and Billy Wright Inquiries in a written answer on 9 November 2009, *Official Report*, column 40W, to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North and Fleetwood (Mrs. Humble).

The Department has incurred no expenditure in connection with the Robert Hamill Inquiry.

#### Low Flying

**Adam Price:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many wind farm developers have agreed with his Department that low-flying aircraft activity may take place in the area of their wind farms. [325339]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** Wind farm developers do not control the airspace within which their equipment is sited, and the Ministry of Defence does not have to approach them for authority to operate low-flying aircraft in the area of wind farms. However, generally, military aircraft will not operate in close proximity to wind farms, and will always maintain the appropriate minimum separation criteria.

### Military Bases

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the current estimated monetary value is of the property comprising (a) Naval Base Clyde, (b) Royal Marines Condor, (c) RAF Leuchars, (d) 2nd Division HQ Craigiehall, (e) Defence Estates Hebrides and (f) Fort George; and how much his Department plans to spend on redevelopment at each of these bases. [316518]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** Details of all Ministry of Defence holdings over £1 million, together with their latest asset valuations can be found in Chapter Seven of the National Asset Register, on HM Treasury's website

[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/psr\\_investment\\_nar\\_2007\\_index.htm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/psr_investment_nar_2007_index.htm)

It will take a little more time to collect and verify information relating to how much the Department plans to spend on redevelopment at each base. I will write to the hon. Member.

We are interpreting DE Hebrides as referring principally to Ministry of Defence sites at Benbecula and St. Kilda and a few other locations.

*Substantive answer from Kevan Jones to Angus Robertson:*

In my answers of 9 February (Official Report, column 814W-815W) I undertook to write to you with details of how much the Ministry of Defence (MOD) plans to spend on the redevelopment of various bases in Great Britain.

Work is currently underway at the MOD'S Hebrides Range to assess the investment required to maintain its capability. Until this work is complete, for which a deadline has not been set, any anticipated redevelopment expenditure cannot be identified. Also, no redevelopment work is planned at RAF Brampton as it is due to close in 2012.

For the remaining sites, the forecasted expenditure for the next five years on work that is considered to be redevelopment is as follows:

<i>MOD site</i>	<i>Total forecasted expenditure (£ million)</i>
Naval Base Clyde	101.6
Royal Marines Condor	12.6
HM Naval Base Devonport	39.0
HM Naval Base Portsmouth	166.2
Fort George	0.1
2nd Div HQ Craigiehall	15
RAF Leuchars	112.4
RAF Valley	16.9
RAF Marham	47.8
RAF Honington	13.8
RAF Wittering	35.3
RAF Wattisham	0.8
RAF Northolt	25.4
RAF High Wycombe	35.4
RAF Brize Norton	216.0
RAF Leeming	29.4

### Weapons: Transport

**Linda Gilroy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the staffing levels required at each waterside depot to maintain the safe supply of armaments to vessels. [325582]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** Staffing levels were assessed as part of the proposals made in the Business Improvement Programme undertaken by the Defence Storage and Distribution Agency's Explosives Business Stream. These proposals are subject to trade unions consultation, which is due to complete in July 2010. It would be inappropriate for me to comment while the consultation is ongoing.

**Linda Gilroy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he took account of the recommendations of the Haddon-Cave Nimrod review in respect of the proposals for the supply of armaments to waterside depots by direct delivery contained in the Business Improvement Programme consultation. [325583]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** Safety is paramount in the munitions environment. The use of direct delivery, if fully implemented, will be consistent with the Haddon-Cave recommendations.

### Written Questions: Government Responses

**Dr. Cable:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans to answer question 300284, on departmental pay, tabled on 18 November 2009. [313133]

**Mr. Bob Ainsworth:** I replied to the hon. Member today. I apologise for the delay.

## HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

### Nurseries

**Mr. Chope:** To ask the hon. Member for North Devon, representing the House of Commons Commission pursuant to the answer of 23 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 170W, on nurseries, for what reason there is no reference to the petition in the minutes of the Commission's meeting of 8 March 2010; and when the Commission plans to respond to the petitioners. [324986]

**Nick Harvey:** The Commission made no decision on 8 March on a response to the petition. It agreed a response on 29 March.

**Mr. Chope:** To ask the hon. Member for North Devon, representing the House of Commons Commission if he will place in the Library a copy of the fully costed options appraisal for a child care facility at 1 Parliament street as agreed by the Commission at its meeting on 23 November 2009. [325750]

**Nick Harvey:** It is not the practice to publish advice given to the Commission. However, as the hon. Member knows, in response to a request from the Administration Committee, Mr. Speaker wrote to the Chairman of that Committee in January explaining how the planned site had been selected from among the sites initially considered and setting out the estimated cost of converting each of the premises covered by the fully costed options appraisal.

**Speaker's Adviser**

**Kate Hoey:** To ask the hon. Member for North Devon, representing the House of Commons Commission how much the Speaker's special adviser has claimed for travel expenses since he was appointed. [325460]

**Nick Harvey:** No expenses of any kind have been claimed.

**Kate Hoey:** To ask the hon. Member for North Devon, representing the House of Commons Commission how many days the Speaker's special adviser has worked since 30 November 2009. [325461]

**Nick Harvey:** The Speaker's adviser has worked for 73.5 days since 30 November 2009, up to and including 12 March 2010.

**Unite**

**Mr. Dunne:** To ask the hon. Member for North Devon, representing the House of Commons Commission whether the House of Commons Commission recognises the Unite trade union. [325348]

**Nick Harvey:** The Unite union is not a recognised trade union under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1992 for the purpose of collective bargaining with the House Service. However, the House Administration has recently agreed a draft memorandum of understanding with Unite and the Members' and Peers' Staff Association, who represent staff employed by hon. Members. The memorandum covers a range of areas for dialogue, including IT, catering, training and premises-related issues.

**COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT****Audit Commission**

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether he plans to place a cap on the maximum salary and remuneration package for the post of chief executive of the Audit Commission. [324509]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** This appointment is to be made by the Audit Commission, whose Chair has assured my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government that in this recruitment exercise the Commission will follow the principles for public sector pay that we are developing with the Chair of the Senior Salaries Pay Review Body.

**Council Housing**

**Mr. Vara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many people were attributed to each banding allocation on the choice-based lettings scheme in (a) North West Cambridgeshire constituency, (b) each local authority area in the East of England and (c) England (i) in each of the last five years and (ii) on the latest date for which information is available. [325334]

**Mr. Ian Austin:** This information is not collected centrally.

**Council Housing: Debts**

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his estimate is of the amount of historic debt remaining on local authority housing. [325561]

**John Healey:** The assumed housing debt, the subsidy capital financing requirement, for each authority is calculated annually by my Department using data supplied by the local authorities themselves on their Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Subsidy base data forms. The information is published, after consultation, in annual HRA Subsidy Determinations. The 2010-11 Determination is available on the Communities and Local Government website at this address:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/hradetermination201011>

**Council Tax**

**Mr. Dunne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the average council tax bill on a Band D home (a) was in 1997-98 and (b) will be in 2010-11 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in 2010 prices. [325329]

**Barbara Follett:** The average Band D council tax in England in 1997-98 was £688 and will be £1,439 in 2010-11. The figure for 1997-98, in real terms based on April 2009 prices, is £931.

It is not possible to express this figure in April 2010 prices as the relevant deflator is not yet available.

**Mr. Dunne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the average Band D fire precept on council tax bills was in (a) England and (b) each individual local authority in (i) 1998-99 and (ii) 2010-11 in (A) cash terms and (B) real terms in 2010 prices. [325330]

**Barbara Follett:** I have today placed in the Library of the House, a table showing the average band D council tax precept collected by billing authorities on behalf of fire authorities in 1998-99 and to be collected in 2010-11. Figures for 1998-99 at April 2009 prices are also shown. It is not possible to express these figures in April 2010 prices as the relevant deflator is not yet available. All the figures are shown in £ sterling.

Data are only shown for those authorities that collected, or will collect, a precept on behalf of the fire authority responsible for their area in either 1998-99 or in 2010-11. From 1 April 2004 combined fire authorities in shire areas became major precepting authorities, having previously been financed by payments from county and unitary councils in their area. Where an authority is not listed this is because the fire service is still run directly by the county council, and so they do not levy a separate fire precept on the billing authority.

In 1998-99 London authorities separately reported the band D council tax precept they collected on behalf of the London fire brigade. In 2010-11 this could not be separately identified from the general GLA precept.

### Crown Estates: Fire Services

**Mr. Dunne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for what reasons there is a separate fire safety inspection regime for Crown premises; and whether he plans to create a single unified regime. [325303]

**Mr. Malik:** The separate fire safety inspection regime reflects the different way in which the Crown is treated under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (S.I. 2005/1541), and in particular the fact that the enforcement provisions of the order do not apply to the Crown. The Fire Precautions Act 1971, which preceded the 2005 order, made a similar distinction. The Government have no plans to create a single unified regime.

### Departmental Internet

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many complaints his Department received regarding difficulties using its website in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325202]

**Barbara Follett:** The Department does not keep records of complaints received regarding the operation of its website.

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much his Department spent on external website design consultants in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325220]

**Barbara Follett:** The Department redesigned its website in August 2007. For information relating to the costs of this redesign, I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Mr. Dhanda) on 20 May 2008, *Official Report*, column 264W.

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) how much his Department spent on maintaining its Flickr channel in the last 12 months; [325592]

(2) how much his Department spent on maintaining its YouTube channel in the last 12 months. [325595]

**Barbara Follett:** The corporate YouTube channel is maintained as part of the routine business of the Department's web team alongside other social media channels. There is no budget assigned to this channel.

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much his Department spent on maintaining its Twitter feed in the last 12 months. [325594]

**Barbara Follett:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Putney (Justine Greening) on 14 October 2009, *Official Report*, column 966W.

### Departmental Legislation

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Peterborough of 1 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 953W, on departmental legislation, for what reasons each substantive piece of uncommenced legislation has not been commenced. [323989]

**Barbara Follett:** The information requested, where it is held centrally, is provided in the following table. Section 314 and schedule 15 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 are fully in force and not partially commenced as stated in my answer to the hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Jackson) of 1 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 953W. The remaining information requested is not held by the Department and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

#### Legislation

#### Explanation

Local Government Act 2003: Section 68

This amendment would remove the requirement for the place of religious worship to be registered under the Places of Worship Registration Act 1855. The amendment was intended to cater for any repeal of the 1855 Act, which may have happened as part of the legislation on civil partnerships. To date, there has been no repeal of the 1855 Act, so my Department has no current plans to bring the section into force

Local Government Act 2003: Section 69

Before the power could be removed, properties with prescribed rateable values were moved to standard rating assessments. This has now been completed, and there are no properties remaining on which the Secretary of State has prescribed a rateable value. However, the final step of removing the power to prescribe has not yet been carried forward

Local Government Act 2003: Section 90

Section 80ZA of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 is fully in force. Subsection 90(4) of the Local Government Act 2003, which amends section 141(8) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, allowing amounts of housing revenue account (HRA) subsidy payable to the Secretary of State to be set off against other amounts payable by him, has not yet been commenced. We are not currently aware of any circumstances indicating that use of this power would be appropriate. There are no proposals to commence the power at present

Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009: Sections 1 to 9

The Duty to Promote Democracy is important and we want to ensure that its introduction has a positive and proactive response from local government given the likely costs involved in implementing it effectively. We have therefore been looking at when the duty should be implemented. We have concluded that given the current economic situation implementation of the duty should be considered as part of the next Spending Review

Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009: Sections 10 to 22

The Commencement Order (210 No. 881) relating to the petitions duty was made on 19 March 2010

Legislation	Explanation
Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009: Sections 34 to 36	Ministers said in the House that we would consult on regulations imposing restrictions or conditions on the use of the mutual insurance power by best value authorities and also on guidance. Following consultation it will be necessary to commence the mutual insurance provisions in the Act (section 148(2)(b))
Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009: Sections 37 to 54	Ministers said in the House that we would consult on the content of proposed regulations defining qualifying entities. Following consultation it will be necessary to commence the audit provisions in the Act (section 148(2)(b))
Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009: Sections 138 to 145	The commencement date for Construction Contract provisions in part 8 is dependent on the revision of the Scheme for Construction Contracts (England and Wales) Regulations 1998. The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills issued a consultation document on amendments to the scheme on 25 March 2010. The draft regulations will be approved by resolution of each House of Parliament. This will give the construction industry sufficient time to prepare for the changes being made by part 8
Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002: Sections 121, 122 (partially), 123, 124 and Schedule 8	Attempts to implement these provisions led to the identification of significant workability issues: following public consultation in 2009, a summary of responses is to be published shortly, indicating that there are no current plans to proceed with implementation of these provisions
Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002: Sections 152 (partially), 154, 156 (partially), 157 (partially) and Schedule 10 (partially); and, Housing and Regeneration Act 2008: Section 303 and Schedule 12 Housing Act 2004: Section 265 and Schedules 15 (partially), 16 (partially)	The Government remain committed to implementing these provisions. Work is in progress with stakeholders to develop the regulations to give effect to these provisions with a target date of October 2010 Section 265 and schedule 15 give the Secretary of State, or where appropriate the National Assembly for Wales, powers to make incidental and consequential provisions to the Act as he considers appropriate. Therefore, these provisions would only be commenced if the Secretary of State considers it appropriate to make incidental and consequential provisions to the Act. Section 266 and schedule 16 repeal provisions in other enactments. Two repeals in schedule 16 have not been commenced. These relate to the London Building Acts amendment Act 1939, sections 35(1)(c)(i) and 36(1) (repealing the words "or sleep") and the Building Act 1984 (section 72(6)(a)). These changes were rendered unnecessary by other legislation. There are two other repeals in the Health Services Commissioners Act 1993 and the Government of Wales Act 1998 which are the responsibility of the Welsh Ministers
Housing and Regeneration Act 2008: Sections 4 (partially), 19 (partially), 31, 32 (partially), 33 (partially), 35, 56 and Schedule 8 (partially), 57 (partially), 58 (partially) covering the Homes and Communities Agency and Sections 60-63, 64 (partially), 68-71 (partially), 73-80 (partially), 94, 95 to 98 (partially), 106 to 111, 112 to 113 (partially), 115, 116 to 117 (partially), 118, 119 (partially), 120 to 126, 127 (partially), 128 to 130, 131 (partially), 132 to 143, 144 to 145 (partially), 146 to 173, 174 (partially), 175 to 191, 198 (partially), 199 to 201, 202 (partially), 203 to 211, 212 (partially), 213, 214 to 215 (partially), 217 to 227, 228 (partially), 229 to 233, 234 (partially), 235 to 239, 240 (partially), 241 to 243, 244 (partially), 245 to 274, 275 to 276 (partially), 277, 278 and Schedule 9 (partially) Covering the Regulation of Social Housing	The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 is currently being implemented by the Government. The provisions relating to the establishment of the Homes and Communities Agency and those relating to the regulation of Social Housing take effect from 1 April 2010
Housing and Regeneration Act 2008: Sections 279 to 293 and Schedule 10	The Government will review the effectiveness of the sustainability certificates in home information pack (mandatory requirement since May 2008) in giving buyers information on how sustainable houses are and will make decisions on commencing the H&R Act 2008 powers in due course
Housing and Regeneration Act 2008: Sections 294, 299 and Schedule 11 (partially), 303 and Schedule 12 (partially), 314 and 15 (partially), 316 (partially), 318, 321 and Schedule 16 (partially)	The Government remain committed to implementing the remaining provisions of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. Statutory instruments will be laid as soon as parliamentary time is available

### Departmental Manpower

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many (a) full-time and (b) part-time staff of each (i) sex, (ii) ethnic group and (iii) disability were recruited to work in his Department's headquarters in (A) each financial year since 2004-05 and (B) 2009-10. [325355]

**Barbara Follett:** The Department publishes information on the diversity of its workforce, including recruitment data, in its annual Workforce Diversity Data Report. Copies of the 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08 reports have been placed in the Library of the House. The 2008-09 report has not yet been published.

### Departmental Public Expenditure

**Mr. Dunne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to his Department's press release of 24 March 2010, on operational efficiency, whether the £200 million of

efficiency savings announced will be in addition to the £500 million of savings identified in the pre-Budget report. [325325]

**Barbara Follett:** The £200 million contribution to operational efficiency and Smarter Government savings are in addition to the £500 million announced at 2009 pre-Budget report. The £200 million of savings is my Department's contribution towards £11 billion savings that are being made across Government. The £11 billion of savings will help halve the deficit over four years and protect front-line priorities.

**Mr. Dunne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to which programmes the £500 million of savings identified in the Pre-Budget Report will apply; and whether this sum includes savings from the (a) New Deal for Communities Fund, (b) Working Neighbourhoods Fund, (c) Local Enterprise Growth Initiative, (d) Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme and (e) Housing and Planning Delivery Grant. [325326]

**Barbara Follett:** The Public Value Programme, launched at Budget 2008, has been conducting demanding value for money reviews across at least 50 per cent. of each Department's budget. On the basis of the early findings of the programme, the 2009 pre-Budget report announced £5 billion of savings by 2012-13 through cutting lower value or lower priority spend. CLG's contribution to this figure was £500 million. Budget 2010 announces further details of these savings, including:

Improved targeting of housing growth and regeneration funding, saving £340 million: including £40 million by concluding the new deal for communities, and a further £300 million from rationalising regional development agency regeneration spending, and programmes including the Working Neighbourhoods Fund, the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative and the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

Saving at least £35 million in housing benefit costs; ending smaller Communities and Local Government (CLG) funded time-limited communities programmes, saving £25 million; and rationalising other smaller CLG programmes, saving a total of £160 million.

### Fire Services: Havering

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many incidents the London Fire Brigade have attended in the London borough of Havering in each year since 1997.

[325602]

**Mr. Malik:** The number of incidents attended by the London Fire Brigade by borough is readily available for periods from April 1999, thus data are shown for years since 2000.

*Incidents attended in the London Borough of Havering by the London Fire Brigade, 2000-09*

	<i>Number of incidents</i>
2000	3,076
2001	3,487
2002	3,313
2003	3,983
2004	3,084
2005	3,279
2006	3,245
2007	2,779
2008	2,489
2009	2,570

Source:  
London Fire Brigade

### Government Office for the North West

**Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many times the Assistant Regional Minister for the North West has (a) been invited to and (b) attended meetings with the Government Office for the North West in the last 12 months.

[311367]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** The Assistant Regional Minister for the North West is invited to attend meetings with the Government Office for the North West as appropriate.

### Housing Revenue Accounts

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much will be provided in management and maintenance grants and major repairs allowance in the Housing Revenue Account determination settlement for 2010.

[325556]

**John Healey:** The expenditure allowances, based upon assumed stock levels, in the HRA Subsidy Determination 2010-11 are maintenance £1.22 billion; management £2.10 billion; and major repairs £1.27 billion.

### Housing: Conferences

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much his Department spent on (a) travel and (b) accommodation for (i) Ministers and (ii) officials attending the MIPIM International Property conference in (A) 2007, (B) 2008 and (C) 2009. [323251]

**Barbara Follett:** The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Infrastructure Planning Commission

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government which commissioners have been appointed to the Infrastructure Planning Commission to date; and what criteria he used in deciding on each appointment.

[325401]

**John Healey:** 26 Commissioners, including the Chair and two Deputy Chairs have been appointed to the Infrastructure Planning Commission, the majority of whom are on call-off contracts. These appointments have been made following an open and transparent recruitment process and represent a range of expertise. A list of the appointees with attached biographies has been placed in the Library of the House, along with details of the selection criteria employed. The IPC website also contains details of all those appointed.

We also anticipate announcing the appointment of a further 13 Commissioners, again on a call-off contract basis, shortly.

### International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

**Anne Main:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what plans the Government have to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

[320956]

**Mr. Malik:** The Government are working to build a fairer, more equal society, where a person's chances and opportunities in life are determined solely by their talent and effort—not by their class, gender, religion or race. We are tackling race inequality by enforcing the strong legal framework, promoting clear leadership in public bodies and focusing work on race across Government.

To mark the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March, on 22 March the British embassy in Bucharest hosted an event for NGOs, civil society and the media on anti-discrimination and tackling racism. Ambassador Robin Barnett and the Romanian Minister for Education both spoke at this event.

On 19 March, ambassador Peter Gooderham, the UK's Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, attended a screening of the film "Colour Blind" hosted

by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at the United Nations in Geneva. During the subsequent panel discussion, ambassador Gooderham reaffirmed our commitment to tackle racism both in the UK and internationally.

#### Multiple Occupation

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to his plans to introduce a definition of houses in multiple occupation into the Use Classes Order, what estimate he has made of the number of additional planning applications likely to result annually. [324614]

**John Healey:** We have estimated that there could be an average of 8,500 additional planning applications per year.

#### Non-Domestic Rates

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the average business rate charge was in England in (a) real terms in 2010 prices and (b) cash terms in each year since 1997-98 for which figures are available. [324786]

**Barbara Follett:** We do not hold figures for the average bill paid by an individual business for national non-domestic rates. However, for 1997-98 to 2009-10, the figures derived from dividing the net rate yield from local authorities' rating lists by the number of hereditaments on the local list as at 31 December of the previous year are shown in the following table.

The figures shown are for England, and are in both cash and in real terms based on 2009 prices. It is not possible to express these figures in April 2010 prices as the relevant deflator is not yet available.

	Cash (£)	Real terms (£)
1997-98	6,796	9,196
1998-99	7,016	9,126
1999-2000	6,998	8,959
2000-01	8,264	10,275
2001-02	8,714	10,647
2002-03	9,071	10,919
2003-04	9,137	10,665
2004-05	9,301	10,593
2005-06	9,997	11,035
2006-07	10,275	11,059
2007-08	10,330	10,637
2008-09	11,274	11,142
2009-10	12,145	12,145

The data are taken from national non-domestic rates (NNDR) returns submitted by all billing authorities in England. Figures for 2009-10 are estimates and data for 2010-11 are not yet available.

Comparisons between years may not be valid as the rateable values for individual properties and hence the actual rates bills vary greatly. Changes in the number of hereditaments on the local lists will also affect the figures. In particular, the figures for 1998-99 to 2000-01 are affected by transfers of properties from the central list to local ones, transfers of crown properties to local lists and adjustments made to the multiplier at the time of the 2000 revaluation. Changes in the figures for the years around 2005-06 are also affected by adjustments made to the multiplier at the time of the 2005 revaluation.

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the average business rate charge was in each billing authority in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11 in (i) real terms in 2010 prices and (ii) cash terms. [324787]

**Barbara Follett:** We do not hold figures for the average bill paid by an individual business for national non-domestic rates. However, I have today placed in the Library of the House a table containing, for 2009-10, the figures derived from dividing the net rate yield from local authorities' rating lists by the number of hereditaments on the local list as at 31 December of the previous year.

The data are taken from the national non-domestic rates (NNDR1) budget forms completed annually by all billing authorities in England.

Data for 2010-11 are not yet available.

Comparisons with previous years may not be valid as the rateable values for individual properties, and hence actual rates bills, vary greatly. In addition, the number of hereditaments in an authority may change from year to year. Also comparisons between authorities may not be valid as the data for an authority may be affected by a small number of large hereditaments.

**Mr. Dunne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the average business rates bill in England (a) was in 1997-98, (b) was in 2009-10 and (c) will be in 2010-11 in (i) cash terms and (ii) real terms in 2010 prices. [325327]

**Barbara Follett:** We do not hold figures for the average bill paid by an individual business for national non-domestic rates. However, for 1997-98 and 2009-10, figures derived from dividing the net rate yield from local authorities' rating lists by the number of hereditaments on the local list as at 31 December of the previous year are shown in the following table.

The figures shown are for England, and are in both cash and in real terms based on 2009 prices. It is not possible to express these figures in April 2010 prices as the relevant deflator is not yet available.

	Cash (£)	Real terms (£)
1997-98	6,796	9,196
2009-10	12,145	12,145

The data are taken from national non-domestic rates (NNDR) returns submitted by all billing authorities in England. Figures for 2009-10 are estimates and data for 2010-11 are not yet available.

Comparisons between years may not be valid as the rateable values for individual properties, and hence the actual rates bills, vary greatly. Changes in the number of hereditaments on the local lists will also affect the figures. In particular, the figures for 1998-99 to 2000-01 are affected by transfers of properties from the central list to local ones, transfers of Crown properties to local lists and adjustments made to the multiplier at the time of the 2000 revaluation. Changes in the figures for the years around 2005-06 are also affected by adjustments made to the multiplier at the time of the 2005 revaluation.

**Mr. Dunne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the average business rates bill was in each Government Office region in each year since 1997-98; and what it is expected to be in each region in 2010-11. [325331]

**Barbara Follett:** We do not hold figures for the average bill paid by an individual business for national non-domestic

rates. However, for 1997-98 to 2009-10, regional figures derived from dividing the net rate yield from local authorities' rating lists by the number of hereditaments on the local list as at 31 December of the previous year are shown in the following table.

	<i>North East</i>	<i>North West</i>	<i>Yorkshire and the Humber</i>	<i>East Midlands</i>	<i>West Midlands</i>	<i>East of England</i>	<i>London</i>	<i>South East</i>	<i>South West</i>	<i>England</i>
1997-98	5,501	5,215	5,381	5,716	5,686	7,026	10,057	7,208	7,087	6,796
1998-99	5,978	5,589	5,869	6,142	6,250	7,125	10,433	7,759	5,295	7,016
1999-2000	6,159	5,770	6,005	6,251	6,487	7,080	9,792	7,796	5,412	6,998
2000-01	6,968	6,825	6,954	7,237	7,588	8,096	12,033	9,212	6,332	8,264
2001-02	7,305	7,273	7,433	7,670	7,756	8,476	12,842	9,705	6,570	8,714
2002-03	7,498	7,646	7,664	7,846	8,003	8,685	13,753	10,045	6,658	9,071
2003-04	7,518	7,708	7,623	7,893	8,055	8,620	14,124	10,053	6,614	9,137
2004-05	7,701	7,793	7,773	7,955	8,192	8,740	14,484	10,252	6,662	9,301
2005-06	8,367	8,086	8,317	8,477	8,672	9,575	15,705	11,124	7,195	9,997
2006-07	8,704	8,496	8,479	9,021	8,906	10,003	15,886	11,192	7,538	10,275
2007-08	8,941	8,719	8,501	9,189	9,031	9,999	15,733	11,210	7,655	10,330
2008-09	9,452	9,473	9,288	9,946	9,743	10,804	17,482	12,325	8,279	11,274
2009-10	10,157	10,159	10,009	10,610	10,602	11,519	19,120	13,190	8,816	12,145

The data are taken from NNDR returns submitted by billing authorities.

Comparisons across regions and years may not be valid as the rateable values for individual properties, and hence actual rates bills, vary greatly. Changes in the figures for the years around 2000-01 are affected by transfers of properties from the central list to local lists, transfers of crown properties to local lists and the adjustments made to the multiplier at the time of the 2000 revaluation to take account of losses from appeals. Changes in the figures for the years around 2005-06 are also affected by adjustments made to the multiplier at the time of the 2005 revaluation.

**Justine Greening:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the answer of 6 July 2009, *Official Report*, column 605W, on non-domestic rates, what projection has been made of the (a) change in rateable value on the ratings list resulting from rateable value appeals and (b) the amount of fees payable by those appealing against their rateable value in (i) 2009-10 and (ii) 2010-11. [323091]

**Barbara Follett:** No projection has been made of the change in rateable value on the ratings list resulting from appeals. However, for the purpose of modelling the 2010 Transitional Relief scheme, my Department has made an assumption about the total reduction in RV as a result of appeals.

The assumptions used for this modelling are detailed in the consultation document titled "The transitional arrangements for the non-domestic rating revaluation 2010 in England". The methodology and assumptions can be found on page 49 of the consultation. A copy of the consultation document is available at the following link:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/nndrrevaluation2010>

There are no fees payable to valuation officers for making proposals challenging rateable values. Nor are there hearing fees payable should the proposal become an appeal to the Valuation Tribunal for England. Many ratepayers choose to employ the services of a professional representative to handle their rating liability. This is a personal matter between ratepayer and representative.

#### Non-Domestic Rates: Valuation

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the (a) address, (b) 2005 rateable value and (c) 2010 rateable value is of each hereditament with a special category code of public houses/pub restaurants (national scheme). [324511]

**Barbara Follett:** The Valuation Office Agency has published the current 2005 and draft 2010 Rating Lists on the internet at:

[www.voa.gov.uk](http://www.voa.gov.uk)

Search facilities within the site (using the 'Agent' access, which is open to any individual) allows the identification of properties within billing authorities by SCAT code. Public houses/pub restaurants (national scheme) are identified by SCAT 226.

#### Piers: Repairs and Maintenance

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much has been spent restoring seafront piers in each year since 1997. [325603]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** The information requested is not collected by this Department and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

**Public Houses**

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) what recent discussions he has had with pub landlords on the effects of the recession on their businesses; [325597]

(2) whether he has visited any pubs on official business in the last 12 months; [325599]

(3) what assistance his Department has provided to pubs during the recession. [325600]

**John Healey:** Since the Prime Minister asked me to lead work across Government to help and support Britain's community pubs in January, I have made a number of visits to pubs and had various discussions with landlords. I have also had discussions with cross-party groups and other organisations directly concerned with the pub industry.

On 19 March 2010, I published the Government's package of measures to support community pubs. Our plans fall into three main categories:

Business support

Industry standards and consumer choice

Community and local authority action.

Further details on our package of measures can be found on our website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1511255>

In addition to this package of measures described above, Planning Policy Statement 4: 'Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth' (published in December 2009) provides policy tools for local authorities to take into account the importance of pubs to the local community when a planning application is made that would result in its loss and enables them to refuse planning permission where people's day to day needs are not safeguarded.

**Public Sector**

**Mr. Dunne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will place a copy of the final report from each Total Place pilot in the Library. [325328]

**Barbara Follett:** The reports of the 13 pilot areas have been published online and are available through the Total Place website at:

<http://www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/news/pilots-final-reports/>

**Tenant Services Authority: Pay**

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many full-time equivalent staff work in the Tenant Services Authority communications team; and what the cost to the public purse was of that team on the latest date for which figures are available. [313092]

**Mr. Ian Austin:** The Tenant Services Authority employs 3.7 full-time equivalent staff in its press office and public affairs teams. The total cost to the public purse of employing these staff in the 12 months since TSA was established on 1 December 2008 was £171,300.

**Unitary Councils**

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many local authorities have (a) applied for and (b) been accepted for unitary status in each year since 1997. [325601]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** Since 1997, 26 proposals for unitary structures were submitted in January 2007 following the Invitation to Councils in England issued in October 2006. A further Invitation for unitary structures in Bedfordshire was issued in November 2007 and one proposal was received in response to it. From these proposals, nine unitary councils were established on 1 April 2009, and orders creating a further two on 1 April 2011, Exeter and Ipswich, have now been made following their approval by Parliament.

**World Urban Forum**

**Mr. Dai Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government who represented his Department at the World Urban Forum in Rio de Janeiro in March 2010; and whether his Department allocated funding to that forum. [324605]

**Ms Rosie Winterton:** No one from the Department for Communities and Local Government attended this year's World Urban Forum in Rio de Janeiro, nor was any money allocated to the event.

**Written Questions: Government Responses**

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he plans to answer questions (a) 323248, (b) 323249 and (c) 323251 on the MIPIM international property conference, tabled by the hon. Member for Welwyn Hatfield on 16 March 2010. [325232]

**Barbara Follett:** I have now replied to the hon. Member's questions.

**CABINET OFFICE****Business: Cardiff**

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many small businesses have (a) closed and (b) opened in (i) Cardiff Central constituency and (ii) Cardiff in each of the last five years. [325320]

**Angela E. Smith:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

*Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated March 2010:*

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question concerning how many small businesses have (a) closed and (b) opened in (i) Cardiff Central constituency and (ii) Cardiff in each of the last five years. [325320]

Annual statistics on business births, deaths and survival are available from the ONS release on Business Demography at:

[www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk)

Information on the number of enterprise deaths by parliamentary constituency is only available from 2005 onwards. The table below contains the latest statistics available on small enterprise birth and deaths in Cardiff over the past five years.

Count of enterprise birth and deaths for Cardiff unitary authority and Cardiff, Central parliamentary constituency from 2004-08 with less than 50 employment (small)

	Births		Deaths	
	Cardiff	Cardiff, Central	Cardiff	Cardiff, Central
2004	1,370	385	1,155	n/a
2005	1,310	390	1,040	325
2006	1,135	335	1,020	295
2007	1,085	300	1,055	295
2008	1,120	345	960	290

Note:

A small business is defined as an enterprise with less than 50 employment

### Departmental Private Detectives

**Mr. Maude:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to the answer of 15 January 2009, *Official Report*, column 873W, on private detectives, how much her Department spent on hiring or commissioning individuals from the panel of independent investigators in each of the last five years. [312258]

**Tessa Jowell:** My Department has incurred no costs in hiring or commissioning individuals from the panel of independent investigators.

### Government Communications Review

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office which recommendations made in the report of the Phillis Review on government communication have not been implemented to date. [323450]

**Tessa Jowell:** Government communications have changed fundamentally over the past five years. Substantial progress has been made towards implementing the findings of the Phillis Review and all the key recommendations have been taken forward, except for Recommendation 10.1 calling for on camera lobby briefings, which was not implemented. Briefings are off the camera but on the record, a record of the briefings is available on the PM's website the same day.

### Ministerial Policy Advisers: Bullying

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many complaints against special advisers alleging bullying or harassment have been made by civil servants since 1997. [323452]

**Tessa Jowell:** The Cabinet Office does not hold this information for the civil service. This information may be held by the individual employing Departments.

The civil service has a zero tolerance policy on bullying and harassment.

### Opposition

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether her Department has undertaken costings of the policies of the (a) Conservative Party and (b) Liberal Democrat Party at the request of Ministers or special advisers in the last 36 months. [324242]

**Tessa Jowell:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend, the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Sarah McCarthy-Fry) on 30 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1044W.

### Union of Good

**Mr. Crabb:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what investigations the Charity Commission has carried out into links between humanitarian charities based in the UK and the Union of Good in the last 12 months. [325224]

**Angela E. Smith:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Charity Commission. I have asked the Commission to reply.

*Letter from Andrew Hind, dated 29 March 2010:*

As the Chief Executive of the Charity Commission I have been asked to respond to your written question on what investigations we have carried out into links between humanitarian charities based in the UK and the Union for Good in the last twelve months.

In 2009 we published a report of our statutory inquiry into the Palestinians Relief and Development Fund, registered charity number 1040094 (known as Interpal). Among other issues, the inquiry considered the relationship between this charity and the Union for Good, which we understand to be a coalition of UK and overseas organisations working with Palestinians and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The inquiry concluded that the charity's membership of the Union for Good was not appropriate, and directed the charity to take a number of actions, including to disassociate itself from membership of the Union for Good.

At the time this inquiry report was published, the Charity Commission was aware of concerns that had been raised that other charities, registered in England and Wales, were said to be members of the Union for Good. We investigated these concerns and concluded that, on the evidence then before us, this was not the case.

The Commission is continuing to monitor Interpal's compliance with the requirements of the Commission.

I will arrange for a copy of the statement of results of the inquiry on the charity Interpal to be placed in the Library of the House. We would be very happy to meet you to discuss this area of our work further.

I hope this is helpful.

## ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

### Carbon Emissions

**Mr. Lilley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change whether he discussed the effect of the UK committing to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 42 per cent. by 2020 with representatives of other governments at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen. [324704]

**Joan Ruddock** [*holding answer 29 March 2010*]: My right hon. Friend did not discuss the effect of the UK committing to reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 42 per cent. with representatives of other Governments at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.

**Mr. Lilley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what assessment he has made of the effect on the UK of a reduction in the UK's carbon dioxide emissions by 42 per cent. by 2020. [324762]

**Joan Ruddock** [*holding answer 29 March 2010*]: In July last year we published a Low Carbon Transition Plan and an accompanying analytical annex that set out how we would reduce greenhouse gas emissions to meet our carbon budgets and the cost to the UK of doing so, consistent with reducing emissions by 34 per cent. by 2020. Were we to move to a higher target and set new carbon budgets consistent with that, then the Climate Change Act requires that we publish our proposals and policies for delivering those emissions reductions as soon as is practicable following the setting of new budgets in legislation.

#### Climate Change: Publicity

**Sammy Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much his Department has spent on advertising aimed at raising awareness of climate change among (a) all people and (b) people under the age of 18 since its establishment. [319424]

**Joan Ruddock:** Act on CO<sub>2</sub> advertising is aimed at adults.

Invoiced media costs for the climate literacy advertising strand of the Act on CO<sub>2</sub> campaign are £4.78 million, inclusive of fees and exclusive of VAT.

The Department has not bought advertising for the Act on CO<sub>2</sub> campaign—or any other campaign activity—specifically aimed at under-18s.

#### Departmental Buildings

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change whether his Department provides subsidised gym facilities for its staff. [324563]

**Joan Ruddock:** The Department provides accommodation, at no cost, for gym facilities in 3 Whitehall Place. The actual gym facilities and equipment are provided and managed by the DEFRA Sports and Social Association.

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much his Department spent on interior design in relation to office refurbishments undertaken since its inception. [324675]

**Joan Ruddock:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to his question 320471 on the cost of refurbishment on 22 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 101W, which included the cost of interior design. This cost cannot be separately identified. In addition, the cost of interior design in relation to internal communications work was £38,404 in 2008-09 and £54,522 in 2009-10.

#### Departmental Consultants

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much (a) his Department and (b) each other body for which his Department is responsible spent on external consultants and advisers in each year since 2005. [319812]

**Joan Ruddock:** The Department of Energy and Climate Change was created on 3 October 2008. In the financial year 2008-09 the Department spent £7,277,000 on external consultants and advisers.

Additionally the bodies for which the Department is responsible spent a total of £14,720,000 on external consultants and advisers.

#### Departmental Disciplinary Proceedings

**Barry Gardiner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many (a) disciplinary and (b) capability procedures have been (i) initiated and (ii) completed in his Department in each year since its inception; how much time on average was taken to complete each type of procedure in each such year; how many and what proportion of his Department's staff were subject to each type of procedure in each such year; and how many and what proportion of each type of procedure resulted in the dismissal of the member of staff. [320639]

**Joan Ruddock:** No records are collated centrally regarding how many procedures have been initiated in the Department since its creation in October 2008.

We are unable to provide the number of staff dismissed (all reasons) under section 40 of the Data protection Act

#### Departmental Information Officers

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what the cost to his Department was of employing press and media officers in the last 12 month period for which figures are available; and what the cost to his Department was of employing such staff in the financial year 1996-97, expressed in current prices. [324813]

**Joan Ruddock:** The cost of employing press and media officers from April 2009 to January 2010 (latest figure available) was £407,000.

DECC was created in October 2008.

#### Departmental Internet

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many complaints his Department received regarding difficulties using its website in each year since its inception; and if he will make a statement. [325199]

**Joan Ruddock:** None.

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much his Department spent on external website design consultants in each year since its inception; and if he will make a statement. [325217]

**Joan Ruddock:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for North-East Hertfordshire (Mr. Heald) on 16 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 796W.

### Departmental Marketing

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much his Department has spent on promotional items carrying the Department's branding and logo since its inception; and what those items were. [324723]

**Joan Ruddock:** The spend on promotional items is:

(a) £2,454, a combined order of a mug for each member of staff as part of our departmental launch and low cost branded pens for internal and external use

(b) £450, a further set of mugs to promote DECC's new values.

As well as having a promotional aspect these items were produced for sustainability reasons in support of our departmental remit. The pens were produced from recycled materials and the mugs used to reduce the use of disposable cardboard cups.

We have deliberately kept use of such promotional materials to a minimum.

### Departmental Recruitment

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many job vacancies in his Department and its agencies were filled through external recruitment in the last year for which figures are available. [315505]

**Joan Ruddock:** DECC recruited 51 people through external recruitment in the last year.

### Energy Supply

**Gregory Barker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what assessment he has made of the effects of changes in the carbon price set under the EU Emissions Trading Scheme on private sector investment in energy supply infrastructure. [325246]

**Joan Ruddock:** No assessment has been made on this particular issue. The Government have recently published the initial findings of their Energy Market Assessment, which recognises the carbon price and its long-term certainty is one of many, and not the most significant factor, that affects investment decisions in electricity generation. Gas price volatility and its relationship to electricity price is a key driver, as well as, uncertainty around future electricity demand and the impact of renewables on wholesale electricity prices.

Despite these uncertainties and the current low level of demand, high levels of investment are currently taking place. National Grid's data show that 20 GW are currently under construction or have been granted planning consent.

The next stage of our Energy Markets Assessment work will be a detailed assessment of a range of options for reforming the electricity market to meet our objectives beyond 2020, assessing them against cost-effectiveness, affordability and investor certainty. Government will consult on proposals in autumn 2010 and publish a White Paper in 2011.

### Greenhouse Gas Emissions

**Mr. Dai Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what account will be taken of the full life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions of each fuel type in identifying low carbon generation technologies which will be eligible for specific support under the five groups of options referred to in paragraphs 4.7 to 4.48 of his Department's report on Energy Market Assessment. [325104]

**Mr. Kidney:** As set out in the DECC publication "Valuation of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions for appraisal and evaluation", which can be found on the DECC website, the emissions associated with imports are not included in the UK's national inventory.

Greenhouse gases emitted elsewhere in Europe which form part of full life cycle emissions for fuels used in the UK, have to meet their costs through the EU Emissions Trading System.

### Housing: Carbon Emissions

**John Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change whether his Department has made an estimate of the effect on the level of carbon dioxide emissions that would result from the installation of room thermostats in homes where they are not presently installed. [325465]

**Joan Ruddock:** The Department keeps abreast of published research relevant to this question as well as carrying out its own field trials of energy saving measures in homes. Heating controls in homes can save energy and thereby reduce carbon dioxide emissions if they allow the occupants to maintain comfort by not heating the home (or part of the home) when this is not needed. However, recent field evidence indicates that these controls make little difference and may not save energy or reduce emissions as they are not used as intended. We will be working with the industry and researchers to understand how heating controls could be better designed and deployed to deliver energy savings.

### Nuclear Decommissioning Authority: Springfields

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the written ministerial statement of 24 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 42WS, on the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (Springfields Site), what insurance arrangements will apply under the new arrangements for management of the plant. [325400]

**Mr. Kidney:** Under the new arrangements for the management of the site, with effect from 1 April 2010 the insurance arrangements for the Springfields site will be a matter for Springfields Fuels Ltd. and its owner. Under the agreements between the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Springfields Fuels Ltd. the latter is required to have a range of insurances including Nuclear Installations Act 1965 liability insurance. No insurance arrangements will be made by either the Department for Energy and Climate Change or the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

### Nuclear Power: Public Consultation

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what the cost to the public purse was of holding the public meeting on his Department's group on documents on nuclear justification at the Marriott Hotel, Marble Arch on 19 January 2010; whether his Department made provision for the reimbursement of participants for travel costs; what assessment his Department made of the comparative cost of holding that meeting at his Department; whether he has made an assessment of the merits of recovering the cost of the meeting from the Nuclear Industry Association; whether he has plans for any further such meeting; and what record of that meeting (a) was circulated to participants and (b) he plans to post on his Department's website. [325667]

**Mr. Kidney:** Further to my answers of 2 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 187W, and 5 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 617W; which covered most of the points in my hon. Friend's question, the final cost of the public meeting held as part of the consultation on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's proposed Regulatory Justification decisions on new nuclear power stations was £12,951. This included the cost of travel for some delegates. A Government venue was not chosen on this occasion as a hotel offered more flexible options for staging the event. The meeting was part of the consultation and it is therefore proper that the Government meet the cost. The consultation being over, we have no current plans for any further such meeting. A transcript of the meeting was circulated to delegates and placed on the Department's website at:

[http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/reg\\_just\\_cons/regjustcons.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/reg_just_cons/regjustcons.aspx)

### Renewable Energy: Scotland

**Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much funding his Department has allocated to renewable energy projects in Scotland in each of the last five years; and what funding allocations have been made for future years. [324522]

**Joan Ruddock** [*holding answer 29 March 2010*]: Since 2005, £10.5 million has been awarded to renewable energy projects in Scotland spread across the financial years 2009-10 and 2010-11.

Funding is not 'allocated' to Scotland as the majority of renewable energy funding schemes operated by DECC are open across the UK on a competitive basis.

HMG also provides funding through other delivery partners (for example, the Carbon Trust) and for research, development and demonstration projects which are not yet operational.

### Uranium: Imports

**Mr. Dai Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much uranium has been imported from each country for civilian uses in each year since 1997. [320983]

**Mr. Kidney:** Uranium comes in many different forms. Providing a list of all forms, from all countries, would be prohibitively expensive.

### Warm Front Scheme: Greater Manchester

**Tony Lloyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many households in (a) the City of Manchester and (b) Manchester Central constituency have received assistance under the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme since its inception. [324883]

**Joan Ruddock** [*holding answer 29 March 2010*]: The following tables show the number of households in the City of Manchester and Constituency of Manchester Central which have received assistance from the Warm Front Scheme<sup>1</sup> since its inception.

<sup>1</sup> The Home Energy Efficiency Scheme which begun in 1991 was rebranded to the Warm Front Scheme in 2000.

<i>City of Manchester</i>	
	<i>Households assisted</i>
2000-01	1,518
2001-02	5,835
2002-03	3,180
2003-04	2,075
2004-05	1,838
2005-06	1,697
2006-07	2,353
2007-08	2,945
2008-09	2,496
2009-10 <sup>1</sup>	2,302

<sup>1</sup> Up to the 28 February 2010.

<i>Constituency of Manchester Central</i>	
	<i>Households assisted</i>
2000-01	281
2001-02	1,609
2002-03	750
2003-04	357
2004-05	329
2005-06	312
2006-07	414
2007-08	478
2008-09	412
2009-10 <sup>1</sup>	653

<sup>1</sup> Up to the 28 February 2010.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### Middle East Peace Process

17. **Mike Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of prospects for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. [325366]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** We welcome the Quartet's determination to move swiftly to proximity talks addressing issues of substance. We continue to press both sides to show the courage, commitment and compromise needed to make real progress.

### Overseas Operations: Financing

18. **Mr. Harper:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the effects of exchange rate movements on the work of his Department. [325367]

**David Miliband:** I refer the hon. Member to my written statement of 10 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 53WS.

21. **Mr. Blunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the effect of exchange rate movements on his Department's overseas activities.

[325370]

**David Miliband:** I refer the hon. Member to my written statement to the House of 10 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 53WS.

#### **Belize: Economic Partnership Agreements**

19. **Lindsay Roy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received on the participation of Belize in EU economic partnership agreements; and if he will make a statement.

[325368]

**Chris Bryant:** Belize is party to the Economic Partnership Agreement signed in October 2008 between the EU and 15 Caribbean states. This was the first EU regional trade agreement and is an excellent opportunity for increased competitiveness, development and economic integration in the region. We have not received representations about Belize's participation.

#### **Moldova: EU Membership**

20. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make an official visit to Moldova to discuss its prospects for joining the EU.

[325369]

**Chris Bryant:** I have no current plans to visit Moldova. We do actively encourage Moldova's closer integration with the EU and are providing expert assistance to Moldova as they negotiate a new Association Agreement.

#### **Gaza Blockade**

22. **Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Israeli authorities and his EU counterparts on the effects on the region of the blockade on Gaza.

[325371]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The EU High Representative Catherine Ashton reported to the Foreign Affairs Council on 22 March on her recent visit to Gaza. The EU has made clear its concerns regarding the humanitarian situation and called for an immediate and unconditional opening of crossings.

#### **Pakistan: Extradition**

23. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his Pakistani counterpart on extradition matters.

[325372]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** I have had regular contact with the Government of Pakistan and discussed a range of issues important to both countries. Although I have had no recent discussions specifically on extradition matters, UK officials undertake regular meetings with their counterparts on extradition.

#### **Tibet**

24. **Harry Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the human rights record of the Government of China, with particular reference to Tibet.

[325373]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Our annual human rights report outlines our assessment of the current situation in Tibet. We remain very concerned about human rights there. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary reiterated these concerns, and the need for meaningful autonomy for Tibetan people, during his recent visit to China. This was also a key focus of our human rights dialogue.

#### **Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh**

**Harry Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps the High Commission in Pakistan has taken to obtain consular access to Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh; and if he will make a statement.

[325547]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Our high commission in Islamabad has continued to make representations to the national and provincial authorities in Pakistan with regard to gaining consular access to Mr. Sheikh. The most recent diplomatic notes requesting access were submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in August 2009 and April 2010. High level requests for consular access to Mr. Sheikh have also been made by my hon. Friend the former Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister with responsibility for consular matters (Gillian Merron) during a visit to Pakistan in February 2009 and, along with other cases, by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary in a letter to Pakistani Foreign Minister Qureshi on 7 December 2009 which was delivered by our high commissioner. To date we have not received consular access to Mr. Sheikh.

#### **British Nationals Abroad: Homicide**

**Mr. Burrowes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training his Department's staff receive on providing support and assistance to the families of British victims of murder abroad.

[325399]

**Chris Bryant:** All front line consular staff abroad and in the UK are trained in the procedures they must follow when helping the family and friends of a British national who has died abroad. Particular attention is paid to the special circumstances affecting the family and friends of murder victims. Both their knowledge of what help we can provide and the skills they must use when dealing with individuals in difficult circumstances are tested to ensure all staff meet the required standard.

#### **Departmental Buildings**

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many smoking shelters his Department has built for its staff in the last five years; and at what cost.

[324351]

**Chris Bryant:** Smoking shelters have been installed over the last five years on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) UK estate as follows:

<i>Smoking shelters installed</i>	
2005-06	None
2006-07	Two shelters for Hanslope Park purchased and installed at an approximate cost of £3,500 each
2007-08	None
2008-09	None purchased but one existing shelter at Hanslope Park moved to more appropriate location at a cost of approximately £1,000
2009-10	Four shelters purchased and installed at Hanslope Park, two at a cost of £5,765 each, one at a cost of £4,693 and one at a cost of £4,681

Shelters have been installed in line with the FCO's Smoking Policy which permits smoking in designated areas only, away from buildings.

The provision of this information for the overseas estate could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Departmental Food

**Mr. Sanders:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to ensure that the meat and dairy products procured by his Department and its non-departmental bodies are free range or produced to standards equivalent to those of the RSPCA Freedom Food scheme. [323063]

**Chris Bryant:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is fully committed to the Government Food Procurement Initiative. Within the UK we have engaged a catering contractor who is committed to animal welfare and is working with suppliers, clients and animal welfare organisations to promote the use of farm assurance schemes which achieve best practises in animal welfare. They fully endorse the Five Freedoms as set out by the Farm Animal Welfare Council. They have met with representatives of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Freedom Food and Compassion In World Farming to discuss ways they can improve animal welfare.

Where economically possible, our catering contractor purchases its products from approved free range suppliers. All fresh eggs supplied are free range.

While free range supplies are not always economically viable, all suppliers hold Farm Assurance Accreditation. To obtain this award our approved suppliers have to meet objectives such as farm animal management, environment and hygiene management, feed composition, housing and handling facilities, medicines and veterinary treatments and transport of livestock.

This information refers to the contracted catering service in the UK only. Provision of information globally could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account his Department's food procurement policy takes of animal welfare. [325530]

**Chris Bryant:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is fully committed to the Government Food Procurement Initiative. Within the UK we have engaged a Catering Contractor who is committed to animal welfare and is

working with suppliers, clients and animal welfare organisations to promote the use of farm assurance schemes which achieve best practises in animal welfare. They fully endorse the Five Freedoms as set out by the Farm Animal Welfare Council. They have met with representatives of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Freedom Food and Compassion In World Farming to discuss ways they can improve animal welfare.

Where economically possible, our catering contractor purchases its products from approved free range suppliers. All suppliers hold Farm Assurance Accreditation. To obtain this award our approved suppliers have to meet objectives such as farm animal management, environment and hygiene management, feed composition, housing and handling facilities, medicines and veterinary treatments and transport of livestock.

This information refers to the contracted catering service in the UK only. Provision of information globally could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Departmental Passports

**Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the conclusions of the report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration of 24 March 2010, if he will review the provisions of his Department's contract with Abtran to provide a customer enquiry service in respect of passports handled on behalf of his Department; what assessment he has made of the conclusions of the report in respect of the adequacy of arrangements for handling passport applications by his Department; and if he will make a statement. [325291]

**Chris Bryant** [*holding answer 30 March 2010*]: We accept the findings of the report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration of 24 March 2010.

We have re-tendered the telephone passport inquiry handling contract and a new commercial partner is now in place to handle customer inquiries; we no longer use Abtran. Customers contact the new provider who will escalate their inquiry to the passport issuing post where necessary.

We agree that the service that was provided to the customer in early 2009 fell considerably short of what the customer should have expected. We had previously written to the applicant to apologise and will be writing again. We are arranging for prompt financial settlement and a further consolatory payment to be made as recommended in the ombudsman's report.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)'s passport operation is going through a period of considerable change in advance of integration with the Identity and Passport Service on 1 April 2011. We are committed to doing all we can to minimise the impact on customers as we move to a more cost effective and secure passport operation. The report highlighted weaknesses in our processes in our consulates in Paris and Amsterdam, and within consular directorate in the FCO. These have been reviewed and changes to procedures have been and are being implemented. This includes improvements to our public facing communication to ensure customers are kept informed in a timely, clear and consistent manner. Customer interests remain at the forefront of our analysis and our highest priority.

### Departmental Public Expenditure

**Mr. Crabb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much funding his Department has allocated for human rights programmes in financial year 2009-10. [325317]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) integrates human rights work across its objectives. This means that funding for human rights can be given through numerous programmes.

The FCO holds the Strategic Programme Fund for Human Rights and Democracy dedicated specifically to supporting human rights projects. In 2009-10, this fund allocated approximately £5.8 million to human rights and democracy projects around the world. Work was funded in support of equality, strengthening civil society, freedom of expression, abolition of torture and the death penalty, among other issues.

The FCO's 2009-10 programmes that fund human rights projects where these help to realise their core objectives include:

Strategic Programme Fund for Reuniting Europe (total programme value: £5.8 million);

Strategic Programme Fund for Counter-Terrorism and Radicalisation: £40 million;

Bilateral Programme Budgets: £27.5 million; and

the tri-departmental (FCO, Department for International Development and Ministry of Defence) Conflict Pool (£171 million in 2009-10) that funds conflict prevention and stabilisation work also benefited human rights projects/objectives.

**Mr. Bone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect on his Department's overseas activities of recent exchange rate movements. [325362]

**David Miliband:** I refer the hon. Member to my written statement to the House of 10 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 53WS.

### Departmental Publications

**David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the dates of publication of any regular statistics or reports by his Department have been affected by planning for the forthcoming general election. [323460]

**Chris Bryant:** On the announcement of a general election, the Cabinet Secretary issues guidance to Departments on their activities during the pre-election period. This will be published on the Cabinet Office website.

Regular statistical releases and reports will continue to be issued and published during the election period on dates which have been pre-announced.

### Departmental Theft

**Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to deter theft from within the Department. [322648]

**Chris Bryant:** Measures to deter, prevent and detect theft are an essential feature of the Department's protective security controls. These controls reflect the standards set out in the HMG Security Policy Framework (SPF) issued by Cabinet Office and available online at:

[www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/spf.aspx](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/spf.aspx)

It would not be appropriate to provide details of specific controls as this could undermine their effectiveness.

### India: Overseas Aid

**Mr. Crabb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to allocate additional funding for work to promote access to justice in Orissa state, India. [325318]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The pilot project to improve access to justice, by increasing awareness of citizens' rights and the capacity of lawyers to effectively pursue cases for victims of the communal violence in 2008 ran until 31 March 2010. We will assess its impact and, together with our EU partners, will continue to monitor the situation in Orissa including any appropriate follow-up action. The EU delegation reported the findings of their visit to Orissa to the EU with recommendations for further areas for follow up including on access to justice. The delegation also raised the issue with appropriate state authorities during their visit to Orissa and with the Indian Government during the EU-India Human Rights Dialogue meeting on 25 March 2010. While acknowledging evidence of progress in some key areas including the setting up of two fast track courts, the EU side also identified areas for future action, on access to justice for victims of the violence, to assist in the reconciliation process.

The pilot project funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to promote access to justice in Orissa ran until 31 March 2010. We will now assess its impact and consider appropriate follow-up action such as additional funding. We will also continue to monitor progress on delivery of access to justice for the victims of violence in Orissa.

**Mr. Crabb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the pilot project funded by his Department to promote access to justice in Orissa state, India. [325319]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** The pilot project to improve access to justice, by increasing awareness of citizens' rights and the capacity of lawyers to effectively pursue cases for victims of the communal violence in 2008 ran until 31 March 2010. We will assess its impact and, together with our EU partners, will continue to monitor the situation in Orissa including any appropriate follow-up action. The EU delegation reported the findings of their visit to Orissa to the EU with recommendations for further areas for follow up including on access to justice. The delegation also raised the issue with appropriate state authorities during their visit to Orissa and with the Indian Government during the EU-India Human Rights Dialogue meeting on 25 March 2010. While acknowledging evidence of progress in some key areas including the setting up of two fast track courts, the EU side also identified areas for future action, on access to justice for victims of the violence, to assist in the reconciliation process.

### Members: Correspondence

**Sir Gerald Kaufman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to reply to the letter of 21 January 2010 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton regarding Mr. H. Zadron. [322724]

**David Miliband:** I replied to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton on 26 March.

**Sir Gerald Kaufman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to reply to the letter from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton of 21 January 2010 with regard to Mr H. H. Zadron, transferred from the Home Office. [325126]

**David Miliband:** I replied to my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton on 26 March.

### Nepal: Religious Freedom

**Mr. Crabb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will take steps to encourage the government of Nepal to enshrine protections for religious freedom consistent with Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in that country's new constitution. [325341]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** We regularly raise with the Government and political parties of Nepal the importance of ensuring that the new constitution is fully in line with Nepal's commitments under international human rights treaties. The Constituent Assembly Committee for Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles has proposed that the new Nepalese constitution should provide that no person "should convert a person from one religion to another" which would be in contravention of article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The constitution drafting process remains ongoing. We will continue to raise protections for religious freedom with the Government and political parties of Nepal.

### Palestinians: Economic Situation

**Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received of the level of support given by the government of Israel to the economy in the West Bank; and if he will make a statement. [324396]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** I have been asked to reply.

Although there are no specific reports on the level of support given by Israel to improve the economy in the West Bank, regular updates provided by the Office of the Quartet Representative and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs give some information.

Israel has relaxed a number of restrictions on access in the last few months, including increased opening hours at certain crossing points, the removal of some earth mounds, and allowing Arab Israelis to visit the

West Bank city of Jenin. The pilot project to keep the Allenby bridge crossing into Jordan open until midnight is expected to continue.

Such moves have complemented the significant levels of donor support to drive growth in the West Bank economy. Despite these improvements, movement and access into and within the West Bank remains seriously restricted, and further easing is essential to help the Palestinian economy grow.

### St. Helena: Wrecks

**Bob Russell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make an assessment of the effects on the health and safety of residents of St. Helena caused by oil leaks from RFA Darkdale after its sinking in James Bay; and if he will make a statement. [325670]

**Chris Bryant:** Responsibility for the health and safety of residents of St. Helena rests with the Government of St. Helena who hold the requested information.

### Tibet: Politics and Government

**Harry Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will establish a mechanism to monitor progress in the talks on Tibet between the government of China and the Dalai Lama. [325815]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** We, alongside our EU counterparts, will continue to monitor progress on the dialogue. We urge all sides to maintain dialogue in good faith. This is the only way to achieving lasting stability and prosperity in Tibet.

### Western Sahara: Human Rights

**Ms Katy Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 22 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 116W, on Western Sahara: human rights, what matters relating to human rights were included in Christopher Ross's briefing of the Security Council on 18 February 2010. [325107]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** Ambassador Ross' briefing to the UN Security Council of 18 February included some background on a recent exchange of allegations between the parties over human rights.

The issue of whether to include human rights monitoring in the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara mandate was raised by Security Council members during the discussions that followed Ross' briefing.

**Ms Katy Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will request HM Ambassador in Rabat to raise with the Moroccan authorities the case of Rachid Sghir, a Saharawi human rights activist. [325113]

**Mr. Ivan Lewis:** This is the first inquiry we have received about the case of Rachid Sghir. UK based media reporting alleges he was mistreated by the Moroccan police after speaking to the BBC. We have had no further reporting on this case.

Officials at our embassy in Rabat will continue to monitor the human rights situation in the disputed territory of Western Sahara and raise our concerns with the Moroccan authorities through our regular dialogue and in partnership with our EU colleagues.

## INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Departmental Energy

**Gregory Barker:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what (a) voltage optimisers and (b) equivalent technologies are used within buildings occupied by his Department. [324973]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** In the last two years the Department for International Development has installed voltage optimisers in both of our UK offices. There are two 1,250 kVa units in our London office (installed March 2008), and a 560 kVa unit in our East Kilbride office (installed March 2009).

Analysis of electricity consumption in the London office indicated an annual 14.2 per cent. reduction in total electricity consumption, which was largely attributable to this equipment. Early analysis shows that there has been a reduction in electricity use in our East Kilbride office, of between 5.2 per cent. and 6.4 per cent.

### Departmental Information Officers

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the cost to his Department was of employing press and media officers in the last 12 months for which figures are available; and what the cost to his Department was of employing such staff in the financial year 1996-97, expressed in current prices. [324797]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** The Department for International Development (DFID) does not hold central records on the cost of individual press officers and this information could not be gathered for the years specified without incurring disproportionate cost.

### Departmental Internet

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many complaints his Department received regarding difficulties using its website in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325194]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** The Department for International Development (DFID) has received no such complaints during the last three years.

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much his Department spent on external website design consultants in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325212]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 14 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 806W, on departmental internet.

## Developing Countries: Roads

**Andrew Stunell:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much his Department has spent on road safety projects in developing countries in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [325024]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** The Department for International Development (DFID) is unable to provide this information without incurring disproportionate costs.

## Haiti: Earthquakes

**Ms Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what equipment was used by UK fire and rescue personnel deployed in Haiti after the recent earthquake; and if he will make a statement. [325236]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 5 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1415W on Haiti: Earthquakes.

**Ms Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development who carried out the four airlifts of relief supplies to Haiti on behalf of his Department following the earthquake in that country; and if he will make a statement. [325268]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** The Department for International Development (DFID) followed an emergency tender process with two suppliers before using Air Charter Service to procure aircraft for the airlift of relief supplies to Haiti.

**Ms Abbott:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much funding his Department has provided to each (a) multi-national and (b) UK non-governmental organisation for the purpose of providing assistance in Haiti. [325269]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer of 5 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1415W, on Haiti: Earthquakes.

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many British firefighters took part in the recent relief efforts in Haiti. [325598]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** 64 firefighters from the UK fire and rescue service deployed to Haiti to take part in search and rescue efforts, along with two search dogs. They pulled three people alive from the rubble.

## India: Politics and Government

**Mr. Crabb:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment he has made of the effect of his Department's work in Orissa state, India, on (a) inter-communal relations and (b) the socio-economic status of all religious, caste, tribal and linguistic groups in the area. [325340]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** The purpose of DFID's aid to Orissa is to reduce poverty in the state. We have not, therefore, carried out an assessment of the impact of

our programmes on inter-communal relations. However, all our programmes have a clear focus on supporting marginalised groups to gain greater access to development and economic opportunities.

DFID's support to the Government of Orissa aims to improve health and nutritional outcomes, support improved governance and improve the incomes and livelihoods of the poor. We regularly review our programmes to track their impact on Adivasis and Dalits, compared to the general population. Evidence shows that our work is having an impact. For example, the Orissa Tribal Empowerment Programme has benefited more than 50,000 Dalit and Adivasi households: 40 per cent. of these report a 50 per cent. increase in income, and 80 per cent. show an increase in food security and livelihood assets.

#### Kenya: Family Planning

**Chris McCafferty:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps his Department is taking to ensure adequate reproductive health and access to reproductive rights in Kenya, with particular reference to family planning and safe abortion services; and if he will make a statement. [325345]

**Mr. Thomas:** The Department for International Development's (DFID) Essential Health Services programme in Kenya is improving the quality of maternal and neonatal health services for 2.2 million poor Kenyans in rural areas. The support has increased the number of births at which a skilled birth attendant was present from 23 per cent. to 32 per cent. between 2006 and 2009.

DFID is supporting advocacy for safe motherhood and safe abortion through Kenya White Ribbon Alliance. We have helped increase access to modern contraceptive methods through the social marketing of family planning commodities such as oral contraceptives. DFID distributed 195 million condoms between 2002 and 2009. DFID support from 2009 to 2015 will avert 770,800 unwanted pregnancies in Kenya.

#### Opposition

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether his Department has undertaken costings of the policies of the (a) Conservative Party and (b) Liberal Democrat Party at the request of Ministers or special advisers in the last 36 months. [324241]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** The Department for International Development (DFID) has not investigated the cost of policies presented by the Conservative party, the Liberal Democrats or any other opposition party.

#### Overseas Aid: Maternity Services

**Harry Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much of the additional £100 million to cut maternal deaths which the Government committed to at the Women Deliver conference in October 2007 has been provided to the United Nations Population Fund. [325549]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** All of the £100 million announced at the Women Deliver conference in 2007 was committed to the United Nations Population fund (UNFPA) Global Reproductive Health Commodity Security Programme. The programme supports governments in Africa and in

South Asia to provide more contraception services and better health care and advice for girls, women and men who really need it. To date £25 million has been transferred to UNFPA as per the agreed payment schedule.

#### Palestinians: Overseas Aid

**Mr. Crabb:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent reports he has received on alleged restrictions imposed by Hamas on the activities of humanitarian non-governmental organisations operating in Gaza. [325659]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** Department for International Development (DFID) officials are in regular contact with non-government organisations (NGOs), the UN and other donors about this issue. We assess that international NGOs and other humanitarian actors are generally able to carry out humanitarian activities, and that they have been able to successfully rebuff isolated attempts by elements of Hamas to interfere with aid delivery. However, we remain concerned that increasingly close scrutiny and accumulation of minor restrictions on NGO activity by Hamas will have the effect of impeding ongoing humanitarian aid. We will continue to support efforts by humanitarian agencies to protect their ability to assist Gazan civilians on the basis of need.

#### St Helena: Wrecks

**Bob Russell:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if his Department will assist the St Helena government in removing the fuel, oil and ammunition from RFA Darkdale after its sinking in James Bay, St Helena; and if he will make a statement. [325668]

**Mr. Michael Foster:** The Department for International Development (DFID) provides financial and technical assistance to the St. Helena Government to allow it to manage its own affairs. We have recently agreed a budget of up to £26.15 million for St. Helena for financial year 2010-11. This did not include any additional assistance for removing the fuel, oil and ammunition from RFA Darkdale.

#### Sudan: Politics and Government

**Andrew Stunell:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent reports he has received on the humanitarian situation in Sudan; and if he will make a statement. [325025]

**Mr. Thomas:** The Department for International Development (DFID) receives regular reports from the United Nations and non-government organisations (NGOs). We are particularly concerned about the humanitarian situation in Darfur and southern Sudan.

In Darfur, despite recent progress on peace talks between the Government and rebel groups, fighting has continued between the Sudanese armed forces and a faction of the Sudanese Liberation Army rebel group in the Jebel Mara region. This will have humanitarian consequences for civilians. We continue to urge both sides to immediately cease hostilities and allow access to the area by humanitarian agencies.

In southern Sudan inter-tribal violence which displaced 390,000 people during 2009 has continued. Poor rains and high prices are fuelling food shortages. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) report that 1.6 million people face acute food shortages in 2010, and a total of 4.3 million people will be food insecure this year.

The UK is the largest European bilateral donor to Sudan, providing some £50 million in humanitarian support this year.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Animal Welfare: Arrests

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests there have been for offences in connection with animal welfare in North Shropshire since 1997. [325422]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** The information on arrests is not collected centrally.

The arrests collection held by the Home Office covers arrests for recorded crime (notifiable offences) only, broken down at a main offence group level, covering categories such as violence against the person and robbery.

The offence in connection with animal welfare is not a notifiable offence and does not form part of this collection.

### Asylum: Standards

**Mr. Bone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average time was between a person claiming asylum on arrival in the UK and a final decision being made on their application in the latest period for which figures are available. [323021]

**Mr. Woolas** [*holding answer 22 March 2010*]: The public service agreement (PSA) Delivery Agreement 3, Indicator 2 refers to the reduction in the time to conclusion of asylum application. The measure is to ensure a target percentage of cases should be resolved within six months.

The method of reporting against the target is based on the performance of the specific monthly cohort of cases reaching six months. Hence all reporting is done against a six-month timeframe. A cohort is specified as those new applications received between 1 and 31 of each month.

The conclusion measurement requires applications to be granted asylum or some form of leave to remain in the UK, allowed at appeal or removed within 182 days (six months) to be counted as concluded.

Performance against the targets has been published in National Statistics as follows:

61 per cent. of new applications received in June 2009 were concluded in six months by the end of December 2009.

Published information is not available in relation to conclusion of applications in timescales other than six months.

### British Nationality

**Fiona Mactaggart:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will reinstate the telephone line for people to request British nationality application forms. [322992]

**Mr. Woolas:** The contract for despatching applications forms in response to telephone requests expires on 31 March 2010. There are no plans to renew it. Forms and guides are available from the UK Border Agency website.

### British Nationality: Assessments

**Damian Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people of each (a) age group and (b) nationality passed the British citizenship test in each month of 2009. [303820]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Knowledge of Life (KOL) requirement was introduced in November 2005 for citizenship applications. In April 2007, the Home Office extended the KOL test to those applying for settlement in the UK. In 2009, 193,645 applications for British citizenship were made.

A breakdown of this information has been placed in the House Library.

### Burglary: Shropshire

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent steps his Department has taken to reduce the number of burglaries in Shropshire. [325416]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** Tackling burglary is the responsibility of local community safety partnerships.

During 2009-10 the Government have supported the work of community safety partnerships by investing £15 million in the Securing Homes: Action Against Burglary programme to prevent and tackle burglary across England and Wales. The elements of the programme which included Shropshire included:

free burglary information and advice packs for victims of burglary and their immediate neighbours;

a campaign to raise awareness of how to avoid becoming a victim of distraction burglary;

new partnerships with the National Union of Students and Age UK to target advice appropriately at those most at risk of or concerned about burglary.

The Home Office also ran a national publicity campaign Don't Advertise Your Stuff to Thieves earlier this year drawing the public's attention to the simple steps they could take to avoid becoming victims of burglary.

We are also keeping pressure on prolific and persistent burglars through offender-based interventions such as the Drugs Intervention Programme (DIP) and the Prolific and Priority Offender (PPO) programme and Integrated Offender Management (IOM). PPO and DIP are in place in every local authority area in England and Wales and IOM approaches are being adopted across the country.

Shropshire are currently in the process of setting up a local IOM pilot.

### Community Safety Accreditation Schemes

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which local authority and police force areas (a) local authority employees and (b) private companies have been authorised to issue fixed penalty notices under the Community Safety Accreditation scheme. [324777]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** The Home Office only holds information on police forces that operate the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS). The Home Office does not collect information on the local authority areas in which CSAS operates. Nor does it collect information on the local authorities and private companies in which police forces have granted employees the power to issue fixed penalty notices under CSAS. The decision as to which employees are granted powers is for individual police forces that operate CSAS.

However, the Home Office conducted a national audit of CSAS in 2009 which found that the following police forces had designated accredited persons with the power to issue fixed penalty notices. Avon and Somerset constabulary and British Transport police have designated the power to issue penalty notices for disorder, but not fixed penalty notices.

Cheshire  
 Cleveland  
 Devon and Cornwall  
 Durham  
 Gwent  
 Hampshire  
 Hertfordshire  
 Kent  
 Lancashire  
 Leicestershire  
 Norfolk

Northamptonshire  
 Nottinghamshire  
 Suffolk  
 Warwickshire  
 West Mercia  
 West Midlands

### Convictions

**Paul Holmes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) males and (b) females aged (i) under 16, (ii) between 16 and 19, (iii) between 20 and 25, (iv) between 26 and 30, (v) between 31 and 40, (vi) between 41 and 50, (vii) between 51 and 60 and (viii) over 60 years have been (A) cautioned, (B) proceeded against and (C) issued with a penalty notice for disorder for being drunk and disorderly in each police force area in the last 12 months. [325281]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** Information showing the number of offenders cautioned for offences of being drunk and disorderly, by age group and police force area, England and Wales, 2008 (latest available) can be found in Tables one and two. The number of defendants proceeded against at magistrates' courts for these offences are given in Tables three and four. The number of offenders issued with a penalty notice for disorder (PND) can be viewed in Tables 5 and 6.

Cautions, court proceedings, and PND data for 2009 are planned for publication in the autumn 2010.

Table 1: Number of males cautioned for offences of drunk and disorderly<sup>1</sup>, by age group and police force area, England and Wales, 2008<sup>2, 3, 4</sup>

Police force area	Age								All ages
	10-15	16-19	20-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 and over	
Avon and Somerset	3	25	19	16	18	7	4	1	93
Bedfordshire	—	—	3	3	4	4	2	1	17
Cheshire	10	23	8	5	9	4	1	2	62
City of London	—	1	5	5	5	1	—	—	17
Cleveland	5	13	3	6	1	1	2	2	33
Cumbria	4	45	19	10	5	4	1	2	90
Derbyshire	2	8	5	3	3	1	1	—	23
Devon and Cornwall	16	76	62	23	56	44	17	8	302
Dorset	4	10	11	3	—	2	—	—	30
Durham	4	27	14	4	8	4	—	—	61
Essex	3	18	13	9	13	7	1	3	67
Gloucestershire	—	12	8	3	1	1	2	—	27
Greater Manchester	5	9	12	7	9	10	5	4	61
Hampshire	5	33	19	6	11	5	3	—	82
Hertfordshire	2	5	6	2	4	4	3	—	26
Humberside	1	5	4	1	1	1	—	—	13
Kent	6	21	6	12	12	7	3	1	68
Lancashire	15	87	54	33	42	19	9	9	268
Leicestershire	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	2
Merseyside	9	52	103	45	51	32	6	6	304
Metropolitan Police	2	116	470	263	374	220	87	36	1,568
Norfolk	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
North Yorkshire	4	23	11	4	8	6	3	4	63
Northamptonshire	—	5	13	3	9	5	—	2	37
Northumbria	58	174	131	73	74	53	18	17	598
South Yorkshire	15	10	7	4	5	2	—	1	44
Staffordshire	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	—	13
Suffolk	—	3	2	1	3	2	1	1	13
Surrey	1	2	5	3	9	3	4	1	28
Sussex	12	32	35	23	40	32	24	5	203
Thames Valley	2	12	13	7	11	8	4	2	59

Table 1: Number of males cautioned for offences of drunk and disorderly<sup>1</sup>, by age group and police force area, England and Wales, 2008<sup>2, 3, 4</sup>

Police force area	Age								All ages
	10-15	16-19	20-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 and over	
Warwickshire	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	2
West Mercia	4	48	63	30	29	13	8	1	196
West Midlands	7	62	84	29	34	14	8	4	242
West Yorkshire	27	117	118	48	81	50	22	5	468
Wiltshire	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—	3
Dyfed-Powys	4	17	11	5	10	8	3	2	60
Gwent	10	71	63	23	30	19	3	3	222
North Wales	8	18	14	8	8	5	8	2	71
South Wales	6	14	11	7	3	4	1	—	46
Total	256	1,202	1,430	729	982	605	255	125	5,584

<sup>1</sup> Includes the following offence descriptions and corresponding statutes:

Being found drunk in a highway or other public place whether a building or not, or a licensed premises.

Licensing Act 1872 Sec 12;

Any person who in any public place is guilty, while drunk, of disorderly behaviour.

Criminal Justice Act 1967 Sec.91.

<sup>2</sup> The 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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 are included in the totals.

<sup>4</sup> 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 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.

Table 2: Number of females cautioned for offences of drunk and disorderly<sup>1</sup>, by age group and police force area, England and Wales, 2008<sup>2, 3, 4</sup>

Police force area	Age								All ages
	10-15	16-19	20-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 and over	
Avon and Somerset	5	11	3	2	2	3	2	—	28
Bedfordshire	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	2
Cheshire	2	13	2	2	4	3	2	—	28
Cleveland	4	7	1	—	4	1	1	—	18
Cumbria	9	27	8	1	2	2	—	—	49
Derbyshire	8	7	1	—	5	1	—	—	22
Devon and Cornwall	17	39	25	16	21	17	11	—	146
Dorset	3	3	2	4	—	2	—	—	14
Durham	11	14	5	4	6	1	1	—	42
Essex	1	11	4	3	3	7	—	—	29
Gloucestershire	—	3	3	—	4	—	—	—	10
Greater Manchester	10	10	2	1	3	3	1	—	30
Hampshire	7	13	7	3	10	5	3	—	48
Hertfordshire	1	—	—	—	2	1	1	—	5
Humberside	1	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	3
Kent	9	6	3	2	1	3	1	1	26
Lancashire	23	34	27	9	14	15	4	1	127
Leicestershire	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	3
Merseyside	8	10	9	6	9	4	1	1	48
Metropolitan Police	3	26	76	38	61	44	11	3	262
Norfolk	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
North Yorkshire	6	7	8	4	4	4	—	—	33
Northamptonshire	—	3	1	—	2	—	—	—	6
Northumbria	68	80	28	10	28	13	1	2	230
South Yorkshire	9	3	1	—	—	1	—	—	14
Staffordshire	1	2	—	—	—	2	—	—	5
Suffolk	1	1	—	1	2	3	—	—	8
Surrey	—	4	4	—	—	2	—	—	10
Sussex	16	15	5	1	10	10	5	3	65
Thames Valley	5	4	5	1	3	2	1	—	21
West Mercia	6	16	16	3	8	11	1	—	61
West Midlands	12	18	15	9	11	10	1	—	76
West Yorkshire	38	62	37	21	35	21	2	2	218
Wiltshire	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	2
Dyfed-Powys	3	5	4	2	1	1	—	—	16
Gwent	7	16	19	9	8	10	3	1	73
North Wales	6	11	5	1	3	2	1	—	29

Table 2: Number of females cautioned for offences of drunk and disorderly<sup>1</sup>, by age group and police force area, England and Wales, 2008<sup>2, 3, 4</sup>

Police force area	Age								All ages
	10-15	16-19	20-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 and over	
South Wales	5	6	5	2	—	5	2	2	27
Total	308	491	331	156	268	209	56	16	1,835

<sup>1</sup> Includes the following offence descriptions and corresponding statutes:

Being found drunk in a highway or other public place whether a building or not, or a licensed premises.

Licensing Act 1872 Sec 12;

Any person who in any public place is guilty, while drunk, of disorderly behaviour.

Criminal Justice Act 1967 Sec.91.

<sup>2</sup> The 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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 are included in the totals.

<sup>4</sup> 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 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.

Table 3: Number of males proceeded against at magistrates courts for offences of drunk and disorderly<sup>1</sup>, by age group and police force area, England and Wales, 2008<sup>2, 3, 4</sup>

Police force area	Age								all ages
	10-15	16-19	20-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 and over	
Avon and Somerset	3	27	44	19	48	33	33	23	230
Bedfordshire	—	5	9	9	20	5	9	1	58
Cambridgeshire	—	5	12	12	44	49	16	12	150
Cheshire	11	55	59	39	54	60	15	4	297
City of London	—	1	7	5	8	10	3	1	35
Cleveland	9	49	75	30	51	33	11	—	258
Cumbria	10	84	92	34	60	45	11	10	346
Derbyshire	10	42	60	28	54	36	14	11	255
Devon and Cornwall	11	104	140	112	204	165	66	14	816
Dorset	4	19	32	19	39	22	10	5	150
Durham	14	64	39	18	28	22	13	—	198
Essex	3	27	19	19	40	37	11	2	158
Gloucestershire	2	10	18	10	19	7	3	—	69
Greater Manchester	18	105	153	79	123	89	20	6	593
Hampshire	3	67	139	40	77	71	17	12	426
Hertfordshire	—	7	15	4	21	16	13	3	79
Humberside	2	10	15	10	17	8	1	—	63
Kent	15	52	69	30	86	89	27	3	371
Lancashire	30	189	226	106	180	136	37	9	913
Leicestershire	—	10	7	2	11	12	1	—	43
Lincolnshire	—	14	23	6	31	20	3	1	98
Merseyside	14	164	324	136	387	290	70	25	1,410
Metropolitan Police	5	48	138	111	308	252	89	24	975
Norfolk	5	31	53	16	60	35	13	1	214
North Yorkshire	7	42	83	46	60	54	27	4	323
Northamptonshire	1	9	17	5	14	9	3	1	59
Northumbria	70	675	916	382	470	314	126	20	2,973
Nottinghamshire	5	25	43	37	69	35	7	2	223
South Yorkshire	16	91	196	108	150	103	28	15	707
Staffordshire	1	49	48	31	39	55	12	5	240
Suffolk	—	3	4	4	8	3	6	1	29
Surrey	1	13	33	31	47	43	13	4	185
Sussex	10	70	74	54	108	89	33	15	453
Thames Valley	3	25	50	10	29	54	21	4	196
Warwickshire	—	17	22	6	18	8	3	1	75
West Mercia	4	89	90	50	49	40	14	5	341
West Midlands	8	129	267	162	303	206	80	15	1,170
West Yorkshire	27	196	318	177	278	219	88	21	1,324
Wiltshire	2	6	8	7	16	35	6	10	90
Dyfed-Powys	1	21	25	21	33	24	11	9	145
Gwent	4	49	70	37	56	43	12	6	277
North Wales	7	41	51	19	42	25	14	—	199
South Wales	—	27	37	25	24	24	22	5	164

Table 3: Number of males proceeded against at magistrates courts for offences of drunk and disorderly<sup>1</sup>, by age group and police force area, England and Wales, 2008<sup>2,3,4</sup>

Police force area	Age								all ages
	10-15	16-19	20-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 and over	
Total	336	2,766	4,120	2,106	3,783	2,925	1,032	310	17,378

<sup>1</sup> Includes the following offence descriptions and corresponding statutes:

Being found drunk in a highway or other public place whether a building or not, or a licensed premises.

Licensing Act 1872 Sec 12;

Any person who in any public place is guilty, while drunk, of disorderly behaviour.

Criminal Justice Act 1967 Sec.91.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Excludes convictions for Cardiff magistrates court for April, July and August 2008.

Source:

Justice Statistics Analytical Services—Ministry of Justice.

Table 4: Number of females proceeded against at magistrates courts for offences of drunk and disorderly<sup>1</sup>, by age group and police force area, England and Wales, 2008<sup>2,3,4</sup>

Police force area	Age								all ages
	10-15	16-19	20-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 and over	
Avon and Somerset	3	8	2	3	7	2	1	1	27
Bedfordshire	1	2	—	—	1	2	1	—	7
Cambridgeshire	—	1	1	1	6	8	3	—	20
Cheshire	3	9	7	8	25	15	—	2	69
City of London	—	—	1	2	2	1	—	—	6
Cleveland	2	18	11	9	23	4	1	1	69
Cumbria	6	30	14	6	25	13	5	—	99
Derbyshire	3	9	9	3	3	5	1	—	33
Devon and Cornwall	8	30	22	22	24	32	4	—	142
Dorset	—	3	6	—	5	6	—	—	20
Durham	5	18	12	3	8	5	1	—	52
Essex	2	3	8	4	8	10	1	—	36
Gloucestershire	—	1	2	1	1	2	—	—	7
Greater Manchester	3	9	16	9	14	13	1	1	66
Hampshire	8	15	9	6	18	8	7	—	71
Hertfordshire	—	2	—	1	1	1	6	—	11
Humberside	1	4	3	1	2	3	—	1	15
Kent	7	15	6	6	17	22	5	—	78
Lancashire	15	69	20	21	43	31	7	—	206
Leicestershire	—	1	—	1	2	2	—	—	6
Lincolnshire	—	—	3	—	3	3	—	—	9
Merseyside	4	41	36	30	82	62	14	—	269
Metropolitan Police	2	6	8	9	16	14	7	—	62
Norfolk	—	2	10	2	7	7	—	—	28
North Yorkshire	3	17	12	4	23	13	4	—	76
Northamptonshire	—	3	1	—	2	2	—	—	8
Northumbria	65	145	106	65	98	43	28	4	554
Nottinghamshire	—	7	6	5	5	9	—	—	32
South Yorkshire	14	21	25	23	22	33	4	—	142
Staffordshire	2	6	9	3	2	26	3	1	52
Suffolk	—	1	1	2	—	1	—	—	5
Surrey	—	5	3	1	3	15	1	3	31
Sussex	3	16	7	9	20	23	3	2	83
Thames Valley	—	6	11	2	6	5	2	—	32
Warwickshire	1	2	2	1	2	1	—	—	9
West Mercia	2	11	8	3	8	17	1	—	50
West Midlands	5	30	36	21	27	28	5	—	152
West Yorkshire	19	42	45	29	60	39	9	1	244
Wiltshire	—	2	—	—	2	4	3	—	11
Dyfed-Powys	—	3	6	2	5	14	1	—	31
Gwent	3	8	7	2	8	12	11	—	51
North Wales	1	11	9	3	10	10	2	—	46
South Wales	2	9	5	3	3	4	1	—	27

Table 4: Number of females proceeded against at magistrates courts for offences of drunk and disorderly<sup>1</sup>, by age group and police force area, England and Wales, 2008<sup>2, 3, 4</sup>

Police force area	Age								all ages
	10-15	16-19	20-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 and over	
Total	193	641	505	326	649	570	143	17	3,044

<sup>1</sup> Includes the following offence descriptions and corresponding statutes:

Being found drunk in a highway or other public place whether a building or not, or a licensed premises.

Licensing Act 1872 Sec 12;

Any person who in any public place is guilty, while drunk, of disorderly behaviour.

Criminal Justice Act 1967 Sec.91.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Excludes convictions for Cardiff magistrates court for April, July and August 2008.

Source:

Justice Statistics Analytical Services—Ministry of Justice.

Table 5: Number of penalty notices for disorder issued to males for offences of drunk and disorderly, by age group and police force area, England and Wales, 2008<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

Police Force Area	Age							All ages
	16-19	20-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 & over	
Avon and Somerset	52	82	25	32	20	6	2	219
Bedfordshire	21	49	20	29	19	4	2	144
British Transport police	59	147	123	195	127	53	14	718
Cambridgeshire	62	95	67	77	44	14	6	365
Cheshire	100	211	87	87	42	20	3	550
Cleveland	257	463	163	174	99	33	9	1,198
Cumbria	69	139	55	70	36	13	7	389
Derbyshire	157	191	77	85	35	17	5	567
Devon and Cornwall	207	317	135	100	61	23	10	853
Dorset	53	74	28	24	12	6	—	197
Durham	192	295	103	99	57	12	5	763
Dyfed Powys	41	56	34	34	22	13	4	204
Essex	50	119	56	56	33	14	4	332
Gloucestershire	26	42	20	21	6	7	2	124
Greater Manchester	130	223	106	108	73	23	7	670
Gwent	62	80	28	23	8	2	—	203
Hampshire	119	168	52	58	51	7	4	459
Hertfordshire	61	71	27	25	21	9	4	218
Humberside	112	181	74	75	47	5	3	497
Kent	393	642	264	320	167	50	24	1,860
Lancashire	1,116	1,458	574	666	390	100	27	4,331
Leicestershire	49	120	63	61	30	10	1	334
Lincolnshire	11	34	12	18	10	2	—	87
London, City of	5	51	34	29	22	1	1	143
Merseyside	843	1,325	522	618	439	120	47	3,914
Metropolitan	321	823	525	700	400	138	54	2,961
Norfolk	71	153	59	80	30	7	3	403
North Wales	128	182	74	70	51	13	6	524
North Yorkshire	179	247	95	96	58	14	5	694
Northamptonshire	56	74	40	40	20	3	1	234
Northumbria	887	1,493	619	587	349	98	23	4,056
Nottinghamshire	120	183	72	74	32	8	—	489
South Wales	37	36	21	31	18	5	2	150
South Yorkshire	559	805	306	322	174	39	14	2,219
Staffordshire	102	144	67	73	44	14	4	448
Suffolk	12	10	5	1	4	1	2	35
Surrey	45	66	39	39	43	20	2	254
Sussex	211	367	145	147	85	32	9	996
Thames Valley	66	123	38	50	25	15	5	322
Warwickshire	24	21	16	12	8	4	1	86
West Mercia	125	173	54	49	25	2	4	432
West Midlands	646	991	431	394	259	73	17	2,811
West Yorkshire	309	476	212	191	107	37	6	1,338
Wiltshire	68	85	40	45	29	8	4	279

Table 5: Number of penalty notices for disorder issued to males for offences of drunk and disorderly, by age group and police force area, England and Wales, 2008<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

Police Force Area	Age							All ages
	16-19	20-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 & over	
Total	8,213	13,085	5,607	6,085	3,632	1,095	353	38,070

<sup>1</sup> The penalty notice for disorder (PND) scheme was implemented in all 43 police forces in England and Wales in 2004 under the provisions of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001.

<sup>2</sup> 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 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.

<sup>3</sup> Centrally available PND data are published at age 16 and over.

Source:

Justice Statistics Analytical Services in the Ministry of Justice.

Table 6: Number of penalty notices for disorder issued to females for offences of drunk and disorderly, by age group and police force area, England and Wales, 2008<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

Police Force Area	Age							All ages
	16-19	20-25	26-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61 & over	
Avon and Somerset	12	7	4	4	3	2	1	33
Bedfordshire	3	3	2	5	2	2	1	18
British Transport police	18	15	20	23	16	2	—	94
Cambridgeshire	4	12	7	11	14	2	—	50
Cheshire	14	37	32	21	15	4	1	124
Cleveland	78	90	40	59	32	10	—	309
Cumbria	20	27	7	22	14	4	—	94
Derbyshire	36	28	18	22	14	7	—	125
Devon and Cornwall	39	50	15	43	25	4	1	177
Dorset	10	8	6	3	5	1	—	33
Durham	38	54	28	31	18	4	—	173
Dyfed Powys	6	11	7	7	6	5	—	42
Essex	9	19	4	15	13	6	—	66
Gloucestershire	4	6	4	3	6	1	—	24
Greater Manchester	45	44	21	22	24	4	—	160
Gwent	7	7	0	6	5	—	—	25
Hampshire	27	14	4	20	5	3	2	75
Hertfordshire	8	17	6	7	5	2	—	45
Humberside	20	29	7	19	7	5	1	88
Kent	89	86	38	60	68	16	1	358
Lancashire	257	261	97	207	110	22	4	958
Leicestershire	8	18	9	9	7	1	—	52
Lincolnshire	5	4	3	5	1	—	—	18
London, City of	0	4	7	3	1	—	—	15
Merseyside	212	230	116	192	119	23	3	895
Metropolitan	64	121	75	126	92	17	5	500
Norfolk	13	16	9	9	9	2	—	58
North Wales	28	27	14	15	15	6	1	106
North Yorkshire	32	46	22	23	15	2	—	140
Northamptonshire	12	7	3	7	6	—	—	35
Northumbria	238	339	133	177	104	32	3	1,026
Nottinghamshire	19	25	5	17	16	3	1	86
South Wales	5	8	4	8	1	1	—	27
South Yorkshire	112	132	70	77	53	11	—	455
Staffordshire	19	25	15	15	15	5	—	94
Suffolk	1	1	0	1	2	2	—	7
Surrey	15	12	5	11	12	1	1	57
Sussex	47	53	20	41	21	12	1	195
Thames Valley	7	8	4	12	9	—	—	40
Warwickshire	3	5	2	2	2	—	—	14
West Mercia	17	17	7	11	6	3	—	61
West Midlands	123	132	59	78	50	12	3	457
West Yorkshire	80	97	33	52	46	12	—	320
Wiltshire	18	8	8	8	7	1	—	50
Total	1,822	2,160	990	1,509	1,016	252	30	7,779

<sup>1</sup> The penalty notice for disorder (PND) scheme was implemented in all 43 police forces in England and Wales in 2004 under the provisions of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001.

<sup>2</sup> 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 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.

<sup>3</sup> Centrally available PND data are published at age 16 and over.

Source:

Justice Statistics Analytical Services in the Ministry of Justice.

**Crime**

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate his Department has made of the number of (a) drug dealers, (b) people dealing in counterfeit currency and (c) people dealing in counterfeit goods in England and Wales in each of the last five years. [317772]

**Alan Johnson:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given in respect of a previous question on 4 June 2008, *Official Report*, column 997W.

**Crime Prevention**

**Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what research his Department has undertaken into the relationship between levels of spending on police and crime rates; and if he will make a statement. [324137]

**Mr. Hanson:** The Home Office has supported a number of research projects concerning the impact of police resourcing and deployment on crime rates. These have included the impact of police force funding, undertaken in collaboration with Professor Ben Vollaard of the university of Tilburg (Tilburg Law and Economics Centre Discussion Paper DP 2009-012), the impact of the Street Crime Initiative, undertaken by Professor Steve Machin (and Olivier Marie) of the London School of Economics (LSE Centre for Economic Performance Discussion Paper No. 680), and the effect of police redeployment following the 7/7 terror attacks, also by Professor Machin (and colleagues) (LSE Centre for Economic Performance Discussion Paper No. 852). These research projects have found that increases in police resources, both generally and targeted, have been associated with reductions in crime rates, in line with the recent international academic literature on the topic.

**Departmental Buildings**

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department and its agencies have spent on rooms for staff leisure in each of the last five years. [324441]

**Mr. Woolas:** In common with many organisations my Department provides various facilities to support staff fitness. Information on the cost of these facilities is not held separately.

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department provides subsidised gym facilities for its staff. [324559]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Home Department provides accommodation for gym facilities at 2 Marsham street, but does not provide a cash subsidy for staff.

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department spent on interior design in relation to office refurbishments undertaken in each of the last five years. [324679]

**Mr. Woolas:** My Department's accounts do not itemise this level of information.

**Departmental Contracts**

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidance on his Department's policy on the relocation offshore of departmental jobs to companies bidding for contracts let by his Department. [324791]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Home Department has no policy on the relocation offshore of departmental jobs and has no plans to issue any guidance to companies bidding for contracts let by the Department.

**Departmental Data Protection**

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many attempts were made to gain unauthorised access to each (a) database and (b) ICT system run by his Department in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [317830]

**Alan Johnson:** The Department does not comment on issues relating to possible breaches of the UK's national security.

**Departmental Information Officers**

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the cost to his Department was of employing press and media officers in the last 12 month period for which figures are available; and what the cost to his Department was of employing such staff in the financial year 1996-97, expressed in real terms. [324805]

**Mr. Woolas:** The cost of press officers employed between March 2009 and February 2010 was £1,795,888.92. The Home Office do not employ media officers and do not hold records of press or media officers employed in the financial year 1996-97; our records do not go back that far.

**Departmental Internet**

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department and its agencies incurred expenditure on advertising via Google Adwords in the latest year for which figures are available. [324624]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Home Office and its agencies have spent a total of £401,724 on advertising via Google Adwords in 2009-10.

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints his Department received regarding difficulties using its website in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325195]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Home Office has received 1,053 pieces of feedback from site users since 2008. This comprises a range of comment such as requests for further information, queries about content, reports of broken links and suggestions for new content. We do not have the information to be able to breakdown this feedback to identify specific complaints regarding difficulties in using the website.

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department spent on external website design consultants in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325213]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Home Office website, [www.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

last underwent a major redesign in 2005. It subsequently underwent a minor redesign in 2008 to incorporate new corporate branding following the machinery of government change to create Ministry of Justice.

Costs spent on design consultants for the external website in the last three years were:

	Spent (£)
2007-08	50,000
2008-09	0
2009-10	0

### Departmental Legal Costs

**Bob Spink:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department has spent in (a) legal fees and (b) compensation on legal cases concerning remuneration of its employees in each of the last 10 years. [322062]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Home Office (excluding its agencies) does not maintain a central record of how much has been spent on legal fees or compensation specifically relating to legal cases concerning remuneration of its employees. Therefore the information requested could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

### Departmental Manpower

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many performance reviews were undertaken in respect of staff of (a) his Department and (b) its agencies in each of the last five years; in how many cases performance was rated as unsatisfactory or below; how many staff left as a direct result of such a rating; and what percentage of full-time equivalent staff this represented. [313829]

**Mr. Woolas:** All permanent staff of the Home Office should receive a performance review each year. In 2008-09 just over 24,000 staff received a review. Staff are assessed against their objectives and, where improvement in performance is needed, that will be reflected in their development plan. In 2008-09 and 2007-08 just over 150 staff were marked as unsatisfactory overall. But in addition many staff receiving satisfactory markings would also have specific areas for improvement.

No accurate figures are available for earlier years. And it is not possible to relate the numbers leaving in any year directly to the numbers marked as unsatisfactory.

#### Total number of unsatisfactory performance assessment markings

	HO HQ and UKBA	IPS	CRB
2004-05	1	1	1
2005-06	1	1	1
2006-07	1	20	1
2007-08	139	15	1
2008-09	132	19	1

<sup>1</sup> No information available.

### Departmental Marketing

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department and its agencies spent on promotional items carrying the Department's branding and logo in the last five years; and what those items were. [324715]

**Mr. Woolas:** The amount spent on promotional items carrying the Departments and its agencies branding and logo in the last five years is as follows:

#### Home Office and UK Border Agency

The requested information is not held centrally and cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

Figures for the Identity and Passport Agency and Criminal Records Bureau are shown in the following tables.

#### Identity and Passport Agency

		Amount (£)
2008	Promotional stationary for the UK Passport Service for Five Nations Passport Issuers Conference	2,437
2009	Idsmart pens and plastic oyster card wallets	3,927
2010	General Register Office mousemats	1,779.62

#### Criminal Records Bureau

		Amount (£)
28 March 2006	1,200 black pens with CRB contact information	445.00
10 May 2006	1,200 black pens with CRB contact information	445.00
4 September 2008	30 crystal pyramids and 1,000 black pens with CRB logo	839.00
10 November 2008	30 crystal pyramids and 1,000 black pens with CRB logo	865.60
19 March 2009	4,000 black pens and 4,000 a4 card folders with CRB logo	4,883.00
27 January 2010	1,200 desk calendars with CRB logo	997.50
27 January 2010	CRB image bank costs	475.00

### Departmental Official Hospitality

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the five most expensive hospitality events hosted by his Department and its agencies were in the last three years; and what (a) the cost and (b) purpose of each such event was. [324658]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Home Office systems (and those of its agencies) do not separately identify the cost of individual hospitality events from overall hospitality costs. This information could be provided at only disproportionate cost.

### Departmental Public Expenditure

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst of 12 October 2009, *Official Report*, column 521W, what the name is of each underspent project; and what the monetary value was of the underspend in each subsequently transferred to support the Draft Legislative Programme for 2009-10. [324529]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Home Office transferred £40 million resource and £5 million capital in the winter supplementary estimate 2009-10 for Building Britain's Future. The transfer was made from emerging underspends in the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism.

#### Departmental Theft

**Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the Department is taking to deter theft from within the Department. [322650]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Home Office has effective security arrangements in place to guard against theft. A range of measures to deter, prevent and detect theft are an integral feature of the Department's broader security risk mitigation measures. These controls reflect the minimum standards set out in the HMG Security Policy Framework (SPF), issued by the Cabinet Office and available online at:

[www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/spf.aspx](http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/spf.aspx)

It would not be appropriate to provide details of specific measures as to do so would undermine their effectiveness.

#### Departmental Written Questions

**Mr. Stephen O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what methodology his Department used to determine whether answers to Questions in the formulation if he will set out with statistical information related as directly as possible to the tabling hon. Member's constituency the effects on that constituency of his Department's policies since 1997 could be provided without incurring disproportionate cost; and if he will make a statement. [323867]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** The Home Department seeks to answer all parliamentary questions that do not incur disproportionate cost.

Disproportionate cost is determined via a disproportionate cost threshold (DCT). The current DCT is £800, announced in Parliament by the Treasury on 20 January 2010.

#### DNA: Databases

**Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the familial searches of the national DNA database have resulted in a prosecution since the creation of that database. [325267]

**Alan Johnson:** Familial searches of the National DNA Database (NDNAD) are only carried out in cases of serious violent crime. They are undertaken on a case by case basis and only after authorisation from the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) officer for the police force requesting the service. They are used to identify a suspect who does not have a DNA profile on the NDNAD but who may have a close relative who does have a profile on the NDNAD.

Data provided by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) indicates that, since 2003, 33 individual suspects have been identified subsequent to a familial search of the NDNAD which suggested a possible relative with a subject profile on the NDNAD. Of these 33 suspects, five were deceased. The remaining 28 suspects were prosecuted, of whom 27 were convicted.

#### Drugs: Misuse

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with reference to the answer of 1 June 2009, *Official Report*, column 159W, on drugs: misuse, when the result of the commissioned research on the impact of khat will be available; and (a) how and (b) when the focus groups will be set up. [320110]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** The Department commissioned two studies in 2009 to explore the social harms associated with khat use. The first of these is a qualitative study exploring perceptions of the social harms associated with khat use; the availability of treatment services provided for khat users; and perceptions of the appropriate role of Government intervention. The second is a review of the national and international literature examining the evidence on the social harms associated with khat and the impact of legislation in countries which have legislated against khat use and supply. The work is now approaching completion and the Department aims to publish the findings of these studies later in 2010.

For the qualitative study, a total of 10 focus groups were conducted with members of the Somali, Yemeni and Ethiopian communities in Sheffield, London and Cardiff. An additional focus with members of the general public was held in each of the focus group site areas. The composition of focus groups was men-only, women-only or young people-only. The focus groups were conducted in a mix of mother-tongue and English depending on the needs of the group.

#### Entry Clearances

**Mr. Holloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent assessment he has made of the operation of the hub and spoke model for the issue of visas to enter the UK. [325080]

**Mr. Woolas:** The Hub and Spoke system has been rolled out gradually since June 2007. This model, which separates the collection of applications from the place where the decision is made, has enabled the UK Border Agency to improve the efficiency and consistency of its visa operation, building on its network of visa application centres as well as increasing the security and integrity of our staff and delivering customer service benefits.

Management reviews of the impact of Hub and Spoke are undertaken at regular intervals, and assessments of Hub and Spoke arrangements have also been made by the independent chief inspector of UKBA. A recent internal evaluation has confirmed that hub and spoke has delivered a number of key benefits, including improvements in quality and consistence of decision making, efficiency and productivity, resilience and flexibility, and customer service.

#### Entry Clearances: Iraq

**Mr. Holloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many business visitor visas to the UK were issued in (a) Iraq and (b) Jordan to (i) Iraqi citizens and (ii) other nationals in each of the last 12 months. [325078]

**Mr. Woolas** [holding answer 30 March 2010]: The information is as follows:

For 2009:

(a) 10

(b) (i) 1,220 and (ii) 3,049.

Detailed statistics by month are tabled as follows:

<i>Statistics, Visit-Business visas issued</i>		
<i>Applications processed in Jordan</i>		
<i>2009</i>	<i>Iraqi nationals</i>	<i>Other nationalities</i>
January	90	188
February	60	212
March	120	254
April	127	256
May	114	330
June	106	284
July	150	234
August	76	188
September	86	230
October	137	421
November	108	269
December	46	183
Total	1,220	3,049

<i>Applications processed in Iraq</i>	
<i>2009</i>	<i>Total</i>
March	8
June	2
December	0
Total	10

**Mr. Holloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent representations he has received on Iraqi citizens travelling to Jordan in order to submit an application for a business visitor visa to enter the UK; and if he will make a statement. [325079]

**Mr. Woolas** [holding answer 30 March 2010]: United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) International Group receives very few direct representations in respect of Iraqi citizens who have travelled to Jordan in order to submit an application for a business visitor visa. Properly documented applications are normally resolved and a decision made, within five working days.

Due to cost and security considerations, Ministers have agreed that UKBA will currently offer a limited

visa application service in Baghdad and Erbil for certain designated categories of applicant (such as senior officials and diplomats), for those going to the UK under Prime Ministerial/Government sponsored initiatives and for urgent compassionate cases.

All other Iraqi nationals—including business people—can apply for their visas outside Iraq, in Damascus, Amman, and Beirut. The current processing time for straightforward applications made at one of these posts is usually within five working days.

UKBA International Group has recorded two recent cases of representations, from UK sponsors, regarding Iraqi citizens who would have preferred to submit their business visitor visa applications in Iraq.

#### Entry Clearances: Overseas Students

**Mr. Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many student visas were (a) applied for by and (b) granted to applicants from (i) India, (ii) Pakistan, (iii) Bangladesh, (iv) Sri Lanka, (v) Nepal, (vi) Malaysia and (vii) Nigeria in each of the last eight quarters. [301812]

**Mr. Woolas** [holding answer 26 November 2010]: The information requested is given in the following table and relates to the financial year.

Tier 4 (students) of the points based system was introduced on 31 March 2009 providing a robust system aimed at ensuring legitimate students are able to come here to access our world renowned educational facilities while protecting the route from abuse. As a result of the review of Tier 4 commissioned by the Prime Minister in November, we announced in February a balanced and targeted package of measures to further tighten the robustness of the system. Measures include, among others, raising the standard of English required to study in the UK and introducing a “highly trusted sponsor” scheme.

In February we also implemented suspensions of Tier 4 applications in north India, Bangladesh and Nepal to ensure proper scrutiny of applications. We lifted the suspension for applications at degree level (and for foundation degrees) in north India at the beginning of March. The other suspensions remain in place and are being kept under review.

	2007		2008			2009		
	<i>October to December</i>	<i>January to March</i>	<i>April to June</i>	<i>July to September</i>	<i>October to December</i>	<i>January to March</i>	<i>April to June</i>	<i>July to September</i>
<i>Applications</i>								
India	5,523	8,597	4,714	22,944	8,109	12,017	8,123	54,749
Pakistan	6,387	7,581	5,647	11,447	5,613	8,094	2,515	8,532
Bangladesh	2,163	3,277	2,399	3,548	1,456	2,563	1,161	11,567
Sri Lanka	995	1,284	977	2,724	1,647	2,157	1,172	4,178
Nepal	847	942	573	757	400	329	2,154	9,964
Malaysia	1,163	747	894	5,364	1,027	501	658	5,957
Nigeria	4,632	4,571	3,523	15,046	5,976	5,406	1,413	10,395
<i>Issued</i>								
India	3,127	5,068	2,633	17,661	4,905	7,807	3,884	31,416
Pakistan	1,777	2,185	1,510	4,705	1,260	1,499	1,553	4,961

	2007		2008			2009		
	October to December	January to March	April to June	July to September	October to December	January to March	April to June	July to September
Bangladesh	896	1,147	758	1,492	762	1,200	979	8,249
Sri Lanka	381	546	350	1,901	885	886	648	2,813
Nepal	300	229	88	281	145	210	288	6,370
Malaysia	1,011	691	699	4,749	1,003	462	477	5,447
Nigeria	1,673	1,769	768	5,999	1,826	1,683	668	7,646

Note:

These data are based on management information. They are provisional and subject to change.

### Entry Clearances: Pakistan

**Tony Baldry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to determine the appeal of Shaheen Kausar lodged on 19 May 2009 in Islamabad against refusal of entry clearance. [325050]

**Mr. Woolas** [*holding answer 30 March 2010*]: Shaheen Kausar's appeal against the refusal of her application for entry clearance was dismissed by the Asylum and Immigration Tribunal on 21 October 2009 (AIT reference: VA/45370/2009).

### Greater Manchester

**Sir Gerald Kaufman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out, with statistical information related as directly as possible to Manchester, Gorton constituency, the effects on that constituency of his Department's policies since 1997. [322139]

**Alan Johnson:** Manchester, Gorton comes within the Manchester Community Safety Partnership (CSP). Prior to one March 2010, CSPs were referred to as crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRP). The available statistical information therefore relates to the Manchester CSP.

In terms of police recorded crime in the Manchester CSP, between 2002-03 and 2008-09, total recorded crime fell by 18 per cent. More specifically:

Violence against the person—down 2 per cent. (down 5 per cent. in last year)

Sexual offences—down 10 per cent. (down 10 per cent. in last year)

Robbery—down 43 per cent. (down 16 per cent. in last year)

Burglary—down 29 per cent. (up 5 per cent. in last year)

Offences against vehicles—down 35 per cent. (down 18 per cent. in last year)

Other theft offences—down 12 per cent. (up 2 per cent. in last year)

Criminal damage—down 20 per cent. (down 11 per cent. in last year)

Drug offences—up 151 per cent. (up 3 per cent. in last year) (there has been increased recording of drug offences which is mainly attributable to the increased use of police powers to issue cannabis warnings).

Data prior to 2002-03 are not directly comparable because of the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard in April 2002. Additionally, no data at CSP level are available prior to 1998-99.

Manchester CSP is covered by Metropolitan, North Manchester, South Manchester and Trafford basic command units, which had a total of 2,167 police

officers as at 30 March 2009. The number of police officers has decreased by 74 since 2003. Comparisons with 1997 at BCU level are not available. There were 218 police community support officers as at 30 March 2009 while there were none in existence in 1997.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 saw positive effects with the statutory duty to create a crime and disorder reduction partnership (CDRP). These are now referred to as community safety partnerships (CSPs). The Manchester CSP has brought new ways of working in a cross cutting way with the police, council and other key stakeholders and genuine partnership working to help tackle complex issues.

Neighbourhood police teams are in place and the Manchester, Gorton constituency is served by a number of such teams from the Greater Manchester police's metropolitan division. Neighbourhood policing is a crucial partnership with the public and is helping to reduce crime and enhance community confidence in the police. The visible policing presence is augmented by information on neighbourhood policing in each area which is available on the internet. None of this was in place in 1997.

All CSPs, including Manchester, are putting in place minimum standards to tackle antisocial behaviour (ASB). By tackling ASB and providing support for victims, these will help to reduce local perceptions of ASB and improve public confidence. This was not in place in 1997. In addition, before 1997 there were no bespoke powers to tackle antisocial behaviour whereas there are now a range of powers to deal with this issue. These include antisocial behaviour orders and designated public places orders (DPPO) from the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001. Manchester is in the top 50 national priority areas for alcohol-related harm. The effects of the Department's policies on crime, antisocial behaviour, policing, and night time economy management have been consistently positive and instrumental in supporting the city centre's development as a safer, more popular and vibrant place to visit.

Detailed and comprehensive analysis is being used by Manchester, along with specific action plans to ensure reductions in serious violent crime. The Manchester Violent Gang Board has recently been commended for their approach to the issues within Manchester and have been given a Green Flag by the Audit Commission for their work in relation to guns and gangs. Gun crime is down significantly—Greater Manchester police's Xcalibre operations have had notable success in targeting the gang culture and securing convictions against gang leaders and members. Firearms discharges have reduced in Manchester over the last three years. This is helping to improve safety in Manchester, Gorton.

Since 1997 a key element of Home Office policy in addressing domestic violence has been driven through the Home Office-led cross-Government National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan. This includes the Specialist Domestic Violence Court programme (Manchester gained accreditation in 2008). It also includes Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs), the Government's approach to identified high risk victims of domestic violence. Manchester is developing three MARACs covering all three police divisions. Victims of domestic violence are supported by independent domestic violence advisers (IDVAs)—trained specialists who provide a service to victims who are at high risk of harm which have been shown to decrease victimisation. Manchester now has 10 IDVAs.

Since 1997 a key element of Home Office policy in addressing sexual violence has been driven through the delivery of the Home Office-led cross-Government Action Plan on Sexual Violence and Abuse which aims to increase access to health and support services for victims; improve the response of the criminal justice system for victims, and to prevent sexual violence in the first place.

This has led to expanded services such as sexual assault referral centres (SARCs) and independent sexual violence advisers (ISVAs) to improve victim care. Home Office has supported the continued development of St Mary's SARC in Manchester and the development of an ISVA service at the centre.

Manchester is a recipient of Youth Crime Action Plan funding and has rolled out a programme of initiatives designed to tackle youth crime. Manchester also receives funding from the Tackling Knives Action Programme and has engaged in a number of enforcement and educational activities to tackle and deter young people from involvement in all forms of serious youth violence. These include Safer Schools Partnerships.

The drug treatment system in Manchester has developed by means of joint planning and commissioning of services over many years. The introduction of national drug strategy and the establishment of pooled treatment budget arrangements in 2001-02 have done much to formalise and enhance partnership working. This has resulted in the development of an integrated treatment system. Manchester has an effective drugs intervention programme (DIP).

Manchester is achieving significant reductions in acquisitive crime, but recognises that there are still challenges, particularly in tackling issues such as domestic burglary and robbery. Robust plans are in place to tackle these. There is a real focus on student safety and Manchester has developed a Student Safety Business Model. Manchester is a Vigilance area and Safer Homes Fund area which are Home Office programmes aimed at tackling acquisitive crime, particularly burglary and robbery. Greater Manchester police's Operation Storm has had real success in recent reductions in domestic burglary in particular.

From 1 April 2010, CSPs are required formulate and implement a strategy "to reduce reoffending". One of Manchester's priorities includes reducing the offending of prolific and priority offenders and the partnership is currently exceeding the targets set in the Local Area Agreement. Manchester will shortly introduce Integrated Offender Management (IOM) based on the Greater Manchester Spotlight model and will have three co-located IOM teams covering the city. This will manage the most

serious offenders including those responsible for acquisitive crime, and violent and domestic violence offences.

The Neighbourhood Statistics Service provides a wide range of statistical information at parliamentary constituency level, taken from the 2001 census and other sources. This service is available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/>

#### Group 4 Securicor

**Andrew Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions there have been with Group 4 Securicor (G4S) on the service offered by G4S Policing Solutions; and if he will make a statement. [324858]

**Mr. Woolas** [*holding answer 29 March 2010*]: The UK Border Agency has engaged in discussions with G4S about G4S Policing Solutions. Joint Immigration Crime Teams operating across the United Kingdom include a number of seconded police posts, five posts are at present being filled temporarily by non-warranted civilian investigators supplied by G4S Policing Solutions, for up to two months.

Planning is being finalised for resourcing this function into 2010-11.

#### Idcardsyoudecide Website

**Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many hits the idcardsyoudecide website has received since its launch. [325243]

**Meg Hillier:** There have been 5,301 page views on the website since its launch to present (28 March 2010):

<http://www.idcardsyoudecide.wordpress.com>

**Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much had been spent on the idcardsyoudecide (a) website and (b) short films on the latest date for which figures are available. [325242]

**Meg Hillier:** The information is as follows:

(a) The cost of the website development is £8,348.50

<http://www.idcardsyoudecide.wordpress.com>

(b) The cost of the five animations that appear on the site is £15,219

#### Identity Cards

**Chris Huhne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which Ministers in his Department have (a) been issued with (i) an identity card and (ii) a biometric passport and (b) their details on the National Identity Register. [320674]

**Alan Johnson:** The Identity and Passport Service holds in confidence personal information about those people who have been issued with a passport or an identity card and it would not be proper to publish whether any particular individuals have been issued with a passport or identity card with their identity details recorded on passport records or on the National Identity Register.

### Identity Cards: Bus Services

**Mr. Dunne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration (a) his Department and (b) the Identity and Passport Service has given to the use of identity cards to indicate entitlement for free local bus travel for the over-60s.

[325324]

**Meg Hillier:** There are no current plans to use identity cards to indicate entitlement for free bus travel for the over 60's. However, an identity card is a convenient proof of age and could be used for the holder to prove that they qualify for age related services such as applying for a bus pass.

### Identity Cards: Greater Manchester

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department by what means police in Greater Manchester are able to verify that an identity card is valid.

[314774]

**Alan Johnson:** We expect a number of checks will be based on visual verification of the card. We have provided detailed guidance on the security features that can be checked to ensure an identity card is genuine. Also, the police can request that the Identity and Passport Service check the validity of an identity card against the National Identity Register for prescribed purposes set out in legislation. These are for the prevention and detection of crime, national security, or to help identify a victim of an event which has caused loss of life or injury.

### Identity Cards: Passports

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to combine the identity card and biometric passport schemes.

[318773]

**Alan Johnson:** The Government's intention is to offer British citizens aged 16 and over the choice of being issued with a passport or an identity card or both documents and for applicants' identity details, including facial image and fingerprint biometrics, to be held on the same National Identity Register. As the Government are to introduce fingerprint biometric passports and essentially the same information will be recorded for the issue of a passport or identity card, it will be far more cost effective and secure to introduce a single application process and to hold the identity information of people issued with passports and identity cards on a single register rather than duplicating that information on separate but almost identical databases.

### Illegal Immigrants

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer to Baroness Warsi of 17 March 2010, *Official Report, House of Lords*, column 190WA, on Houses of Parliament: illegal staff, whether the individual who was the subject of the report to the UK Border Agency worked for the House of Commons Service.

[324623]

**Mr. Woolas:** The individual referred to in the answer to Baroness Warsi of 17 March 2010, *Official Report, House of Lords*, column 190WA, was engaged directly by a contracted cleaning company.

### Immigration: Gurkhas

**Nick Harvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Gurkha veterans have claimed resettlement rights since August 2009; and how many of them are receiving (a) pension credit, (b) housing benefit and (c) council tax benefit.

[325777]

**Mr. Woolas:** Any former member of the Brigade of Gurkhas who served for four years or more is eligible to apply for settlement in the UK. Since we published our revised guidance in 2009 we have granted settlement to 2,179 individuals.

The UK's benefit systems do not record the nationality of people receiving benefits because nationality is not a condition of entitlement.

### Islamist Militants

**Mr. Crabb:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent estimate he has made of the funds raised in the UK for overseas Islamist militants.

[325029]

**Mr. Hanson** [*holding answer 29 March 2010*]: My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary published on 22 March this year the first annual report on progress against the objectives set out in the Government's overall strategy for countering international terrorism (known as 'CONTEST'), which includes information on work to tackle terrorist finance. For reasons of national security it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the details of the Government's assessments of the levels of funds raised in the UK for terrorism overseas.

### Khat

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent research his Department has (a) commissioned and (b) evaluated on the health effects of khat.

[320108]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** The HO commissioned two studies in 2009 to explore the social harms associated with khat use. The first of these is a qualitative study exploring perceptions of the social harms associated with khat use; the availability of treatment services provided for khat users; and perceptions of the appropriate role of Government intervention. The second is a review of the national and international literature examining the evidence on the social harms associated with khat and the impact of legislation in countries which have legislated against khat use and supply.

The perceived health effects of khat are briefly reported on in each of the studies. The Home Office has not commissioned any overall evaluations of the health effects associated with khat use.

### Mobile Phones: Surveillance

**Mr. David Davis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much his Department has spent on (a) contracts with Roke Manor and (b) other projects relating to the Celldar mobile telephone monitoring system. [325266]

**Mr. Woolas** [holding answer 30 March 2010]: The Home Department has not spent any money on (a) contracts with Roke Manor or (b) other projects relating to the Celldar mobile telephone monitoring system.

### Offences Against Children

**Mr. Steen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Government will take steps to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. [325031]

**Mr. Alan Campbell** [holding answer 29 March 2010]: We are currently taking steps to assess the UK's compliance with its obligations under the convention.

### Offensive Weapons: Shropshire

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes involving a weapon there have been in North Shropshire in each year since 1997; and what type of weapon was involved in each case. [325417]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** The main police recorded crime return does not identify the use of a weapon in a given offence. Figures are collected for possession of weapon offences, but these do not include the more serious offences with which weapons are often associated, such as grievous bodily harm with intent.

Data relating to firearms offences and knife and sharp instrument offences are available, through additional special collections separate to the main recorded crime return. Figures are collected at police force level only, so data are provided for West Mercia police force area.

Data for firearms offences (excluding air weapons) are available since 1997-98 and are shown in Tables A, B and C.

There were two major changes in the way that police record crime in 1998 and 2002. In April 1998, the way in which crime was counted changed and the coverage of offences increased. In April 2002 the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) was introduced, which brought in a more victim-focused reporting system. This means that it is not possible to compare figures across these recording changes and this is reflected in the tables.

Data for knife/sharp instrument offences have been collected 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.

The data for knife/sharp instrument offences are shown in Tables D and E.

Table A: Firearm offences (excluding air weapons) in West Mercia police force area, 1997-98

	Total number of offences
1997-98	30

Table B: Firearm offences (excluding air weapons) in West Mercia police force area, 1998-99 to 2001-02<sup>1,2</sup>

	Total number of offences
1998-99	38
1999-2000	36
2000-01	41
2001-02	54

<sup>1</sup> The coverage was extended and counting rules revised from 1998/99. Figures from that date are not directly comparable with those for 1997-98.

<sup>2</sup> The data in this table are prior to the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard in April 2002. These figures are not directly comparable with those for later years.

Table C: Firearm offences (excluding air weapons) in West Mercia police force area, 2002-03 to 2008-09<sup>1</sup>

	Total number of offences
2002-03	48
2003-04	62
2004-05	151
2005-06	115
2006-07	58
2007-08	124
2008-09	79

<sup>1</sup> The data in this table take account of the introduction of the National Crime Recording Standard in April 2002. These figures are not directly comparable with those for earlier years.

Table D: Knife and sharp instrument offences recorded by West Mercia police for selected offences, 2007-08<sup>1</sup>

Offence category	Number of offences
Attempted murder	1
Wounding with intent to do GBH	43
Wounding or inflicting GBH without intent <sup>2</sup>	20
Robbery	80
Total of selected serious offences	144

<sup>1</sup> Other offences exist that are not shown in this table that may include the use of a knife or sharp instrument. In this table "offences involving a knife" refers to the use of a knife or sharp instrument. Total of selected serious offences only include the five offence types shown in this table.

<sup>2</sup> Includes racially or religiously aggravated wounding or inflicting GBH.

Table E: Knife and sharp instrument offences recorded by West Mercia police for selected offences, 2008-09<sup>1</sup>

Offence category	Number of offences
Attempted murder	5
Threats to kill	16
ABH and GBH <sup>2</sup>	137
Robbery	81
Rape and sexual assaults	1
Total of selected serious offences	242

<sup>1</sup> Other offences exist that are not shown in this table that may include the use of a knife or sharp instrument. In this table "offences involving a knife" refers to the use of a knife or sharp instrument. Total of selected serious offences only include the five offence types shown in this table. Collection expanded in 2008-09.

<sup>2</sup> Includes racially or religiously aggravated wounding or inflicting GBH.

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) knives and (b) firearms have been recovered by police in North Shropshire in each year since 1997. [325418]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** The requested data are not held centrally.

### Opposition

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has undertaken costings of the policies of the (a) Conservative Party and (b) Liberal Democrat Party at the request of Ministers or special advisers in the last 36 months. [324246]

**Mr. Woolas:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend, the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Sarah McCarthy-Fry) on 30 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1044W.

### Police

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his most recent estimate is of the proportion of police (a) time and (b) budget spent on tackling (i) gang related crimes, (ii) robbery, (iii) criminal damage and (iv) sexual offences. [317836]

**Alan Johnson:** Table A contains the percentages of police officer time spent on different activities for the financial year 2007-08 for England and Wales. To reduce paperwork burdens on police officers the collection of data about time spent by officers on police activities ceased after 2007-08 in response to the recommendations by Sir David Normington in his review of data burdens placed by the Government on the police service published in February 2009. Activities are grouped according to whether they are related to crime incidents, related to non-crime incidents (e.g. road traffic accidents), or not related to specific incidents. In this last case, these activities could be related to crime (e.g. prison interviews), or to general police duties and activities (e.g. training).

The Policing Green Paper published in July 2008 introduced a robust programme to reduce bureaucracy and free-up officer time. This is enabling frontline staff to focus on dealing with the public's priorities, as measured against the confidence target—now the only top-down target on forces.

Table A indicates that, in 2007-08, the police in England spent 32.7 per cent. of their time on all crime incident-specific activities, 14.6 per cent. of their time on all non-crime incident specific activities, and 52.7 per cent. of their time on activities which were not related to specific incidents (although some of this will be crime-related).

The comparative figures for Wales are 27.9 per cent., 20.7 per cent. and 51.5 per cent. respectively.

Overall, in 2007-08, police in England and Wales spent 32.5 per cent. of their time on all crime incident-specific activities, 14.9 per cent. of their time on all non-crime incident specific activities, and 52.7 per cent. of their time on activities which were not related to specific incidents.

For the specific offence groupings of robbery, criminal damage and sexual offending, the amount of time spent by the police in England and Wales in 2007-08 on incident-specific activities, as a proportion of total police time, was 2.2 per cent., 2.1 per cent. and 2.3 per cent. respectively. As a proportion of total crime incident-specific time, the figures were 6.7 per cent., 6.3 per cent. and 7.2 per cent. respectively. There is no category of 'gang-related crimes'.

Table B contains police spend on different activities for the financial year 2007-08. As before, crime and non-crime incident-specific activities are differentiated. The categorisation of non-incident specific activities is different in Table B from Table A, however. Table B does not include costs of activities such as training, which are instead treated as overheads and included in the costs of all other activities. Further, Table B separates out some activities which are undertaken by particular staff or roles (e.g. 'intelligence analysis and research')—these are not included in Table A, as activity analysis covered only police officers working on foot, car or beat patrol, CID and traffic duties. Note that costs in Table B do not include 'sustaining overheads' such as running costs for the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).

Table B indicates that for the financial year 2007-08 the police in England and Wales spent 34.9 per cent. of its total budget (excluding sustaining overheads) on crime incident-specific activities. For the same specific offence groupings of robbery, criminal damage and sexual offending, the amount of budget spent by the police in England and Wales in 2007-08 on incident-specific activities, as a proportion of total police budget (excluding sustaining overheads), was 2.0 per cent., 2.2 per cent. and 2.6 per cent. respectively. As a proportion of total crime incident-specific budget spending, the figures were 5.7 per cent., 6.3 per cent. and 7.4 per cent. respectively. As before, there is no category of 'gang-related crimes'.

By way of context, Table C provides proportions of crime incidents of different types alongside the proportion of time and budgetary spend on crime devoted to these incident types. Thus it can be seen that, in 2007-08, robbery accounted for 1.7 per cent. of crime incidents, and 6.7 per cent. and 5.7 per cent. of police time and budgetary spend respectively. Criminal damage accounted for 21 per cent. of crime incidents, and 6.3 per cent. of both police time and budget. Sexual offences accounted for 1.1 per cent. of crime incidents, and 7.2 per cent. and 7.4 per cent. of police time and budget respectively.

Table A: Police time by activity, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, 2007-08

Activity	Percentage of time		
	England	Wales	Total
<i>Dealing with crime incidents</i>			
Violence against the person—S20 and more serious	3.4	2.3	3.3
Violence against the person—S47 and less serious	4.0	4.2	4.0
Sexual offences	2.3	2.1	2.3
Burglary dwelling	2.8	2.8	2.8
Burglary—commercial and other	1.2	1.5	1.2
Robbery	2.2	0.9	2.2
Theft of or from motor vehicle	1.8	1.7	1.8
Deception/fraud	1.2	0.9	1.2
Theft other	3.3	3.0	3.3
Drugs offences	2.8	2.7	2.8
Criminal damage	2.0	3.2	2.1
Other crime	5.6	2.6	5.5
Total	32.7	27.9	32.5
<i>Dealing with non-crime incidents</i>			
RTA fatal/serious	1.0	0.9	1.0
RTA minor injury/damage	1.2	1.7	1.2
Traffic Other	2.4	3.8	2.5
Public disorder	1.9	2.8	2.0
Domestic dispute	2.1	2.4	2.2
Complaint/nuisance	0.9	2.5	1.0

Table A: Police time by activity, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, 2007-08

Activity	Percentage of time		
	England	Wales	Total
Prostitution	0.1	0.0	0.1
False alarms	0.1	0.3	0.2
Missing person	1.1	1.7	1.2
Sudden/suspicious death	0.6	1.2	0.6
Other non crime	3.0	3.3	3.1
Total	14.6	20.7	14.9
<i>Non-incident related</i>			
Visible Patrol	13.7	15.2	13.8
Court duties/escort	0.4	0.3	0.4
Special operations/events	1.9	1.6	1.8
Investigate complaints	0.2	0.2	0.2
Deal with informants	0.4	0.0	0.3
Community Involvement	1.3	1.3	1.3
Property inquiries	0.3	0.4	0.3
Non incident inquiries	1.5	1.6	1.5
Crime prevention activity	0.4	0.2	0.4
Prison interviews	0.1	0.0	0.1
Training	1.9	1.1	1.8
Briefings/meetings	6.6	7.2	6.6
Non incident linked paperwork	7.4	7.0	7.4
Other non incident related work	5.0	3.6	4.9
Staff development, appraisal, personnel-related	0.9	0.7	0.8
Monitoring cellblock PACE	0.3	0.2	0.3
Relief custody duties	0.4	0.8	0.4
Call handling/relief control room duties/enquiry desk	0.2	0.2	0.2
Checking paperwork (supervisory)	1.8	2.3	1.8
Budgetary/financial	0.1	0.1	0.1
ID parades	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other managerial/supervision	3.6	2.7	3.5
Refreshments	4.2	4.6	4.2
Waiting time	0.3	0.1	0.3
Total	52.7	51.5	52.7
Grand total	100.0	100.0	100.0

<sup>1</sup> Excludes Staffordshire, as this force did not submit AA data for 2007-08.Table B: Police spend by activity, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, 2007-08

Activity	Spend (£000)	Spend (percentage)
<i>Dealing with crime incidents</i>		
Violence against the person—S20 and more serious	395,906	4.50
Violence against the person—S47 and less serious	346,819	4.00
Sexual offences	226,678	2.60
Burglary dwelling	259,262	3.00
Burglary—commercial and other	130,232	1.50
Robbery	170,458	2.00
Theft of or from motor vehicle	195,493	2.20
Deception/fraud	130,792	1.50
Theft other	273,557	3.10
Drugs offences	271,550	3.10
Criminal damage	187,576	2.20
Other crime	452,835	5.20
Total	3,041,159	35
<i>Dealing with non-crime incidents</i>		
RTA fatal/serious	76,905	0.90
RTA minor injury/damage	105,163	1.20
Traffic Other	243,729	2.80
Public disorder	235,011	2.70

Table B: Police spend by activity, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, 2007-08

Activity	Spend (£000)	Spend (percentage)
Domestic dispute	175,446	2.00
Complaint/nuisance	99,671	1.10
Prostitution	7,876	0.10
False alarms	13,058	0.10
Missing person	112,040	1.30
Sudden/suspicious death	81,260	0.90
Other non crime	276,938	3.20
Total	1,427,097	16
<i>Non-incident related</i>		
Visible Patrol	1,207,838	13.80
Court duties/escort	35,643	0.40
Special operations/events	225,440	2.60
Deal with informants	39,985	0.50
Community Involvement	169,188	1.90
Property inquiries	32,032	0.40
Non incident inquiries	135,039	1.50
Crime prevention activity	64,865	0.70
Prison interviews	7,332	0.10
Role Code—National, international policing, CT and Special Branch	474,839	5.40
Role Code—Crime partnerships	90,021	1.00
Role Code—Maintaining and developing partnerships	35,687	0.40
Role Code—Intelligence Research and Analysis	368,101	4.20
Role Code—Prisoner handling/ custody	399,657	4.60
Role Code—Call handling/inquiry office	603,164	6.90
Role Code—Licensing	23,475	0.30
Role Code—Criminal Justice	273,753	3.10
Role Code—Police protection	21,014	0.20
Role Code—Family liaison	19,830	0.20
Role Code—Warrants	16,581	0.20
ID parades	9,698	0.10
Total	8,721,439	49
Grand total	4,253,184	100.00

<sup>1</sup> Excludes Staffordshire, as this force did not submit AA data for 2007-08.Table C: Proportions of crime incidents, crime incident-related activity and crime incident-related spend by crime type, England and Wales<sup>1</sup> 2007-08

Crime incident type	Percentage		
	Crime incidents	Time on crime incidents	Budget on crime incidents
Violence against the person—S20 and more serious	0.5	10.3	12.9
Violence against the person—S47 and less serious	18.8	12.4	11.5
Sexual offences	1.1	7.2	7.4
Burglary dwelling	5.7	8.6	8.6
Burglary—commercial and other	6.2	3.7	4.3
Robbery	1.7	6.7	5.7
Theft of or from motor vehicle	13.3	5.4	6.3
Deception/fraud	3.2	3.7	4.3
Theft other	22.3	10.1	8.9
Drugs offences	4.6	8.6	8.9
Criminal damage	21.0	6.3	6.3
Other crime	1.4	17.0	14.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

<sup>1</sup> Excludes Staffordshire, as this force did not submit AA data for 2007-08.

**Police: Bureaucracy**

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of police officer time was spent on each type of activity in (a) England and (b) Wales in the latest period for which figures are available. [319518]

**Alan Johnson:** Table A contains the percentages of police officer time spent on different activities for the financial year 2007-08 for England and Wales. To reduce paperwork burdens on police officers the collection of data about time spent by officers on police activities ceased after 2007-08 in response to the recommendations by Sir David Normington in his review of data burdens placed by the Government on the police service published in February 2009. Activities are grouped according to whether they are related to crime incidents, related to non-crime incidents (e.g. road traffic accidents), or not related to specific incidents. In this last case, these activities could be related to crime (e.g. prison interviews), or to general police duties and activities (e.g. training).

The Policing Green Paper published in July 2008 introduced a robust programme to reduce bureaucracy and free-up officer time. This is enabling front line staff to focus on dealing with the public's priorities, as measured against the confidence target—now the only top-down target on forces.

Table A indicates that, in 2007-08, the police in England spent 32.7 per cent. of their time on all crime incident-specific activities, 14.6 per cent. of their time on all non-crime incident specific activities, and 52.7 per cent. of their time on activities which were not related to specific incidents (although some of this will be crime-related).

The comparative figures for Wales are 27.9 per cent., 20.7 per cent. and 51.5 per cent. respectively.

Overall, in 2007-08, police in England and Wales spent 32.5 per cent. of their time on all crime incident-specific activities, 14.9 per cent. of their time on all non-crime incident specific activities, and 52.7 per cent. of their time on activities which were not related to specific incidents.

For the specific offence groupings of robbery, criminal damage and sexual offending, the amount of time spent by the police in England and Wales in 2007-08 on incident-specific activities, as a proportion of total police time, was 2.2 per cent., 2.1 per cent. and 2.3 per cent. respectively. As a proportion of total crime incident-specific time, the figures were 6.7 per cent., 6.3 per cent. and 7.2 per cent. respectively. There is no category of 'gang-related crimes'.

Table B contains police spend on different activities for the financial year 2007-08. As before, crime and non-crime incident-specific activities are differentiated. The categorisation of non-incident specific activities is different in Table B from Table A, however. Table B does not include costs of activities such as training, which are instead treated as overheads and included in the costs of all other activities. Further, Table B separates out some activities which are undertaken by particular staff or roles (e.g. 'intelligence analysis and research')—these are not included in Table A, as activity analysis covered only police officers working on foot, car or beat patrol, CID and traffic duties. Note that costs in Table B do not include 'sustaining overheads' such as running costs for the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).

Table B indicates that for the financial year 2007-08 the police in England and Wales spent 34.9 per cent. of its total budget (excluding sustaining overheads) on crime incident-specific activities. For the same specific offence groupings of robbery, criminal damage and sexual offending, the amount of budget spent by the police in England and Wales in 2007-08 on incident-specific activities, as a proportion of total police budget (excluding sustaining overheads), was 2.0 per cent., 2.2 per cent. and 2.6 per cent. respectively. As a proportion of total crime incident-specific budget spending, the figures were 5.7 per cent., 6.3 per cent. and 7.4 per cent. respectively. As before, there is no category of 'gang-related crimes'.

By way of context, Table C provides proportions of crime incidents of different types alongside the proportion of time and budgetary spend on crime devoted to these incident types. Thus it can be seen that, in 2007-08, robbery accounted for 1.7 per cent. of crime incidents, and 6.7 per cent. and 5.7 per cent. of police time and budgetary spend respectively. Criminal damage accounted for 21 per cent. of crime incidents, and 6.3 per cent. of both police time and budget. Sexual offences accounted for 1.1 per cent. of crime incidents, and 7.2 per cent. and 7.4 per cent. of police time and budget respectively.

Table A: Police time by activity, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, 2007-08

Activity	Percentage of time		
	England	Wales	Total
<i>Dealing with crime incidents</i>			
Violence against the person—S20 and more serious	3.4	2.3	3.3
Violence against the person—S47 and less serious	4.0	4.2	4.0
Sexual offences	2.3	2.1	2.3
Burglary dwelling	2.8	2.8	2.8
Burglary—commercial and other	1.2	1.5	1.2
Robbery	2.2	0.9	2.2
Theft of or from motor vehicle	1.8	1.7	1.8
Deception/fraud	1.2	0.9	1.2
Theft other	3.3	3.0	3.3
Drugs offences	2.8	2.7	2.8
Criminal damage	2.0	3.2	2.1
Other crime	5.6	2.6	5.5
	32.7	27.9	32.5
<i>Dealing with non-crime incidents</i>			
RTA fatal/serious	1.0	0.9	1.0
RTA minor injury/damage	1.2	1.7	1.2
Traffic Other	2.4	3.8	2.5
Public disorder	1.9	2.8	2.0
Domestic dispute	2.1	2.4	2.2
Complaint/nuisance	0.9	2.5	1.0
Prostitution	0.1	0.0	0.1
False alarms	0.1	0.3	0.2
Missing person	1.1	1.7	1.2
Sudden/suspicious death	0.6	1.2	0.6
Other non crime	3.0	3.3	3.1
	14.6	20.7	14.9
<i>Non-incident related</i>			
Visible patrol	13.7	15.2	13.8
Court duties/escort	0.4	0.3	0.4

Table A: Police time by activity, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, 2007-08

Activity	Percentage of time		
	England	Wales	Total
Special operations/events	1.9	1.6	1.8
Investigate complaints	0.2	0.2	0.2
Deal with informants	0.4	0.0	0.3
Community involvement	1.3	1.3	1.3
Property inquiries	0.3	0.4	0.3
Non incident inquiries	1.5	1.6	1.5
Crime prevention activity	0.4	0.2	0.4
Prison interviews	0.1	0.0	0.1
Training	1.9	1.1	1.8
Briefings/meetings	6.6	7.2	6.6
Non-incident linked paperwork	7.4	7.0	7.4
Other non-incident related work	5.0	3.6	4.9
Staff development, appraisal, personnel-related	0.9	0.7	0.8
Monitoring cellblock PACE	0.3	0.2	0.3
Relief custody duties	0.4	0.8	0.4
Call handling/relief control room duties/inquiry desk	0.2	0.2	0.2
Checking paperwork (supervisory)	1.8	2.3	1.8
Budgetary/financial	0.1	0.1	0.1
ID parades	0.1	0.1	0.1
Other managerial/supervision	3.6	2.7	3.5
Refreshments	4.2	4.6	4.2
Waiting time	0.3	0.1	0.3
	52.7	51.5	52.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

<sup>1</sup> Excludes Staffordshire, as this force did not submit AA data for 2007-08.

Table B: Police spend by activity, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, 2007-08

Activity	Spend (£000)	Spend (percentage)
<i>Dealing with crime incidents</i>		
Violence against the person—S20 and more serious	395,906	4.50
Violence against the person—S47 and less serious	346,819	4.00
Sexual offences	226,678	2.60
Burglary dwelling	259,262	3.00
Burglary—commercial and other	130,232	1.50
Robbery	170,458	2.00
Theft of or from motor vehicle	195,493	2.20
Deception/fraud	130,792	1.50
Theft other	273,557	3.10
Drugs offences	271,550	3.10
Criminal damage	187,576	2.20
Other crime	452,835	5.20
	3,041,159	35
<i>Dealing with non-crime incidents</i>		
RTA fatal/serious	76,905	0.90
RTA minor injury/damage	105,163	1.20
Traffic Other	243,729	2.80
Public disorder	235,011	2.70
Domestic dispute	175,446	2.00
Complaint/nuisance	99,671	1.10
Prostitution	7,876	0.10
False alarms	13,058	0.10
Missing person	112,040	1.30
Sudden/suspicious death	81,260	0.90
Other non-crime	276,938	3.20

Table B: Police spend by activity, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, 2007-08

Activity	Spend (£000)	Spend (percentage)
	1,427,097	16
<i>Non-incident related</i>		
Visible patrol	1,207,838	13.80
Court duties/escort	35,643	0.40
Special operations/events	225,440	2.60
Deal with informants	39,985	0.50
Community involvement	169,188	1.90
Property inquiries	32,032	0.40
Non incident inquiries	135,039	1.50
Crime prevention activity	64,865	0.70
Prison interviews	7,332	0.10
Role Code—National, international policing, CT and Special Branch	474,839	5.40
Role Code—Crime partnerships	90,021	1.00
Role Code—Maintaining and developing partnerships	35,687	0.40
Role Code—Intelligence Research and Analysis	368,101	4.20
Role Code—Prisoner handling/custody	399,657	4.60
Role Code—Call handling/inquiry office	603,164	6.90
Role Code—Licensing	23,475	0.30
Role Code—Criminal justice	273,753	3.10
Role Code—Police protection	21,014	0.20
Role Code—Family liaison	19,830	0.20
Role Code—Warrants	16,581	0.20
ID parades	9,698	0.10
	4,253,184	49
Total	8,721,439	100.00

<sup>1</sup> Excludes Staffordshire, as this force did not submit AA data for 2007-08.

Table C: Proportions of crime incidents, crime incident-related activity and crime incident-related spend by crime type, England and Wales<sup>1</sup>, 2007-08

Crime incident type	Crime incidents	Time on crime incidents	Percentage Budget on crime incidents
Violence against the person—S20 and more serious	0.5	10.3	12.9
Violence against the person—S47 and less serious	18.8	12.4	11.5
Sexual offences	1.1	7.2	7.4
Burglary dwelling	5.7	8.6	8.6
Burglary—commercial and other	6.2	3.7	4.3
Robbery	1.7	6.7	5.7
Theft of or from motor vehicle	13.3	5.4	6.3
Deception/fraud	3.2	3.7	4.3
Theft other	22.3	10.1	8.9
Drugs offences	4.6	8.6	8.9
Criminal damage	21.0	6.3	6.3
Other crime	1.4	17.0	14.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

<sup>1</sup> Excludes Staffordshire, as this force did not submit AA data for 2007-08.

**Chris Grayling:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of police officer time was spent on front-line policing in each year since 1997. [319521]

**Alan Johnson:** For the period 2003-04 to 2007-08, the front-line policing measure assesses time spent by police officers on core policing duties such as patrol and

responding to 999 calls. They also include activities of CID and specialist officers, who, while not always visible to the public, are nonetheless carrying out core policing duties.

The estimates by year are as follows: 2003-04, 63.6 per cent.; 2004-05, 62.3 per cent.; 2005-06, 63.6 per cent.; 2006-07, 64.2 per cent.; 2007-08, 64.9 per cent. Data for Staffordshire are not available for 2007-08 and these figures therefore exclude Staffordshire.

The Policing Green Paper published in July 2008 introduced a robust programme to reduce bureaucracy and free-up officer time. This is enabling frontline staff to focus on dealing with the public's priorities, as measured against the confidence target—now the only top-down target on forces. As recommended by Sir David Normington in his review of data burdens placed by the Government on the police service, the collection of data about time spent by officers on police activities ceased after 2007-08.

On 18 March 2010 HM Inspectorate of Constabulary published Value for Money Profiles for the 43 forces in England and Wales. Explanatory material accompanying the profiles contains an overall analysis of the police workforce as at 31 March 2009 which shows the proportion by function as:

*Aiding the public 47 per cent.*

Working in the community 36 per cent.

Policing roads 4 per cent.

Taking 999 calls and tasking (control room) 7 per cent.

*Dealing with criminals 31 per cent.*

Investigating crime (for example CID) 13 per cent.

Specialist functions (such as air support, firearms, dogs) 4 per cent.

Gathering intelligence 4 per cent.

Processing forensic evidence 2 per cent.

Preparing cases for court (criminal justice) 5 per cent.

Holding people in custody 3 per cent.

*Helping to support 22 per cent.*

Operational Support (including planning, estates, vehicles) 8 per cent.

Business Support (including HR, finance, IT) 11 per cent.

Training 2 per cent.

Other (such as catering and stores/supplies) 1 per cent.

*Note:*

These figures relate to the breakdown of all police personnel by function. They therefore include police staff as well as officers.

**Police: Council Tax**

**Mr. Dunne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average Band D police precept on council tax bills in (a) England, (b) England and Wales and (c) each individual police authority (i) was in 1997-98 and (ii) will be in 2010-11 in (A) cash terms and (B) real terms in 2010 prices. [325322]

**Mr. Hanson:** The information available is in the following table.

Police Authority	Precept (Band D) 1997-98		£
	Cash	Real	Precept (Band D) 2010-11 Cash=real terms
Avon and Somerset	52.04	70.46	168.03
Bedfordshire	52.51	71.10	144.77
Cambridgeshire	51.03	69.10	169.56
Cheshire	51.16	69.27	144.53
Cleveland	54.87	74.29	187.84
Cumbria	58.20	78.80	193.89
Derbyshire	51.31	69.47	163.74
Devon and Cornwall	49.79	67.42	156.60
Dorset	63.59	86.10	180.00
Durham	52.20	70.68	153.41
Essex	54.09	73.24	132.12
Gloucestershire	51.17	69.28	199.69
Greater Manchester	54.10	73.25	144.33
Hampshire	51.75	70.07	146.25
Hertfordshire	51.51	69.75	147.82
Humberside	52.47	71.04	166.47
Kent	51.59	69.85	138.68
Lancashire	53.25	72.10	146.27
Leicestershire	52.26	70.76	169.63
Lincolnshire	69.03	93.47	179.28
Metropolitan	63.27	85.67	216.83
Merseyside	66.87	90.54	146.23
Norfolk	50.58	68.49	191.16
North Yorkshire	49.72	67.32	204.55
Northamptonshire	70.56	95.54	193.20
Northumbria	52.73	71.40	83.68
Nottinghamshire	49.78	67.40	160.11
South Yorkshire	53.29	72.16	132.33
Staffordshire	54.74	74.12	177.61
Suffolk	51.39	69.58	160.74
Surrey	44.64	60.44	198.54
Sussex	51.66	69.95	138.42
Thames Valley	52.79	71.48	154.30
Warwickshire	52.24	70.73	174.10
West Mercia	50.87	68.88	178.72
West Midlands	53.20	72.03	99.45
West Yorkshire	53.17	71.99	130.50
Wiltshire	55.22	74.77	157.77
Dyfed Powys	48.42	65.56	181.44
Gwent	49.10	66.48	181.38
North Wales	48.52	65.70	201.33
South Wales	49.22	66.64	153.67
England Average	54.07	73.21	161.35
England and Wales Average	53.57	72.53	163.07

*Sources:*

1. English Police Authorities—DCLG
2. Welsh Police Authorities—WAG

The averages calculated here are the averages of the precepts displayed above.

**Rape**

**Mr. Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps the Government is taking to counter inaccurate perceptions of (a) the number of falsely-reported rapes and (b) individual responsibility for the crime of rape. [321382]

**Mr. Alan Campbell:** The information is as follows:

(a) MOJ and HO are considering the recommendation set out in Baroness Stern's independent review on this issue and will publish a full response to the review later this year.

The Government are working with police and CPS to ensure that every victim has the confidence to report. Guidance on Investigating and Prosecuting Rape published in June 2009 by NPIA states that officers should assume victim reports are accurate unless evidence proves otherwise. Joint ACPO/CPS support team visits will have been made to every force to support the implementation of this guidance by March 2010.

(b) The Government recently launched a new advertising campaign to challenge teenagers' attitudes to violence and abuse in relationships. The campaign is the first part of a communications strategy announced in the Together We Can End Violence Against Women and Girls strategy. This can be viewed at the campaign website:

<http://thisisabuse.direct.gov.uk/>

A number of local areas run local campaigns to challenge attitudes on rape and in particular, those around consent. The Home Office has contributed to the cost of these campaigns, most recently, the Greater Manchester police awareness campaign "No Consent, No Sex" TV campaign in December 2009.

### Shropshire

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many times he has visited

Shropshire in an official capacity in the last 12 months. [325415]

**Alan Johnson:** In the last 12 months I have not visited Shropshire in an official capacity.

### Stop and Search

**Keith Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many stop and search procedures were performed on members of each ethnic minority in each of the last five years; [323485]

(2) how many stop and search procedures were performed (a) by Leicestershire Police, (b) by officers of police authorities in the East Midlands and (c) in England in each of the last five years; [323486]

(3) how many stop and search procedures were performed on people in each age group in each of the last five years. [323487]

**Mr. Hanson:** Data on stop and search procedures performed by ethnic appearance in each of the last five years can be found in table 1.

Data on stop and search procedures performed (a) by Leicestershire police, (b) by officers of police authorities in the East Midlands and (c) in England in each of the last five years can be found in table 2.

The stop and searches collection held by the Home Office does not breakdown stop and search procedures by age group.

Table 1: Stop and search procedures performed, under sections 1, 60, 44(1) and 44(2), by ethnic appearance

2007-08					
Main	Searches of persons under section 1—general	Searches of persons in anticipation of violence under section 60	Searches of vehicles and occupants under section 44(1)	Searches of persons in order to prevent acts of terrorism under section 44(2)	Total
White	738,505	35,973	42,006	31,961	848,445
Black	172,393	11,837	8,753	6,465	199,448
Asian	89,781	4,125	10,878	9,890	114,674
Other	17,755	433	2,773	3,154	24,115
Not Recorded	17,004	757	807	591	19,159
Vehicle Only Searched	10,485	125	7,409	—	18,019
Total	1,045,923	53,250	72,626	52,061	1,223,860
2006-07					
Main	Searches of persons under section 1—general	Searches of persons in anticipation of violence under section 60	Searches of vehicles and occupants under section 44(1)	Searches of persons in order to prevent acts of terrorism under section 44(2)	Total
White	690,643	25,520	16,878	9,695	742,736
Black	152,120	13,219	2,412	1,230	168,981
Asian	77,421	4,522	3,127	2,438	87,508
Other	14,755	618	756	909	17,038
Not Recorded	20,174	780	312	206	21,472
Vehicle Only Searched	7,784	48	4,871	—	12,703
Total	962,897	44,707	28,356	14,478	1,050,438
2005-06					
Main	Searches of persons under section 1—general	Searches of persons in anticipation of violence under section 60	Searches of vehicles and occupants under section 44(1)	Searches of persons in order to prevent acts of terrorism under section 44(2)	Total
White	629,624	22,702	19,187	11,650	683,163
Black	133,769	7,199	2,046	2,110	145,124

2005-06					
<i>Main</i>	<i>Searches of persons under section 1—general</i>	<i>Searches of persons in anticipation of violence under section 60</i>	<i>Searches of vehicles and occupants under section 44(1)</i>	<i>Searches of persons in order to prevent acts of terrorism under section 44(2)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Asian	68,173	4,856	2,809	3,994	79,832
Other	13,967	594	944	994	16,499
Not Recorded	32,620	897	493	316	34,326
Vehicle Only Searched	10,522	28	5,504	—	16,054
Total	888,675	36,276	30,983	19,064	974,998

  

2004-05					
<i>Main</i>	<i>Searches of persons under section 1—general<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Searches of persons in anticipation of violence under section 60</i>	<i>Searches of vehicles and occupants under section 44(1)</i>	<i>Searches of persons in order to prevent acts of terrorism under section 44(2)</i>	<i>Total</i>
White	16,383	23,405	17,337	7,456	64,581
Black	180	9,926	2,113	631	12,850
Asian	96	6,858	2,659	1,047	10,660
Other	295	810	842	587	2,534
Not Recorded	4,047	576	402	146	5,171
Vehicle Only Searched	95	36	3,793	—	3,924
Total	861,494	41,611	27,146	9,867	940,118

  

2003-04					
<i>Main</i>	<i>Searches of persons under section 1—general</i>	<i>Searches of persons in anticipation of violence under section 60</i>	<i>Searches of vehicles and occupants under section 44(1)</i>	<i>Searches of persons in order to prevent acts of terrorism under section 44(2)</i>	<i>Total</i>
White	547,369	23,868	14,806	5,840	591,883
Black	108,208	9,385	2,146	558	120,297
Asian	53,794	5,627	2,571	1,097	63,089
Other	10,796	688	904	418	12,806
Not Recorded	16,552	625	867	209	18,253
Vehicle Only Searched	12,725	243	4,396	10	17,374
Total	749,444	40,436	25,690	8,132	74,258

<sup>1</sup>—Data not broken down by vehicle only search

<sup>1</sup> Data for searches of person under section 1—general has been estimated

Table 2: Stop and search procedures performed in Leicestershire, East Midlands and England, under sections 1, 60, 44(1) and 44(2)

2007-08					
<i>Police force area</i>	<i>Searches of persons under section 1—general</i>	<i>Searches of persons in anticipation of violence under section 60</i>	<i>Searches of vehicles and occupants under section 44(1)</i>	<i>Searches of persons in order to prevent acts of terrorism under section 44(2)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Leicestershire	24,181	837	4	5	25,027
East Midlands Region	64,905	1,522	8	5	66,440
England	1,004,004	52,592	59,697	51,630	1,177,923

  

2006-07					
<i>Police force area</i>	<i>Searches of persons under section 1—general</i>	<i>Searches of persons in anticipation of violence under section 60</i>	<i>Searches of vehicles and occupants under section 44(1)</i>	<i>Searches of persons in order to prevent acts of terrorism under section 44(2)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Leicestershire	21,849	744	—	2	22,595
East Midlands Region	61,508	2,339	5	4	63,856
England	919,816	44,458	24,878	12,701	1,001,853

  

2005-06					
<i>Police force area</i>	<i>Searches of persons under section 1—general</i>	<i>Searches of persons in anticipation of violence under section 60</i>	<i>Searches of vehicles and occupants under section 44(1)</i>	<i>Searches of persons in order to prevent acts of terrorism under section 44(2)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Leicestershire	17,923	1,039	1	27	18,990
East Midlands Region	52,904	2,317	11	223	55,455
England	848,400	35,596	28,861	18,781	931,638

2004-05					
<i>Police force area</i>	<i>Searches of persons under section 1—general</i>	<i>Searches of persons in anticipation of violence under section 60</i>	<i>Searches of vehicles and occupants under section 44(1)</i>	<i>Searches of persons in order to prevent acts of terrorism under section 44(2)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Leicestershire	15,350	583	0	0	15,933
East Midlands Region	44,958	1,266	0	0	46,224
England	811,300	40,783	23,731	10,209	886,023

  

2003-04					
<i>Police force area</i>	<i>Searches of persons under section 1—general</i>	<i>Searches of persons in anticipation of violence under section 60</i>	<i>Searches of vehicles and occupants under section 44(1)</i>	<i>Searches of persons in order to prevent acts of terrorism under section 44(2)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Leicestershire	12,523	1,005	7	2	13,537
East Midlands Region	38,585	1,384	7	2	39,978
England	710,826	40,409	25,118	7,501	783,854

### Stop and Search: Shropshire

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been (a) stopped and (b) searched under the provisions of section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000 in North Shropshire in each month of the last five years. [325421]

**Mr. Hanson:** The Home Office does not hold statistics which are recorded in this way. The Home Office does collate statistics on the number of terrorism arrests and convictions and these are included in a Bulletin published for the first time on 13 May 2009 (Statistics on Terrorism Arrests and Outcomes Great Britain 11 September 2001 to 31 March 2008).

The second issue of the Bulletin was published on 26 November 2009 and, unlike the first edition, includes data on stop/searches under Section 44 of the Terrorism Act 2000. The bulletin is available via the following link:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb1809.pdf>

The third issue of this bulletin was published on 25 February 2010 and is available via the following link:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs10/hosb0410.pdf>

In addition to the above bulletins, the Home Office publishes Statistics on Police Powers and Procedures, which includes a force by force breakdown of stop/searches under Section 44. The last edition of that bulletin (covering 2007-08) is available via the following link:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs09/hosb0709.pdf>

The next edition of this bulletin (covering 2008-09) is scheduled to be published before the end of April 2010. Links to the bulletins covering the four years up to 2007-08 are included in the following:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/arrests-recorded-crime-engl-wales-2006-07-b.pdf>

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/arrests-for-recorded-crime-england-and-wales.pdf>

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/hosb2105.pdf>

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hosb1804.pdf>

### War Crimes

**Mr. Crabb:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there are plans to establish a specialist war crimes unit in the Metropolitan police. [323060]

**Mr. Hanson:** Arrangements already exist within the Metropolitan police service for dealing with allegations of war crimes in liaison with the Crown Prosecution Service, UKBA and other agencies as appropriate. These arrangements remain under review to ensure that they continue to be effective.

## BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

### Aviation: Treaties

**Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills when he expects to ratify the air protocol to the 2001 Cape Town Convention. [325045]

**Ian Lucas:** The UK played an active role in negotiations regarding the Cape Town Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment and the Protocol on Matters Specific to Aircraft Equipment at the 2001 Diplomatic Conference held in Cape Town, South Africa. The UK is committed to its ratification, and will be issuing a Call for Evidence seeking stakeholder views on this matter in the near future.

### Departmental Official Hospitality

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what the five most expensive hospitality events hosted by his Department and its agencies were in the last three years; and what the (a) cost and (b) purpose was of each. [324412]

**Mr. McFadden [holding answer 25 March 2010]:** Events organised by the Department cover such matters as business summits, trade missions, conferences concerning EU issues and so on, where hospitality is not the only, or even the main cost. Often, the costs of such events are shared with other organisations. It is not possible to disaggregate the BIS hospitality costs of these events except at disproportionate cost.

I have approached the chief executives of the Insolvency Service, Companies House, the National Measurement Office and the Intellectual Property Office and they will respond to the hon. Member directly.

*Letter from John Alty, dated 26 March 2010:*

I am responding in respect of the Intellectual Property Office to your Parliamentary Question tabled 22nd March 2010, to the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

The Intellectual Property Office does not generally host hospitality events, although it runs a number of outreach events and seminars on Intellectual Property issues. The Office has on occasion hosted launch events on specific issues. These include:

- Artist Resale Rights: £625
- Lambert Tool Kit: £2,495
- IP Crime Report: £5,072
- World IP day '09: £3,210
- World IP day '08: £9,375

*Letter from Peter Mason, dated 26 March 2010:*

I am responding in respect of the National Measurement Office (NMO) to your Parliamentary Question asking the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the cost and purpose of the five most expensive hospitality events in the last three years.

The five most expensive hospitality events hosted by the National Measurement Office in the last three years were:

- 1) A networking event to discuss reform of Weights and Measures regulations in line with Hampton principles held in London. Cost £6,024.30 in March 2008.
- 2) A networking event to discuss reform of Weights and Measures regulations in line with Hampton principles held in London. Cost £5,824.99 in January 2008. This was in addition to the above as it involved a different sector of stakeholders.
- 3) A metrology seminar in Birmingham at a cost of £5,820.45. This took place in November 2009.
- 4) A chemical and biological metrology seminar held in London at a cost of £5,328.67. This took place in November 2009.
- 5) A metrology seminar in Birmingham at a cost of £4,941.82. This took place in November 2008

*Letter from Gareth Jones, dated 25 March 2010:*

I am replying on behalf of Companies House to your Parliamentary Question tabled 22 March 2010, UIN 324412, to the Minister of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Companies House does not host hospitality events.

*Letter from Stephen Speed, dated 26 March 2010:*

The Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has asked me to reply to your question, to list the five most expensive hospitality events hosted by his Department and its agencies in the last three years; and what the (a) cost and (b) purpose was of each.

The Insolvency Service hosted a reception for its stakeholders in December 2007 at a cost of £4,177. This was attended principally by insolvency practitioners, members of the judiciary and people working in the debt advice sector (both commercial and charitable).

In April 2009, The Service held an internal ceremony to present awards to members of its staff who had obtained an award under one of The Service's bespoke qualification programmes. This work-related event was also attended by members of the awarding body, Nottingham Trent University, and some external training partners, 12 individuals in total. The cost of the refreshments provided to those attending from outside The Service was £640.

In October 2009, The Service held a half-day conference for stakeholders concerning its project to modernise the Insolvency Rules 1986. Refreshments were provided for the delegates at the end of the conference at a cost of £962.

### Easter

**Mr. Greg Knight:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent consideration the Secretary of State has given to bringing into force the provisions of the Easter Act 1928 which fix the date of Easter; and if he will make a statement. [325707]

**Mr. McFadden:** The Easter Act 1928 remains on the statute book but the Act requires that before a draft order is laid before Parliament:

"regard shall be had to any opinion officially expressed by any Church or other Christian Body."

There are no plans to implement the provisions of the Act.

### Employment Agencies: EU Law

**Paul Rowen:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what guidance his Department plans to provide on (a) the steps an agency must undertake to establish the parameters for equal treatment from an end-user of agency workers under the Agency Worker Regulations 2010, (b) the extent to which measures undertaken by an agency to ascertain the information needed to provide equal treatment will be considered reasonable steps under section 14(3)(a) of the Regulations and (c) safeguards for agencies from unreasonable liability where an end-user of agency workers does not accurately provide the information required to determine equal treatment under the Regulations or attempts to indemnify against such liability. [325384]

**Mr. McFadden:** The Government fully understand the importance of providing clear, comprehensive guidance on the agency workers regulations prior to their entry into force. This will be drawn up in consultation with stakeholders and will address these and other issues.

**Paul Rowen:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what plans he has to monitor the effects of the Agency Worker Regulations 2010 on the agency worker industry once they have entered into force. [325385]

**Mr. McFadden:** The Government are committed to post-implementation review (PIR) of new legislation in line with better regulation principles. The PIR would be used to identify whether the policy change is achieving the desired results. In the case of the agency workers regulations, a post implementation review is planned for 2013. It is expected that this will feed into the overall review of the Agency Workers Directive that the European Commission is required to carry out by December of that year by virtue of article 12.

### Further Education: Finance

**Justine Greening:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills with reference to the Learning and Skills Council news release of 9 February 2010, entitled Learning and Skills Council Honours Commitment to Help Colleges with Financial Problems, which of the 41 colleges to receive funding from the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) are in London; which colleges in (a) England and (b) London were identified by the LSC as facing financial difficulty as a direct result of aborted capital spending; what assessment has been made of the extent of the financial difficulty faced by such colleges in (i) England and (ii) London; and how much funding will be provided to each college. [325568]

**Kevin Brennan:** The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) is committed to ensuring that no college experiences financial difficulty as a result of decisions taken on capital. As a result the LSC has now paid all contractual obligations and has granted £43 million in additional support to 42 colleges identified as experiencing or anticipating serious financial problems as a result of the programme. The LSC will continue to work with the sector to ensure that no further colleges get into financial difficulty as a result of developing a capital proposal. I am unable to provide financial details relating to individual colleges as they are commercially sensitive to the colleges involved.

#### Licensing Laws: Music

**Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many licensees of (a) pubs, (b) restaurants and (c) bars (i) applied for and (ii) were (A) granted and (B) refused licences to perform live music in (1) Montgomeryshire and (2) England in each year since 2007; and if he will make a statement. [325153]

**Mr. Sutcliffe:** I have been asked to reply.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport does not collate data specifically on premises licence applications for the provision of live music, and does not collate data by premises type. This is because the Licensing Act 2003 defines activities not premises type.

The number of premises licences with live music provisions in the Licensing Authority of Powys was 505 on 31 March 2007, 528 on 31 March 2008 and 559 on 31 March 2009.

The estimated total premises licences with live music provisions in England and Wales was 75,200 on 31 March 2007, 79,800 on 31 March 2008 and 83,600 on 31 March 2009.

**Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills how many applications to vary licences for the provision of regulated entertainment in (a) pubs, (b) restaurants and (c) bars have been made in each year since 2007; and if he will make a statement. [325155]

**Mr. Sutcliffe:** I have been asked to reply.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport does not collate data specifically on applications to vary licences for the provision of regulated entertainment and does not collate data by premises type. This is because the Licensing Act defines activities not premises type.

The total number of applications to vary a premises licence in England and Wales is shown in the table.

Financial year	Number of applications to vary premises licences	Number granted	Licensing authorities responding to the question (percentage)
2006/07	9,534	9,050	80
2007/08	11,114	10,642	95
2008/09	7,473	7,004	97

#### Opposition

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills whether his Department has undertaken costings of the policies of (a) the Conservative Party and (b) the Liberal Democrat Party at the request of Ministers or special advisers in the last 36 months. [324400]

**Mr. McFadden:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him by my hon. Friend the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury on 30 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1044W.

#### Optics: Technology

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills whether the Hauser review of the current and future role of technology and innovation centres in the UK considered the establishment and development of the Optic centre at St. Asaph Business Park. [325393]

**Mr. Lammy:** The Hauser review was not established with a view to identifying and prioritising centres that should receive support in the future and as such no assessment has been made of the Optic centre at St. Asaph Business Park. However, the report and recommendations provide a broad framework for future investment in technology and innovation centres. My noble Friend the Secretary of State has accepted these recommendations and has commissioned the Technology Strategy Board to work with industry, stakeholders, and wider government on how to implement the recommendations in the Hauser review and to report back by the pre-Budget report on the process, priority areas, scale of investment required and governance structure.

#### Student Loans Company: Redundancy

**Mr. Carmichael:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what discussions he has had with officials from the Student Loans Company regarding the redundancies at the company's Glasgow offices announced in January 2010. [324237]

**Mr. Lammy:** The Student Loans Company (SLC) is a non-departmental public body and decisions about staffing matters are for the company and its board. The chairman and senior executives of the company have discussions regularly with Ministers about the service the company provides for its customers. I was told by the chair of the SLC on 26 January 2010 that the company intended to announce its restructuring on the following day; and attended a meeting requested by the SLC branch of the Public and Commercial Services trade union on January 26.

#### UK Space Agency

**Adam Afriyie:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate he has made of (a) the number of officials at each pay band and (b) the administration costs of the UK Space Agency in 2010-11. [324901]

**Mr. Lammy:** The final staffing structure will be completed only when all discussions on post transfers are finalised. The current estimate of full-time equivalents translated to BIS grades is:

	Number
SCS	4
Grade 6/7	18.5
SEO/HEO/EO/AO	18.25

The above remains an estimate pending final agreement. Back office support for HR, finance and grants will be contracted from one or more of the existing partners.

The estimated administration costs, including staff costs for 2010/11 will be £3.2 million plus the back office function costs, which are funded by existing partners and the necessary transfers are still in negotiation.

There will be no increase in BNSC costs.

**Adam Afriyie:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what the remit of the UK Space Agency is; when he plans to appoint a Space Agency director; what resources he has allocated to the Space Agency in (a) 2009-10 and (b) each of the next three financial years; and from which existing budgets such resources will be drawn. [324902]

**Mr. Lammy:** The remit of the United Kingdom Space Agency is to manage UK Government civil space programmes as an executive agency. The agency will also represent the UK in European and international forums. Dr David Williams, the Director General of the British National Space Centre (BNSC), will be the acting CEO from 1 April 2010.

A competition will be held to fill the new post of CEO for the UK Space Agency later this year. The agency will begin its role from 1 April 2010, so all 2009/10 budgets resided with existing BNSC partners and not the agency.

In 2010/11 the estimated budget is £230 million, but this is subject to final negotiations with existing BNSC partners.

The resources for 2010/11 will be drawn from programmes in BIS, the Technology Strategy Board, the Natural Environment Research Council, the Science and Technology Facilities Council, DEFRA, DfT and MOD.

Budgets beyond 2010/11 have not yet been set.

**Adam Afriyie:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills what the cost of launching the UK Space Agency was; and what the cost of developing the Agency's (a) website and (b) logo was. [324903]

**Mr. Lammy:** The direct cost of creating the new UK Space Agency and re-branding the British National Space Centre is £46,500, relating to the launch event itself—note that this event also included the launch of the Government response to the Space IGT—the development of the logo, the protection of trademarks on the name and logo within the UK, and the website revamp. Of this £46,500, £1,000 was to revamp the website for its launch by 1 April, and £18,000 was for the logo design and its protection.

**Adam Afriyie:** To ask the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills whether his Department commissioned external organisations to assist with the launch of the UK Space Agency. [325459]

**Mr. Lammy:** Yes, the Department for Business Innovation and Skills commissioned external organisations to assist with the launch of the UK Space Agency. These organisations helped handle interview requests from national, regional and trade media; and also captured video and photos of the event which will be used in future publications and online.

## TREASURY

### Council Tax

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Glenrothes of 20 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 391W, on council tax, whether his Department has estimated the cost of a council tax freeze in (a) year one and (b) year two taking into account council tax benefit savings; [324496]

(2) pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Chorley of 26 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 673, on council tax, what estimate he has made of the cost of a council tax freeze in England net of savings from council tax benefit payments. [324817]

**Mr. Byrne:** The estimates referred to on 20 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 391W, and 26 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 673, are the cost to central Government of providing every council in England with top-up funding to compensate for freezing council tax for two years. This costing considered only the direct costs of providing a top-up, assumed to be equivalent to a 2.5 per cent. increase in band D bills in England.

The impact on council tax benefit of a two-year freeze on council tax has not been estimated.

### Council Tax: Valuation

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the Valuation Office Agency's Council Tax Revaluation 2007 Programme Board minutes of 22 November 2005, what the purpose and function is of Project 1.5; and what enhancements it has made to Project 1. [324119]

**Ian Pearson:** The purpose and function of Project 1.5 was to deliver a series of enhancements to Project 1. These enhancements did not alter the fundamental operation of the Automated Valuation Model (AVM) system but were a refinement of processes within, and outputs from, the system, together with the generation of additional management reports.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the Valuation Office Agency's Council Tax Revaluation 2007 Programme Board minutes of 31 March 2003, paragraph 1.05, if he will place in the Library a copy of the Council Tax Revaluation 2007 Project Timetable. [324122]

**Ian Pearson:** The minutes refer to 'the "Council Tax Revaluation 2007 Project Timetable" (V01 14/03/2003)'.

This timetable was for initial scoping activity and is headed "Proof of Concept". A copy of the document is being placed in the Library.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the Valuation Office Agency's Council Tax revaluation 2007 Programme Board minutes of 22 November 2005, if he will place in the Library a copy of each of the Programme Closure documents PRMP-12, PRMP-37 and PRMP-38, redacting the names of junior civil servants. [324162]

**Ian Pearson:** Copies of these documents will be placed in the Library.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which opinion research company conducted the People's Panel research for the Valuation Office Agency's Council Tax Revaluation 2007 Programme; what reports they produced; and what the cost was of that research. [324163]

**Ian Pearson:** ORC International conducted the People's Panel research work at a cost of £75,968. Two reports were produced, one presenting the output of focus groups and the other presenting that of in-depth interviews conducted with a sample of council taxpayers.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the Valuation Office Agency's Council Tax Revaluation 2007 Programme Board minutes of 20 January 2004, paragraph 3, if he will place in the Library a copy of the results of the Omnibus survey. [324164]

**Ian Pearson:** A copy of the results of the Valuation Office Agency's (VOA) Council Tax Omnibus Survey 2004 has been placed in the Library.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the Valuation Office Agency's Council Tax Revaluation 2007 Programme Board minutes of 17 February 2004, paragraph 5, if he will place in the Library a copy of the (a) presentation from the Welsh office of the Valuation Office Agency and (b) paper from statisticians. [324166]

**Ian Pearson:** The papers requested are not held by the Valuation Office Agency.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the Valuation Office Agency's Council Tax Revaluation 2007 Programme Board minutes of 24 May 2004, paragraph 3, if he will place in the Library a copy of Handout 1 and Handout 2. [324167]

**Ian Pearson:** Copies of these documents will be placed in the Library.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the Valuation Office Agency's Council Tax Revaluation 2007 Programme Board minutes of 23 November 2004, paragraph 7, if he will place in the Library a copy of the revised version of the Benefits Analysis document. [324171]

**Ian Pearson:** A copy of this document will be placed in the Library.

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the Valuation Office Agency's Council Tax Revaluation 2007 Programme Board minutes of 19 October 2004, paragraph 3.10, if he will place in the Library a copy of the presentation on the insight to automated valuation model estimates; and in which areas the mini-revaluations took place. [324319]

**Ian Pearson:** This presentation was a live demonstration of emerging test modelling outputs and outcomes. As such there is no presentation that can be placed in the Library.

Prior to the postponement of the 2007 Council Tax Revaluation in England, 'Mini Revaluation' (later known as Test Modelling) exercises were carried out, in order to test and refine the automated valuation model, in the following billing authority areas:

Barrow-in-Furness  
Birmingham  
Blackpool  
Bradford  
Brighton and Hove  
Bristol  
Camden  
Canterbury  
Colchester  
Derby  
Ellesmere Port and Neston  
Enfield  
Gosport  
Greenwich  
Hillingdon  
Ipswich  
Kettering  
Liverpool  
Milton Keynes  
Newham  
North Tyneside  
Oldham  
Restormel  
Rotherham  
Sefton  
South Ribble  
Stockport  
Stroud  
Sutton  
Tamworth  
Tonbridge and Malling  
Tower Hamlets  
Wandsworth  
Watford  
West Berkshire  
West Lindsey

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the Valuation Office Agency's Council Tax Revaluation 2007 Programme Board minutes of 25 May 2005, if he will place in the Library a copy of the paper presenting the case for the acquisition of Rightmove data. [324365]

**Ian Pearson:** A copy of this document, with commercially sensitive information redacted, will be placed in the Library.

### Departmental Contracts

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will issue guidance on his Department's policy on the relocation offshore of departmental jobs to companies bidding for contracts let by his Department. [324792]

**Mr. Byrne:** I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Government's written evidence to the Treasury Sub-Committee's inquiry into Estate Management in the Chancellor's Departments, HC 852-i 2007-08, Ev 37.

### Departmental Energy

**Gregory Barker:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate the Office of Government Commerce has made of the extent of the use of (a) voltage optimisers and (b) equivalent technologies within buildings occupied by (i) central Government Departments and (ii) the Government estate since the publication of the Delivery Plan for Sustainable Procurement and Operations on the Government Estate. [324953]

**Ian Pearson** [*holding answer 29 March 2010*]: The Office of Government Commerce recommends reducing the voltage of supplied electricity, including voltage optimisation to central Government Departments as one means to achieving the target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions by 12.5 per cent. by 2010-11.

Government hold data on voltage reduction, however, the element of voltage optimisation is not disaggregated within this.

Two Departments are already making use of a framework agreement for voltage reduction and/or optimisation technology and we estimate that a further seven Departments and wider Members of the Government estate are planning usage of improving voltage supply technologies in their buildings across the Government estate.

### Departmental Marketing

**Mr. Syms:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Ruislip Northwood of 5 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 103W, on departmental marketing, how much (a) his Department, (b) its agencies, (c) HM Revenue and Customs and (d) the Valuation Office Agency have spent on advertising, marketing, public relations and publicity in relation to the (i) Real Help Now and (ii) Building Britain's Future themed campaign to date. [320496]

**Sarah McCarthy-Fry:** For HM Treasury, the "Real Help Now" endorsement phrase has been included in some marketing material to promote the Money Guidance pilot service in the north west and north east of England between April 2009 and March 2010. The marketing campaign is aimed at raising awareness of the service as a free source of impartial help for families on personal finance matters. The service is available to all but is

targeted at those most vulnerable to poor financial decision making. Some of the marketing material on TV, local radio and local press advertising carried the "Real Help Now" logo. There were no additional costs to the campaign as a result of including "Real Help Now". In total just under £3 million has been spent marketing the Money Guidance pathfinder service since April 2009.

For HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), £1.4 million has been spent on the "Real Help Now" cross government campaign; £230,000 of the total was funded by HMRC with the balance coming from other Government Departments. Two further campaigns included "Real Help Now" identifiers. £388,000 was spent on the Business Payments Support Service advertising campaign which carried the "Real Help for Business Now" logo and £165,000 was spent on those elements of the Payments for Parents campaign which carried the "Real Help for Families Now" logo. All of the spending was funded from within existing departmental budgets.

No spending on Building Britain's Future themed campaigns was reported by any of the Departments, and no spending on "Real Help Now" was reported by the Valuation Office Agency, Debt Management Office or the Office of Government Commerce.

### Economic Situation: Multiple Births

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to the financial situation of multiple birth families; and if he will make a statement. [325185]

**Mr. Timms:** The Government's system of financial support for families recognises the additional costs involved in multiple births as child benefit and child tax credits are paid per child to eligible families.

The Sure Start maternity grant, which is specifically intended to help people on certain benefits and tax credits to meet the immediate needs of a new baby, is also paid per child. The Health in Pregnancy grant is intended to provide financial support for women during pregnancy, not to their children after birth and the grant is therefore paid per pregnancy.

### Employment

**Mr. Leech:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of (a) public and (b) private sector jobs contracted to deliver public services which were relocated offshore in each of the last 10 years. [323941]

**Mr. Byrne:** No specific estimate has been made of the number of public and private sector jobs contracted to deliver public services relocated off-shore.

### Equitable Life Assurance Society: York

**Hugh Bayley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate his Department has made of the number of Equitable Life pension fund members resident in City of York constituency. [324225]

**Mr. Byrne:** The Treasury does not hold the details of Equitable Life pension fund members resident in City of York constituency.

### EU Grants and Loans: Wales

**Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much funding from the (a) European Social Fund and (b) European Regional Development Fund was available to Wales in (a) 2009-10 and (b) each of the last 10 financial years; how much such funding from each fund was drawn down in respect of Wales in each of those years; and how much such funding from each fund he expects to be available to Wales in each of the next two financial years. [325146]

**Mr. Byrne** [holding answer 30 March 2010]: The UK Government are responsible for managing the UK's overall contribution to the EU budget. However, the management of the EU social fund and regional development fund in Wales is a matter for the Welsh Assembly Government and the EU Commission.

**Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the effect on the level of EU funding for Wales of the new cohesion policy provided for by the Lisbon Treaty. [325148]

**Mr. Byrne** [holding answer 30 March 2010]: The management of EU structural fund programmes in Wales is a matter for the Welsh Assembly Government and the EU Commission.

### Government Departments: Bank Cards

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Government procurement cards were reported (a) lost and (b) stolen in the last year for which figures are available. [323522]

**Ian Pearson:** 3,316 Government Procurement Cards were officially reported lost or stolen during the period January to December 2009.

Buying Solutions, an Executive agency of the Office of Government Commerce, and the banks that issue the Government Procurement cards take lost and stolen cards very seriously. Buying Solutions provides advice to departments on how to reduce the risk of card fraud and each of the card issuers provides guidance to cardholders and programme administrators on the importance of keeping cards safe. Card issuers also use statement messaging to advise customers on security.

### Government Departments: Buildings

**Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what targets have been set for Government departments to reduce the cost of their estates; and what estimate he has made of the likely level of savings in (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11 and (c) 2011-12. [323207]

**Mr. Byrne:** Through the High Performing Property (HPP) programme Government has targeted annual real running cost savings of between £1 billion and £1.5 billion per annum by 2013 from the central civil Government estate, not broken down by individual Departments. This target saving contributes to the target announced in Budget 2010 to save £5 billion per annum in property running costs through more effective management of assets and property across the whole public sector.

The State of the Estate for 2009 reports that the Government estate is performing better than the private sector in a number of key areas. The annual real cost of running the estate, adjusted for inflation, has fallen by 17 per cent., equivalent to a reduction of approximately £740 million since 2003-04. This achieves the interim targeted annual savings of between £600 million and £800 million by March 2011. No target was set for 2009-10 or 2011-12. Government Departments are therefore on track to meet the HPP target savings.

### Government Departments: Consultants

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the total cost to the public purse was of expenditure by Government departments on consultancies in the last year for which figures are available; and what the estimated level of such expenditure is in each of the next three years. [324211]

**Mr. Byrne:** The most recent year for which public expenditure on consultancy is available 2008-09. This data was published by the Office of Government Commerce alongside Budget 2010 in the "Public Sector Procurement Expenditure Survey 2009"

<http://www.ogc.gov.uk/publicspending>

The expenditure set out here will be reduced by 50 per cent. a year by 2012-13, as set in the pre-Budget report 2009.

### Government Departments: Marketing

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 24 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 604W, on Government departments: marketing, (1) what the estimated cash value is of the level of marketing and communications spend in 2009-10 on which the 25 per cent. cut will be based; [324207]

(2) what the base (a) year and (b) cash value is of the level of consultancy spend on which the cut of 50 per cent. will be based. [324208]

**Mr. Byrne:** Budget 2010 announced that over £11 billion of savings have now been identified by Department for the years from 2012-13. This includes the consultancy, marketing and communications cuts which were identified based on 2008-09 spending levels, currently the most recent financial year that spending levels are available for. The 2008-09 spend is set out in the 'Public Sector Procurement Expenditure Survey 2009', published alongside Budget.

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 24 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 604W, on Government departments: marketing, what the estimated level of savings is from reducing consultancy and marketing/advertising spend in (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12. [324209]

**Mr. Byrne:** Budget 2010 announced that over £11 billion of savings have now been identified by Departments for the years from 2012-13. This includes over £650 million by 2012-13 from reducing departmental consultancy spend by 50 per cent. and departmental marketing and communications spend by 25 per cent. from 2008-09

spending levels, currently the most recent financial year that spending levels are available for. The 2008-09 spend is set out in the "Public Sector Procurement Expenditure Survey 2009", published alongside Budget, it will be up to Departments to decide how they implement these cuts to ensure they meet the targets by 2012-13.

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate his Department has made of the total cash spend on marketing, advertising and public relations by central Government in the last 12 months; and what proportion of such expenditure was made through the Central Office of Information. [324213]

**Mr. Byrne:** Central Government departmental total cash spend on marketing, advertising and public relations is collected by financial year. Therefore the most recent data collected covers financial year 2008-09. This information was published by department and non-departmental public body alongside Budget 2010 by the Office of Government Commerce in "Public Sector Procurement Expenditure Survey 2009".

<http://www.ogc.gov.uk/publicspending>

#### Government Departments: Pay

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the policy of approving bonus payments of over £50,000 will apply to all staff. [323580]

**Mr. Byrne:** The 2009 pre-Budget report announced a set of fundamental reforms to pay-setting for senior staff, as part of this, I will approve all bonus payments of over £50,000 where ministerial sign-off is needed. For public sector bodies where ministerial approval is not required, the Government expect all organisations making any bonus payments in excess of £50,000, to publicly justify this level to the relevant Secretary of State.

#### Government: Cost Effectiveness

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Horsham of 26 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 806W, on public expenditure, whether the £500 million of savings by reducing duplication between organisations will include savings delivered by the Total Place initiative; and whether Total Place savings will be allocated to (a) central and (b) local government. [324121]

**Mr. Byrne:** The Government announced in pre-Budget report 2009 that at least £500 million would be saved by 2012-13 by reducing duplication between organisations and streamlining arm's length bodies. Budget 2010 gives further detail on how these savings will be achieved.

These savings are being delivered as part of the Government's commitment to deliver £11 billion of savings by 2012-13, set out in "Putting the Frontline First: Smarter Government" and are separate from any savings identified through Total Place. The Total Place report, published on 25 March 2010, set out further details of how savings will be achieved.

#### Infrastructure: Expenditure

**Mr. Dai Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what budget has been allocated for the work to be undertaken by Infrastructure UK in its investigation into the cost of delivering major infrastructure projects in the UK referred to in paragraph 4.4 of the report on Strategy for National Infrastructure. [325102]

**Mr. Byrne:** Infrastructure UK is setting up a steering group for the investigation into the cost of delivery, initially with the Government's chief construction adviser and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Office of Government Commerce and the Department for Transport. A budget for the investigation has not yet been agreed between Infrastructure UK and these organisations.

#### Local Government: Cost Effectiveness

**Robert Neill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Meriden of 25 January 2010, *Official Report*, column 598W, on local government: cost effectiveness, what methodology was used to identify £550 million as the expected figure for savings from local government; and what arrangements will be made for local authorities unable to reach their targets for efficiency savings. [323201]

**Mr. Byrne:** The 2009 pre-Budget report sets out a number of areas where local government will be able to find efficiency savings over the next spending period, of £550 million per year by 2012-13.

Departments have worked closely to explore potential savings across the different functions and service areas of local authorities, and the scope for local initiatives that have delivered savings to be taken up more widely. It is for individual local authorities to make efficiencies based on local priorities and use of resources.

During the CSR 2007 period, local authorities have been free to use savings to hold down council tax or reinvest in other services. Councils do not have individual targets, but where a council is failing to deliver the level of efficiencies expected of the sector as a whole, we would expect the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and local government office to play an active role in supporting the council.

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the working estimate is of the cash value of local government's contribution to the Operational Efficiency Programme's target of £8 billion of efficiency savings by 2012-13; and whether the £8 billion of annual savings are cumulative by 2012-13. [323578]

**Mr. Byrne:** Budget 2010 provided an update on the £8 billion of Operational Efficiency Programme (OEP) savings and the £3 billion cross-cutting savings by 2012-13. Details of the proportion of these savings contributed by local government are available at:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/1516900>

The £8 billion annual OEP savings are savings to be delivered by 2012-13, against a baseline year of 2010-11.

These are not cumulative savings. More detail on OEP savings numbers is available at:

[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/oep\\_final\\_report\\_210409\\_pu728.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/oep_final_report_210409_pu728.pdf)

### Non-domestic Rates

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what notification to the Valuation Office Agency is required of business rate payers when a hereditament is split; and how many such notifications were made in each year since 2000. [320065]

**Ian Pearson:** Ratepayers may make a formal proposal to the local Valuation Officer asking that a hereditament be treated as more than one hereditament (split) but there is no legal requirement to advise the Valuation Officer of this. The number of rating proposals made from 2000 in England and Wales to split is shown in the following table:

	<i>Number of rating proposals</i>
April 2000 to March 2001	8,250
April 2001 to March 2002	6,830
April 2002 to March 2003	6,310
April 2003 to March 2004	6,260
April 2004 to March 2005	8,550
April 2005 to March 2006	3,960
April 2006 to March 2007	3,600
April 2007 to March 2008	3,330
Apr 2008 to March 2009	5,040
April 2009 to February 2010	4,080
Total	56,210

*Note:*

Figures rounded to nearest ten.

Rating list entries are also split as a direct result of information being supplied to the valuation officer by either the respective billing authority or by the valuation officer becoming aware of the need to alter an entry in the rating list. The number of reports made since 2000 in England and Wales by billing authorities is shown in the following table:

	<i>Number of billing authority and VO reports to split</i>
April 2000 to March 2001	40,570
April 2001 to March 2002	9,910
April 2002 to March 2003	29,670
April 2003 to March 2004	30,680
April 2004 to March 2005	28,540
April 2005 to March 2006	47,130
April 2006 to March 2007	30,520
April 2007 to March 2008	32,610
April 2008 to March 2009	34,900
April 2009 to February 2010	31,050
Total	335,570

*Note:*

Figures rounded to the nearest ten.

### Non-domestic Rates: Ports

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much the Valuation Office Agency spent on administering the separate rating of port companies in each year since 1999; and how many of the agency's staff worked on such rating in each of those years. [325560]

**Ian Pearson:** The VOA does not keep records of expenditure on or the number of staff involved in the assessment of separate hereditaments within statutory ports going back to 1999. Staff involved in work on the ports undertake general rating work in other locations and work in other business streams.

### Non-domestic Rates: Valuation

**Justine Greening:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the answer of 6 July 2009, *Official Report*, column 605W, on non-domestic rates, what the change in rateable value on the ratings list resulting from rateable value appeals was in each year from 2004-05 to 2008-09. [321344]

**Ian Pearson:** To correspond with the answer of 6 July 2009, *Official Report*, column 605W, the information provided is in respect of valid rating appeals received 1 April 2004 to 31 March 2009 and settled as at 30 June 2009.

The period covers the:

2000 Rating Lists—effective 1 April 2000 to 31 March 2005

2005 Rating Lists—effective 1 April 2005 to 31 March 2010

The compiled list statistics shows overall reduction in rateable value resulting from appeals against the compiled rating list entries, i.e. appeals challenging the original entries in the rating lists, effective from either 1 April 2000 or 1 April 2005.

The column labelled “others” shows the reduction in rateable value resulting from all other appeals. These are appeals where circumstances have changed since the lists were compiled and the rating assessment requires amendment.

		<i>Compiled List</i>	<i>Others</i>
	<i>Appeals received in:</i>	<i>RV change (£000)</i>	<i>RV change (£000)</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>6</i>
England	2004-05	-29,785	-538,362
England	2005-06	-817,768	-390,510
England	2006-07	-388,963	-549,049
England	2007-08	-164,470	-522,566
England	2008-09	-55,897	-348,893
Wales	2004-05	-954	-17,163
Wales	2005-06	-33,391	-8,198
Wales	2006-07	-8,805	-16,679
Wales	2007-08	-4,357	-10,648
Wales	2008-09	-1,032	-11,642
England and Wales	2004-05	-30,740	-555,525
England and Wales	2005-06	-851,159	-398,708
England and Wales	2006-07	-397,768	-565,728
England and Wales	2007-08	-168,827	-533,214
England and Wales	2008-09	-56,929	-360,535

The above figures were extracted from the Valuation Office Agency operational database.

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many hereditaments with rateable values over £50,000 in each local authority area are on the 2010 Rating List. [323440]

**Ian Pearson:** I have placed a table in the Library which sets out how many hereditaments in each local authority have a rateable value over £50,000.

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:

[http://www.voa.gov.uk/publications/statistical\\_releases/VOA\\_Statistics\\_Release\\_Final.pdf](http://www.voa.gov.uk/publications/statistical_releases/VOA_Statistics_Release_Final.pdf)

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the average rateable value of hereditaments is in each local authority area. [323526]

**Ian Pearson:** I have placed a table in the Library which sets out the average rateable value in each local authority.

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:

[http://www.voa.gov.uk/publications/statistical\\_releases/VOA\\_Statistics\\_Release\\_Final.pdf](http://www.voa.gov.uk/publications/statistical_releases/VOA_Statistics_Release_Final.pdf)

### Pakistan

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will place in the Library a copy of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury’s itinerary for his recent official visit to Pakistan; [324694]

(2) whether the Chief Secretary to the Treasury’s recent visit to Pakistan was wholly, exclusively and necessarily on Government business. [325111]

**Mr. Byrne:** Since 1999, the Government have published on an annual basis, a list of all overseas visits by Cabinet Ministers costing in excess of £500 as well as the total cost of all ministerial travel overseas. From 2007-08 the list was expanded to include all Ministers. The list also provides information on the purpose of the visit and the number of officials who accompany Ministers. Copies are available in the Libraries of the House. Information for 2009-10 will be published as soon as it is available. All travel by Ministers and civil servants is undertaken in accordance with the Ministerial Code and the Civil Service Code respectively.

### Public Expenditure

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Horsham of 26 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 803W, on Pre-Budget Report 2009, what estimate he has made of the value in cash terms of expenditure on (a) consultancies and (b) marketing and communications in 2009-10. [322877]

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Horsham of 26 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 806W, on public expenditure, for what reason the marketing and communications spend is to be reduced against a 2009-10 baseline and the consultancy spend is to be reduced according to a 2008-09 baseline. [323531]

**Mr. Byrne:** Budget 2010 announced that over £11 billion of savings have now been identified by Department for the years from 2012-13. This includes the consultancy, marketing and communications cuts which were identified based on 2008-09 spending levels, currently the most recent financial year that spending levels are available for. The 2008-09 spend is set out in the “Public Sector Procurement Expenditure Survey 2009”, published alongside Budget.

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer to the right hon. Member for Horsham of 26 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 806W, on public expenditure, what the reason is for the base year chosen to calculate savings on expenditure on (a) consultancy and (b) marketing and communications. [324478]

**Mr. Byrne:** Budget 2010 announced that over £11 billion of savings have now been identified by Departments for the years from 2012-13. This includes over £650 million by 2012-13 from reducing departmental consultancy spend by 50 per cent. and departmental marketing and communications spend by 25 per cent. from 2008-09 spending levels. These spending levels were chosen because they are the most recent financial year that spending levels are available for. The 2008-09 spend is set out in the “Public Sector Procurement Expenditure Survey 2009”, published alongside Budget.

### Public Expenditure: Wales

**Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the Barnett consequential are for Wales of the savings to be made by each Department following Budget 2010. [325145]

**Mr. Byrne [holding answer 30 March 2010]:** In Budget 2010 the Welsh Assembly Government received an additional £48 million in 2010-11 as Barnett consequential of increases in spending of UK Departments. Budgets for 2011-12 onwards will be set in the next spending review in the usual way.

**Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much money is available to the Welsh Assembly Government under the Barnett formula for financial year 2010-11. [325312]

**Mr. Byrne:** Budget 2010 announced an increase of £48 million for the Welsh Assembly Government in 2010-11. The Welsh Assembly Government’s budget plans for 2010-11 are set out in Table C11 of the Budget 2010 Report (HC 451). The final outturn for 2010-11 will not be known until spring 2011.

**Mrs. Gillan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the consequential changes are to Government expenditure in Wales arising from the £11 billion savings announced by Government departments consequent on the Financial Statement and Budget Report. [325347]

**Mr. Byrne:** The departmental expenditure limits for the Welsh Assembly Government will be determined in the next spending review in the usual way.

#### Public Sector: Databases

**John Thurso:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the Operational Efficiency Programme, what discussions his Department has had with private sector organisations on the role of common electronic standards for data analysis and exchange of information in the management of the public sector estate. [325169]

**Mr. Byrne:** Discussions have taken place last autumn between officials from the Office of Government Commerce and OSCRE (Open Standards Consortium for Real Estate, formerly known as PISCES). An electronic standard (Civil Estate Co-ordination Protocol) for the exchange of data within central Government is currently in place.

#### Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

**Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the (a) average time taken for a call to be answered, (b) average time spent waiting in a call queue, (c) average call duration, (d) number of unanswered calls, (e) average response time for a return call and (f) percentage of calls returned was in call centres operated by HM Revenue and Customs in (i) 2008, (ii) 2009 and (iii) 2010 to date; and if he will make a statement. [325152]

**Mr. Timms:** The information requested, where available, is provided in the following table.

	2007-08	2008-09	April 2009 to February 2010
Average time for a call to be answered (mm:ss) <sup>1</sup>	01:26	01:57	01:29
Average time spent waiting in a call queue <sup>1</sup>	As above	As above	As above
Average call duration (mm:ss) <sup>2</sup>	05:27	05:59	06:31
Number of unanswered calls (Million) <sup>3</sup>	24.5	43.7	16.4

<sup>1</sup> Defined as the time taken for a call to be answered by an adviser once a customer has selected an option from the call steering menu.

<sup>2</sup> This includes the time the customer speaks to an adviser and any follow-up actions the adviser may need to take (e.g. updating customer's records).

<sup>3</sup> Defined as the difference between the call attempts made to HMRC's telephone helplines and the call attempts answered by advisers, less calls answered with an automated message.

In July 2009 HM Revenue and Customs introduced a range of automated information messages on its helplines whose purpose includes enabling customers to gain the information they need without speaking to an adviser. From April 2009 to February 2010, five million calls had been handled in this way, helping to reduce the 'unanswered calls' to 16.4 million.

HMRC's systems do not capture information on return calls.

#### Taxation: Domicile

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will take steps to ensure that UK nationals may not be non-domiciled for income tax purposes if evidence shows that to all intents and purposes the UK is their main residence; [324333]

(2) if he will bring forward proposals to reduce the number of days spent in the UK for nationals who were non-domiciled for tax purposes. [324334]

**Mr. Timms:** The Government reformed the rules on the taxation of non-domiciled individuals in 2008 to make them fairer.

An individual's liability to UK tax on their worldwide income and gains is linked to their residence and domicile status.

Tax residence in part depends on the amount of time spent in the UK but the other connections an individual builds or maintains in the UK may also be significant.

Domicile is a general law concept that is used for some tax purposes. It is separate to residence and does not depend on the number of days spent in the UK. Someone who is UK resident has significant connections to the UK, the current rules act to ensure that they make an appropriate contribution to the UK tax system.

Further guidance is available at:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/cnr/hmrc6.pdf>

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his latest estimate is of the number of UK nationals who are non-domiciled for income tax purposes. [324335]

**Mr. Timms [holding answer 25 March 2010]:** No such estimate has been made. Individuals are not required to indicate whether they are UK nationals on their self-assessment tax return.

**Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the loss to the Exchequer arising from UK nationals who are non-domiciled for tax purposes in the latest period for which figures are available. [324336]

**Mr. Timms [holding answer 25 March 2010]:** No such estimate has been made. Individuals, including those who are non-domiciled, are not required to declare any income and gains that are not taxable in the UK when completing their self-assessment tax return.

#### UK Membership of EC: West Midlands

**Richard Burden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the effect on the economy of (a) Birmingham and (b) the West Midlands of the inclusion of the UK in the EU single market. [325247]

**Ian Lucas:** I have been asked to reply.

No estimate has been made in relation specifically to Birmingham or the West Midlands.

The benefit of free trade across the EU is estimated to boost GDP by over 2 per cent. For the UK that equates to benefits of around £25-£30 billion a year.

### Valuation Office Agency

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the answer to the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar of 2 February 2009, *Official Report*, column 902W, on the Valuation Office, if he will place in the Library a copy of each of the user guidance and manuals for the Valuation Office Agency's (a) Digital Mapping User Guide, (b) RSA Induction Workbook and (c) Digital Photography User Guide, with information that could assist with unauthorised access redacted. [324323]

**Ian Pearson:** The Digital Mapping User Guide, RSA Induction Workbook and Digital Photography User Guide are technical instructions on the operation of Valuation Office Agency (VOA) internal IT applications. It is not appropriate to publish information which might assist unauthorised access to VOA systems or databases. The manuals have been written specifically to provide detail of accessing and operating these applications. Accordingly, it is not possible to redact only specific parts that could assist with unauthorised access.

**Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff (a) there were and (b) were made redundant from the Valuation Office Agency in each year since 1999; what efficiency savings the agency made in each of those years; and how much the agency spent on legal advice in each of those years. [325557]

**Ian Pearson:** For the number of staff in the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) (a) I refer the hon. member to the answer given to him on 22 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 75W and (b) no staff have been made redundant since 1999.

Under the current spending review period the income the VOA receives from its statutory clients has been reducing year on year by at least 5 per cent. per annum, in 2010-11 the current assumptions are that the VOA income will reduce from clients by a range of 5 per cent. to 13 per cent. These savings are counted as efficiency savings for the departments providing funding to the VOA to avoid double counting.

Nevertheless the VOA tracks its efficiency record and using the HM Treasury basis for calculating these the efficiencies delivered in the current spending round are £13.3 million in 2008-09 increasing to a planned £24.0 million in 2009-10 (these figures are cumulative). In addition the VOA has completed the Revaluation 2010 project across England and Wales at no additional costs to the taxpayer whilst maintaining its performance targets creating a further efficiency of £52 million. A total of approximately £76 million.

In addition as part of its commitment to value for money the VOA has also committed to £15 million savings in the Operational Efficiency programme over the next three years.

The VOA publishes its legal services costs in its annual report and accounts to Parliament and a copy for each financial year is available in the Library. From 2000 an electronic copy is available on the VOA's website at:

[www.voa.gov.uk](http://www.voa.gov.uk)

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Solicitors advice is provided under a service level agreement, the fee for which is included within the service charge payment to HMRC. Counsel's opinion is obtained for the VOA via HMRC Solicitors and charged back to the agency together with other disbursements such as lodging and hearing fees, and any costs awarded against the VOA.

It is not possible to identify the element purely attributed to legal advice without incurring disproportionate costs.

### Valuation Office Agency: Contracts

**Robert Neill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Peterborough of 4 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 522W, on the Valuation Office: contracts, what expenditure his Department incurred with (a) the Whitehall and Industry Group, (b) the Public and Commercial Services Union, (c) Prospect (ex IPMS), (d) Propaganda and (e) Making Change Happen in 2008-09; what goods and services were procured in each case; and what the purpose was of each such procurement. [323191]

**Ian Pearson:** Expenditure incurred by the Valuation Office Agency was as follows:

(a) Attendance for delegates at the Whitehall and Industry conferences in June and December 2008 and fees in recruiting non executive directors for the agency were £10,089.

(b) and (c) None. Payments to trade unions such as the Public and Commercial Services Union and Prospect represent subscriptions from staff who are members of those unions. The agency deducts these fees as part of its payroll processes and pays them to the unions on behalf of those staff who are members. As such this is not agency expenditure.

(d) Marketing material at the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation conference, cost £475.

(e) Training material for performance and coaching, in relation to Making Change Happen in 2008-09, cost £352.

### Valuation Office Agency: Pay

**Mrs. Spelman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what bonuses have been awarded to each board member and director of the Valuation Office Agency in each of the last three years. [324320]

**Ian Pearson:** To provide this information would require the personal consent of all individual board members. Some of these individuals are no longer with the agency. To obtain all the necessary consents would incur disproportionate cost. Remuneration information for board members is detailed in the VOA annual report and accounts.

### Valuation Office Agency: Visits Abroad

**Robert Neill:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer with reference to the answer of 9 February 2009, *Official Report*, columns 1629-30W, on the Valuation Office: overseas visits, what overseas visits representatives of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) have undertaken in the last 12 months; what the (a) purpose, (b) destination and (c) cost was of each such

visit; and if he will place in the Library a copy of each (i) presentation made and (ii) handout distributed by VOA staff at each overseas conference attended in the last 12 months. [323090]

**Ian Pearson:** During the last 12 months staff from the Valuation Office Agency have visited the following locations:

<i>(a) Purpose</i>	<i>(b) Destination</i>	<i>(c) Cost (£)</i>	<i>(d) Handout/Presentations</i>
Speaker at International Property Tax Institute	South Africa	2,875	I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Jackson) on 6 May 2009, <i>Official Report</i> , column 178W
Speaker at Joint IRRV/IPTI International Conference	Poland	561	A copy of the presentation will be placed in the Library
Expert Witness at Lands Tribunal	Hong Kong	168	None
Participant at NSG Top Management Programme	India	519	None
Speaker at European Valuation Standards Conference	Poland	73	I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Peterborough (Mr. Jackson) on 6 May 2009, <i>Official Report</i> , column 179W
Attendee at Joint workshop on Cadastral Systems, Inspire Implementation and E-signature and Plenary Meeting of the Permanent Committee on Cadastre in the European Union	Prague	474	None

### Written Questions: Government Responses

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he plans to answer question 305530, tabled by the hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge on 4 December 2009, on alcohol and entertainment. [321186]

**Sarah McCarthy-Fry:** I have now replied to the hon. Member and apologise for the delay in doing so.

## HEALTH

### Blood

**Dr. Iddon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will ensure that haemophilia patients will not be required to switch blood products as a consequence of the outcome of his Department's recent tendering exercise in respect of blood products. [325451]

**Gillian Merron:** Patients with haemophilia are no longer generally treated with products manufactured from human plasma (blood products). Almost all are now treated with recombinant (biosynthetic) factor VIII. It is expected that about 50 per cent. of patients will change from one brand of recombinant product to another, following the tendering exercise.

Some small children with haemophilia will not change products either because they have always been treated with the same brand or because they are having treatment for a factor VIII inhibitor. Patients have now been notified by their haemophilia centres of the proposal to either change their brand or to continue to prescribe the brand that they are already receiving and to invite them to consult the centre if they have any concerns.

The tender has taken place with the full support and active involvement of the Haemophilia Society representing patients and the UK Haemophilia Centre Doctors'

Organisation (UKHCDO). UKHCDO have advised that all of the available brands of recombinant products are equally safe and effective.

### Breast Cancer: Ethnic Groups

**Harry Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what models his Department uses to assess prevalence of breast cancer by ethnic minority grouping. [325546]

**Ann Keen:** We do not hold information on the prevalence of breast cancer by ethnic minority grouping. However, we are working on models to allow us to assess prevalence by ethnic minority grouping.

### Cancer: Health Services

**Mr. Hoban:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) which cancer centres are located in a hospital building without the ancillary services of an acute hospital; [325010]

(2) which gynaecological cancer centres are located within (a) a maternity hospital and (b) an acute hospital; [325011]

(3) which gynaecological cancer centres lack an on-site intensive therapy unit (ITU); and whether he plans to relocate any such centres to hospitals which do have an on-site ITU. [325012]

**Ann Keen:** Information concerning the location of cancer centres within hospital buildings is not collected centrally.

Decisions regarding the placement of cancer centres are the responsibility of local national health service hospital trusts and primary care trusts and are made in conjunction with cancer networks and other stakeholders.

### Cancer: Waiting Lists

**Mrs. Curtis-Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average time was that patients in Merseyside waited for the start of treatment for ovarian cancer in the most recent year for which figures are available. [325003]

**Ann Keen:** This information is not collected centrally.

### Civil Servants

**Mr. Stephen O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which senior civil servants in his Department left to take up jobs in the for-profit or not-for-profit healthcare sector in the last two years. [324999]

**Phil Hope:** The Department does not hold records on the employment of former staff after they leave the Department.

Rules on civil servants taking up outside business appointments are published in the Civil Service Management Code (section 4.3) which can be found at:

[www.civilservice.gov.uk/about/work/codes/csmc/index.aspx](http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/about/work/codes/csmc/index.aspx)

Section 4.3 annex A contains the full guidance on accepting outside business appointments. The Department complies fully with the requirements of the Civil Service Management Code in ensuring adherence to the business appointments procedure.

These rules are also referred to in the Directory of Civil Service Guidance, available at:

[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/propriety\\_and\\_ethics/civil\\_service/civil\\_service\\_guidance.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/propriety_and_ethics/civil_service/civil_service_guidance.aspx)

Standard employment contracts for all senior civil servants refer to the rules on outside business appointments.

### Dementia

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many letters he has received on his Department's most recent dementia awareness campaign in the last six months. [324894]

**Phil Hope:** Information about the number of letters of correspondence on the information campaign is not collected centrally.

### Dental Services: Bognor Regis

**Mr. Gibb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reasons dentists at the Maywood Surgery and Flansham Park Surgery in Bognor Regis were not invited to bid for the contract to provide dental services in the Bognor Regis area. [325655]

**Ann Keen:** This information is not collected centrally. Primary care trusts are responsible for commissioning dental services to meet the needs of their population.

### Departmental Buildings

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department and its agencies have spent on rooms for staff leisure in each of the last five years. [324440]

**Phil Hope:** The Department and its agencies spent the following on rooms provided for staff leisure in the last five years:

	£
2005-06	253,550
2006-07	266,000
2007-08	285,590
2008-09	230,590
2009-10	267,070

These are the full costs of providing these rooms and have been calculated and based on a square metre percentage of the overall costs for the buildings where leisure facilities are available.

The response covers the Department's central administrative London estate of Richmond house, Wellington house and Skipton house, the properties of the NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency, and the Medicines and products Healthcare Regulatory Authority.

The Department is a minor occupier in New Kings Beam house (HM Revenue and Customs) and Quarry house in Leeds (Department for Work and Pensions) and the data for these sites are not available to us.

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department provides subsidised gym facilities for its staff. [324560]

**Phil Hope:** There are gym facilities in two of the Department's buildings—Skipton house in London and Quarry house in Leeds. Staff who are members of HASSRA, the sports and social association for staff working in the Department and its Executive agencies can access these facilities. HASSRA owns the gym equipment in Skipton house and the gym is run by club members. HASSRA does not own the gym at Quarry house, which is run by a private company.

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department spent on interior design in relation to office refurbishments undertaken in each of the last five years. [324678]

**Phil Hope:** Like most organisations, the Department has a rolling refurbishment programme. It is not possible to identify separately, in all cases, the elements within this programme that relate to interior design, because it is often commissioned by the main contractor responsible for carrying out the refurbishment.

In the last five years, the Department employed interior designers directly on two occasions. This was in financial year 2005-06, at a total cost of £94,251.

### Departmental Energy

**Gregory Barker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what (a) voltage optimisers and (b) equivalent technologies are used within buildings occupied by his Department. [324975]

**Phil Hope:** The Department is currently looking at the feasibility of installing voltage optimisers across the Department's London estate as part of our Carbon Management Programme to reduce energy consumption.

There are no equivalent technologies used within buildings occupied by the Department in its central administrative estate which consists of Richmond house, London SW1A, Wellington house, London SE1, and Skipton house, London SE1. The Department is a minor occupier in New Kings Beam house, London SE1 (a HM Revenue and Customs building) and Quarry house in Leeds LS2 (a Department for Work and Pensions building).

#### Departmental Food

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what account his Department's food procurement policy takes of animal welfare. [325528]

**Phil Hope:** In line with DEFRA guidance regarding sustainable development and animal welfare issues, the Department of Health works with its catering and hospitality suppliers to ensure that they abide by the highest standards of animal welfare in their food procurement policy.

Quadrant Catering and Eurest Services provide staff restaurant and hospitality catering for Department of Health staff and are both part of Compass Group United Kingdom and Ireland, one of the United Kingdom's largest contract caterers, who have an excellent record in ethical food procurement.

#### Departmental Furniture

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has incurred expenditure on antique furniture in the last five years. [325108]

**Phil Hope:** No expenditure has been incurred by the Department on antique furniture in the last five years.

#### Departmental Internet

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints his Department received regarding difficulties using its website in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325196]

**Phil Hope:** The Department received the following number of complaints regarding difficulties operating the Department's website in each of the last three years.

	<i>Number</i>
2009-10 <sup>1</sup>	262
2008-09	255
2007-08	349

<sup>1</sup> Figures for March 2010 are not yet available.

**Jenny Willott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department spent on external website design consultants in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [325214]

**Phil Hope:** The Department operates two main websites:

1. The Department's corporate website  
www.dh.gov.uk
2. NHS Choices  
www.nhs.uk

For the Department's corporate website, the following amounts have been spent on external website design consultancy:

	<i>£</i>
2007-08	34,250.00
2008-09	6,748.19
2009-10	9,949.00

NHS Choices development and delivery is provided through an outsourced contract. From June 2007 to November 2008 this was provided through Doctor Foster Intelligence. Since November 2008, this has been provided by Capita. The overall contract value for Capita for the design, development and delivery of the NHS Choices digital service is £60 million over three years.

It is not possible to disaggregate specific website design elements from this contract as they are inherent in the improvement and delivery of the overall service.

Since 27 June 2007 the Department has reduced the total number of websites that it operates from 196 to 71, to meet its obligations under Transformational Government. The Department will continue to reduce this number to just two websites by the Cabinet Office deadline of July 2011.

Given the high number of websites that were in existence between March 2007 and January 2010, it is not possible to provide information on costs for all of these, as this would incur disproportionate costs.

#### Departmental Official Hospitality

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the five most expensive hospitality events hosted by his Department and its agencies were in the last three years; and what (a) the cost and (b) purpose of each such event was. [324657]

**Phil Hope:** The Department is unable to provide information on the five most expensive events hosted by the Department and its agencies, where hospitality has been offered, as this information is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

The Department's Code of Business Conduct states that a blanket ban on accepting or providing hospitality is neither practical nor desirable from a business point of view.

However, there must be a real business benefit to providing or accepting hospitality, as public money must not be used to fund occasions such as social gatherings, retirement or office parties.

This is in accordance with the principles of Managing Public Money and the Treasury handbook on Regularity and Propriety.

#### Departmental Public Expenditure

**Anne Milton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 4 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1399W, on home care services: finance, what estimate he has made of his Department's expenditure on (a) administration and (b) management consultants in 2009-10. [321610]

**Phil Hope:** The Department's administration budget does not meet all the costs of administering major programmes funded from the Department's central budgets.

The Department's administration budget for 2009-10 was set out in the spring supplementary estimates at £218 million. The spring supplementary estimates are available on the HM Treasury website at:

[www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/springsupps0910\\_doh.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/springsupps0910_doh.pdf)

Data on the estimated spend by the Department on management consultants for 2009-10 are not available in the format requested. Information for the full year 2009-2010 will be published in due course, after it has been validated.

#### Departmental Sick Leave

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many sick days were taken by staff of his Department in each month of each year since 1997.

[324940]

**Phil Hope:** Providing an analysis of sickness absence by individual months for the last 13 years would incur disproportionate cost.

For the 12 months ending 30 June 2009, the core Department's average reported working days lost per person was 4.8 days. This is one of the lowest rates in Government. The civil service average for the same period was 8.7 days.

However, the Department continues to give this issue the importance it deserves and the Department's human resources division has policies and procedures in place to help manage and support the response to sickness absence.

#### Drugs: Rehabilitation

**Jim Cousins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many residential places were available for drug rehabilitation of under 18-year-olds in England in each year since 2000.

[306051]

**Dawn Primarolo:** I have been asked to reply.

Information is not held centrally about the number of residential places available across the country that are able to support young people with substance misuse and other complex needs.

For the vast majority of young people under 18 community-based services are the most appropriate option. In addition, local authorities can arrange a package of support that combines specialist drug treatment with specialist children's home, fostering places or other supported accommodation.

#### Family Nurse Partnership Programme

**Hilary Armstrong:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in the original 2007 pilots of the family nurse partnerships; and which of those pilots is planned to be developed for wider implementation.

[325674]

**Ann Keen:** The original 10 Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) test sites are currently being evaluated by Birkbeck college, university of London. The second year report of the evaluation suggests that the programme is being delivered well; that it is successful in engaging the most vulnerable clients, who value it highly; and that it is also successful in engaging fathers. The evaluation also points

to early signs that clients cope better with pregnancy, labour and parenthood, have aspirations for the future and that FNP is having a positive effect on reducing smoking during pregnancy and increasing rates of breastfeeding.

The learning from the evaluation and from other learning and development projects in these 10 sites has been invaluable and is being used more widely as we expand and develop FNP in this country. Approximately 4,000 families have benefited from FNP to date, and we are currently working with over 50 sites.

Clients in the original 10 sites are reaching the end of the FNP programme. Expansion in these sites is a decision for local commissioners, but nine sites have started to recruit a new cohort of clients and have expanded their teams. Eight of these sites are also now participating in a randomised controlled trial of FNP, along with 10 newer test sites, which will report in 2013.

#### General Practitioners: Primary Care Trusts

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received from general practitioners on their funding from primary care trusts.

[325135]

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** The Department and NHS Employers (responsible for negotiating the general practitioner (GP) contract on the Departments behalf) are in regular dialogue with the General Practitioner Committee (GPC) negotiating arm of the British Medical Association (BMA) regarding funding issues to the GP contract.

Most recent representations involved my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State contacting the chairs of both the BMA and GPC personally regarding his ministerial statement of 10 February 2010 on his recommendations to the Review Body on Doctors and Dentists' remuneration award review for 2010.

#### Health Services: Armed Forces

**Justine Greening:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the written ministerial statement of 11 January 2010, *Official Report*, columns 15-16WS, on medical care (veterans), what estimate has been made of the cost to the public purse of extending to all veterans the undertaking of an entitlement to receive from the NHS an equivalent standard of prosthetic limb to those provided by Defence Medical Services; and what standards apply to prosthetic limbs provided by (a) the NHS to members of the public and (b) Defence Medical Services to military personnel.

[325065]

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** The current operating framework for the NHS requires commissioners to take account of military personnel, their families and veterans when commissioning services in their area. It is for primary care trusts in partnership with local stakeholders, including practice based commissioners, local government and the public to determine how best to use their funds to meet national and local priorities for improving health and to commission services accordingly. This process provides the means for addressing local needs within the health community including the provision of prosthetic services for former service personnel.

The provision of a prosthetic limb is not the only factor that influences an amputee's quality of life and acceptance of ability. Psychological, social, co-morbidity, age, and clinical service all contribute to an individual's quality of life and use of the prostheses. The provision of prosthetic care and services is undertaken by a multidisciplinary clinical and assessment team to ensure that the type and standard of a particular prostheses is clinically appropriate for an individual.

### Health Services: Overseas Visitors

**Mr. Vara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many non-British residents received NHS treatment in North West Cambridgeshire constituency in each of the last 10 years. [324688]

**Ann Keen:** Information is not available in the format requested. The following table shows the count of finished admission episodes where the strategic health authority (SHA) of residence was recorded as "Foreign (including Isle of Man and Channel Islands)" or "Northern Ireland" and the primary care trust (PCT) of main provider was Cambridgeshire PCT in years 1999-2000 to 2005-06 and 2007-08 to 2008-09. Years 2006-07 and 1998-99 are unfortunately unavailable as the PCT of main provider field in HES has poor data quality in these years.

	Total admission episodes
2008-09	282
2007-08	349

Organisation	£000					
	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Hinchingbrooke Healthcare NHS Trust	29	0	0	0	108	51
Cambridge University Hospitals Foundation Trust	217	0	0	0	0	0
Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	74	0	0	0	0	0
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust	0	0	0	0	0	0
Huntingdonshire Primary Care Trust (PCT)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cambridge City PCT	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Cambridgeshire and Fenland PCT	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Cambridgeshire PCT	0	0	0	0	0	0
South Peterborough PCT	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	320	0	0	0	108	51

#### Notes:

- For Cambridgeshire PCT and Peterborough PCT, the data prior to 2006-07 are the sum of the predecessor PCTs that were merged to form the new PCTs in October 2006.
- The Department does not collect data from NHS foundation trusts. Where an NHS trust obtains foundation trust status part way through any year, the data provided is only for the part of the year the organisation operated as an NHS trust.
- North West Cambridgeshire constituency is also served by the following NHS foundation trusts—in these cases we have provided data up to the point that they achieved FT status:  
Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. This organisation achieved FT status in July 2004, therefore no data exists after the 2004-05 financial year.  
The 2004-05 figure represents only the part of the year the organisation operated as a NHS trust.  
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust. This organisation achieved FT status in June 2008, therefore the 2008-09 figure represents only the part of the year the organisation operated as a NHS trust.  
Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. This organisation achieved FT status in April 2004, therefore no data exist after the 2003-04 financial year.
- In common with many other public and private sector organisations the Department only holds accounting data at organisation level for seven years, and therefore data are available only for the financial years 2002-03 to 2008-09.
- Income from overseas patients under non-reciprocal agreements was not separately identified in the 2002-03 summarisation schedules and cannot be disaggregated from other income figures.

#### Source:

Audited summarisation schedules 2003-04 to 2008-09.

**Mr. Vara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the cost to the NHS of treating non-British residents in North West Cambridgeshire constituency in each of the last 10 years. [324758]

	Total admission episodes
2006-07	n/a
2005-06	330
2004-05	248
2003-04	214
2002-03	184
2001-02	208
2000-01	277
1999-2000	255
1998-99	n/a

#### Notes:

- This is not a count of patients as some patients may have been admitted more than once within the year.
- In 2006-07 there was a merger of East Cambridgeshire and Fenland PCT, Huntingdonshire PCT, Cambridge City PCT, South Cambridgeshire PCT and 36 per cent. of South Peterborough PCT to form Cambridgeshire PCT. Therefore years 2007-08 and 2008-09 are not directly comparable to previous years. Where there were no records of admissions where the SHA of residence was foreign or Northern Ireland at one of the PCTs of main provider, the PCT has not been included in the breakdown.

**Mr. Vara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much of the cost of treating non-British residents on the NHS in North West Cambridgeshire constituency was recovered by charging the patient or the insurer in each of the last 10 years. [324757]

**Ann Keen:** Information is not available in the format requested. The following table shows income recovered from overseas patients under non-reciprocal agreements, 2003-04 to 2008-09.

**Ann Keen:** This information is not held centrally. Data would be held by local national health service organisations if collected.

### Health Visitors

**Mr. Vara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health visitors there were in each primary care trust area in (a) 2008 and (b) 2009. [325063]

**Ann Keen:** The following table shows the numbers requested.

*NHS hospital and community health services: Health Visitors in England by strategic health authority area and by primary care trust as at 30 September each year*

		Headcount	
		2008	2009
England		11,190	10,859
<i>North East Coast Strategic Health Authority area</i>	—	646	609
County Durham PCT	5ND	9	4
Darlington PCT	5J9	170	176
Gateshead PCT	5KF	44	42
Hartlepool PCT	5D9	14	0
Middlesbrough PCT	5KM	0	0
Newcastle PCT	5D7	85	76
North Tyneside PCT	5D8	57	51
Northumberland Care Trust	TAC	59	46
Redcar and Cleveland PCT	5QR	55	48
South Tyneside PCT	5KG	47	47
Stockton-on-Tees Teaching PCT	5E1	37	0
Sunderland Teaching PCT	5KL	66	69
<i>North West Strategic Health Authority area</i>	—	1,838	1,794
Ashton, Leigh and Wigan PCT	5HG	103	110
Blackburn with Darwen PCT	5CC	57	48
Blackpool PCT	5HP	61	60
Bolton PCT	5HQ	76	71
Bury PCT	5JX	52	52
Central and Eastern Cheshire PCT	5NP	96	100
Central Lancashire PCT	5NG	101	96
Cumbria Teaching PCT	5NE	110	109
East Lancashire Teaching PCT	5NH	99	93
Halton and St Helens PCT	5NM	71	59
Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale PCT	5NQ	78	67
Knowsley PCT	5J4	54	36
Liverpool PCT	5NL	103	132
Manchester PCT	5NT	125	124
North Lancashire Teaching PCT	5NF	89	86
Oldham PCT	5J5	51	54
Salford PCT	5F5	40	37
Sefton PCT	5NJ	56	61
Stockport PCT	5F7	81	70
Tameside and Glossop PCT	5LH	68	60
Trafford PCT	5NR	52	54
Warrington PCT	5J2	50	55
Western Cheshire PCT	5NN	64	58
Wirral PCT	5NK	83	86
<i>Yorkshire and the Humber Strategic Health Authority</i>	—	1,256	1,214
Barnsley PCT	5JE	60	53
Bradford and Airedale Teaching PCT	5NY	152	147
Bradford District Care Trust	TAD	0	0
Calderdale PCT	5J6	61	63
Doncaster PCT	5N5	92	78

*NHS hospital and community health services: Health Visitors in England by strategic health authority area and by primary care trust as at 30 September each year*

		Headcount	
		2008	2009
East Riding of Yorkshire PCT	5NW	68	66
Hull Teaching PCT	5NX	77	71
Kirklees PCT	5N2	80	98
Leeds PCT	5N1	158	155
North East Lincolnshire Care Trust Plus	TAN	44	39
North Lincolnshire PCT	5EF	37	38
North Yorkshire and York PCT	5NV	147	127
Rotherham PCT	5H8	61	50
Sheffield PCT	5N4	125	125
Wakefield District PCT	5N3	88	96
<i>East Midlands Strategic Health Authority area</i>	—	899	957
Bassetlaw PCT	5ET	20	17
Derby City PCT	5N7	63	48
Derbyshire County PCT	5N6	172	161
Leicester City PCT	5PC	75	71
Leicestershire County and Rutland PCT	5PA	103	93
Lincolnshire Teaching PCT	5N9	140	138
Northamptonshire Teaching PCT	5PD	122	248
Nottingham City PCT	5EM	91	85
Nottinghamshire County Teaching PCT	5N8	110	93
<i>West Midlands Strategic Health Authority area</i>	—	1,235	1,186
Birmingham East and North PCT	5PG	93	97
Coventry Teaching PCT	5MD	48	47
Dudley PCT	5PE	75	73
Heart of Birmingham Teaching PCT	5MX	75	71
Herefordshire PCT	5CN	30	24
North Staffordshire PCT	5PH	46	55
Sandwell PCT	5PF	72	56
Shropshire County PCT	5M2	53	45
Solihull Care Trust	TAM	59	56
South Birmingham PCT	5M1	70	72
South Staffordshire PCT	5PK	132	134
Stoke on Trent PCT	5PJ	87	80
Telford and Wrekin PCT	5MK	41	43
Walsall Teaching PCT	5M3	52	40
Warwickshire PCT	5PM	107	101
Wolverhampton City PCT	5MV	59	62
Worcestershire PCT	5PL	132	128
<i>East of England Strategic Health Authority area</i>	—	1,069	991
Bedfordshire PCT	5P2	83	80
Cambridgeshire PCT	5PP	59	78
East and North Hertfordshire PCT	5P3	107	105
Great Yarmouth and Waveney PCT	5PR	42	28
Luton PCT	5GC	43	41
Mid Essex PCT	5PX	56	51
Norfolk PCT	5PQ	132	128
North East Essex PCT	5PW	46	45
Peterborough PCT	5PN	50	43
South East Essex PCT	5P1	62	55
South West Essex PCT	5PY	94	68

*NHS hospital and community health services: Health Visitors in England by strategic health authority area and by primary care trust as at 30 September each year*

		Headcount	
		2008	2009
Suffolk PCT	5PT	117	106
West Essex PCT	5PV	53	47
West Hertfordshire PCT	5P4	112	105
<i>London Strategic Health Authority area</i>	—	1,577	1,513
Barking and Dagenham PCT	5C2	24	14
Barnet PCT	5A9	31	39
Bexley Care Trust	TAK	59	50
Brent Teaching PCT	5K5	41	41
Bromley PCT	5A7	80	82
Camden PCT	5K7	32	27
City and Hackney Teaching PCT	5C3	50	47
Croydon PCT	5K9	70	63
Ealing PCT	5HX	64	57
Enfield PCT	5C1	46	44
Greenwich Teaching PCT	5A8	52	42
Hammersmith and Fulham PCT	5H1	69	65
Haringey Teaching PCT	5C9	7	2
Harrow PCT	5K6	45	36
Havering PCT	5A4	36	81
Hillingdon PCT	5AT	56	55
Hounslow PCT	5HY	37	36
Islington PCT	5K8	31	33
Kensington and Chelsea PCT	5LA	30	38
Kingston PCT	5A5	26	32
Lambeth PCT	5LD	45	34
Lewisham PCT	5LF	82	93
Newham PCT	5C5	36	44
Redbridge PCT	5C8	42	40
Richmond and Twickenham PCT	5M6	40	32
Southwark PCT	5LE	100	74
Sutton and Merton PCT	5M7	95	97
Tower Hamlets PCT	5C4	52	62
Waltham Forest PCT	5NC	50	0
Wandsworth PCT	5LG	57	55
Westminster PCT	5LC	56	55
<i>South East Coast Strategic Health Authority area</i>	—	769	764
East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT	5P7	70	58
Eastern and Coastal Kent PCT	5QA	148	160
Hastings and Rother PCT	5P8	40	35
Medway PCT	5L3	58	49
Surrey PCT	5P5	163	159
West Kent PCT	5P9	91	89
West Sussex PCT	5P6	119	133
<i>South Central Strategic Health Authority area</i>	—	784	758
Berkshire East PCT	5QG	78	71
Berkshire West PCT	5QF	87	81
Buckinghamshire PCT	5QD	103	107
Hampshire PCT	5QC	192	168
Isle of Wight NHS PCT	5QT	19	18
Milton Keynes PCT	5CQ	58	60
Oxfordshire PCT	5QE	157	134
Portsmouth City Teaching PCT	5FE	48	47
Southampton City PCT	5L1	42	72

*NHS hospital and community health services: Health Visitors in England by strategic health authority area and by primary care trust as at 30 September each year*

		Headcount	
		2008	2009
<i>South West Strategic Health Authority area</i>	—	1,117	1,073
Bath and North East Somerset PCT	5FL	43	41
Bournemouth and Poole Teaching PCT	5QN	78	74
Bristol PCT	5QJ	123	10
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly PCT	5QP	109	101
Devon PCT	5QQ	116	89
Dorset PCT	5QM	89	84
Gloucestershire PCT	5QH	134	131
North Somerset PCT	5M8	39	41
Plymouth Teaching PCT	5F1	70	67
Somerset PCT	5QL	101	122
South Gloucestershire PCT	5A3	52	51
Swindon PCT	5K3	35	31
Torbay Care Trust	TAL	26	31
Wiltshire PCT	5QK	96	93

*Notes:*

1. England and Strategic Health Authority area totals include a small number of staff employed by NHS trusts. Year on year organisation level health visitor figures may fluctuate due to the migration of staff and services between organisations.

2. Data Quality: The NHS Information Centre for health and social care seeks to minimise inaccuracies and the effect of missing and invalid data but responsibility for data accuracy lies with the organisations providing the data. Methods are continually being updated to improve data quality where changes impact on figures already published. This is assessed but unless it is significant at national level figures are not changed. Impact at detailed or local level is footnoted in relevant analyses.

*Source:*

The NHS Information Centre for health and social care Non-Medical Workforce Census

### Home Care Services

**Mr. Stephen O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the Personal Care at Home Bill's compliance with the new burdens doctrine for local authorities. [325756]

**Phil Hope:** As with all policies and programmes, the Government are committed to assessing the costs to local authorities of the Personal Care at Home Bill. The Bill will be funded through a combination of additional grant and from local authority efficiency savings. It will not now be introduced until April 2011.

It is right to expect councils to play their part alongside central Government to help deliver this new commitment. We believe that councils have room to use efficiency savings because:

The costs of delivering local services are now much lower, with recent low levels of inflation and affordable pay settlements;

The Budget 2010 announced new measures to free-up local resources through reducing burdens and targets and reductions in ring-fencing; and

We have provided record investment in local government, with local authorities receiving £8.6 billion more over the current Spending Review period.

### Hospitals: Manpower

**Mr. Vara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many (a) doctors and (b) nurses were employed in the NHS in each hospital in North West Cambridgeshire constituency (i) in 1997 and (ii) on the latest date for which figures are available. [324595]

**Ann Keen:** Information is not available in the format requested. The number of doctors and nurses employed in NHS hospitals in Cambridgeshire in 1997 and 2009 are shown in the following table.

*Hospital and Community Health Services (HCHS): doctors and nurses within specified organisations*

	Number (Headcount)	
	As at 30 September each year	
	1997	2009
<i>Cambridge University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust</i>		
HCHS Doctors	614	1,263
Nurses	1,814	3,028
<i>Hinchingbrooke Healthcare NHS Trust</i>		
HCHS Doctors	152	169
Nurses	673	601
<i>Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust</i>		
HCHS Doctors	285	416
Nurses	1,026	1,189

*Source:*

The NHS Information Centre for health and social care medical and dental workforce census and the NHS Information Centre for health and social care non-medical workforce census y challenge.

### Hospitals: Mortality Rates

**Harry Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will request the Care Quality Commission to investigate the reasons for the hospital standardised mortality ratio in 2007-08 at hospitals in (a) Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust, (b) Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, (c) Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, (d) Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, (e) Colchester Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust, (f) George Eliot Hospital NHS Trust, (g) Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, (h) Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust, (i) Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust, (j) James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, (k) Mayday Healthcare NHS Trust, (l) Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, (m) Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust, (n) Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust, (o) North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust, (p) Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, (q) Royal Bolton Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, (r) Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, (s) Southampton University Hospitals NHS Trust, (t) Stockport NHS Foundation Trust, (u) Tameside Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, (v) United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust, (w) University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust, (x) University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust and (y) Warrington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust. [325066]

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** From 1 April, national health service providers of regulated activities are required by law to be registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC), and assessed against a set of 16 safety and quality requirements. CQC has, therefore, recently scrutinised the registration applications of all NHS trusts in the country.

In December 2009 CQC conducted a regional review of all trusts identified as having high hospital standardised mortality ratios and considered this information as part of the registration process for every trust, alongside other data.

Where CQC does not have sufficient evidence of compliance with the requirements, it can impose conditions on the trust's registration, to force it to improve essential levels of quality and safety within timescales specified by CQC.

Once trusts are registered, CQC continues to look at their mortality rates and will continuously monitor compliance with the essential safety and quality requirements, as part of the new system of regulation.

### Hospitals: Parking

**Mr. Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will issue guidance to NHS hospital trusts on charging their staff to park in trust car parks; and if he will make a statement. [325235]

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** The Department has issued guidance to the national health service on the operation of controlled car parking schemes 'Income Generation: Car Parking Charges—Best Practice for Implementation', a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

This guidance provides general advice on factors that should be considered when establishing a policy for staff car parking, but recognises that specific decisions need to be taken at a local level.

### Hospitals: Security

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what the annual cost of security staff in NHS hospitals in Shropshire has been in each year since 1997; [325408]

(2) what percentage of security cameras at Shropshire NHS hospitals were found to be faulty in each year since 1997. [325409]

**Ann Keen:** This information is not collected centrally. However, it should be available direct from Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust, Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic and District Hospital NHS Trust, Shropshire County Primary Care Trust, and South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

### Influenza

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the written ministerial statements of 23 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 40WS, on pandemic flu and 22 March 2010, *Official Report*, columns 11-12WS, on departmental expenditure limits and administration cost limits (2009-10), for what reasons there was a transfer (a) of £200 million from his Department's capital budget to its revenue budget to meet existing commitments on pandemic flu and (b) of £100 million from his Department's revenue budget to its capital budget to meet existing commitments on pandemic flu. [325398]

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** The £200 million transfer from the Department's capital budget to its revenue budget was based on the information available on pandemic flu commitments at the time of the Spring Parliamentary Estimate exercise.

Since the Spring Parliamentary exercise, the Department has finalised the budgeting and accounting treatment of pandemic flu commitments and consequently undertook the transfer of £100 million from the revenue budget to the capital budget.

These transfers do not change the overall funding is available to the Department.

#### Injuries: North Yorkshire

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has made an estimate of the number of (a) broken bones, (b) lacerations, (c) fractures and (d) sprains that were diagnosed in respect of patients in each age group in hospitals in (i) Easingwold and (ii) North Yorkshire during the Christmas and new year period of 2009-10. [325282]

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** The information is not available in the format requested. Hospital episode statistics for accident and emergency attendances, during the month of December 2009, for dislocation, fracture, joint injury, amputation, laceration and sprain as well as ligament injury are due to be published on 9 April 2010. Statistics for January 2010 are due to be published on 11 May 2010.

#### Mental Health Services: Advocacy

**Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 22 March 2010, *Official Report*, columns 125-6W, on mental health services: advocacy, how frequently information on the availability and accessibility of independent mental health advocates in hospitals which detain patients under the Mental Health Act 1983 will be collected and published; and in which quarter he expects the annual report of the Care Quality Commission to be laid before Parliament. [325172]

**Phil Hope:** The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the new integrated regulator for health and adult social care from 1 April 2009. They have told us that:

the implementation of independent mental health advocacy is of particular interest to them;

the availability and accessibility of advocacy will be a standard question asked on all of their regular visits to hospitals from 1 April 2010;

the results will be reflected in annual statements on every hospital (in the independent sector) or trust (in the national health service) that they visit and that these statements will be published on the CQC website towards the end of each calendar year; and

a CQC report containing initial findings on the implementation of independent mental health advocacy in 2009-10 is planned for publication in October 2010.

NHS

**Mr. Stephen O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health in which (a) primary care trust area and (b) parliamentary constituency each NHS acute trust is located. [325757]

**Mr. Mike O'Brien:** This information is not held centrally. NHS trusts provide a range of services from a number of locations.

Information on constituencies served by primary care trusts is available on the Department's website at:

[www.info.doh.gov.uk/nhsfactsheets.nsf](http://www.info.doh.gov.uk/nhsfactsheets.nsf)

#### NHS: Finance

**Mr. Lansley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department spent on each programme funded from its centrally-managed budget in each year since 1997-98; and how much his Department plans to spend on each programme it plans to fund from its centrally-managed budget in 2010-11; and how much such planned expenditure on each planned programme is (a) committed and (b) uncommitted. [324515]

**Phil Hope:** It would be at disproportionate cost for the Department to list expenditure from each individual central budget programme for the years in question due to the very large number of budgets and several departmental reorganisations.

2010-11 central budget programme plans have not yet been finalised. The Department does not report their central budgets on a committed/not-committed basis.

While the detailed (by programme) expenditure is not readily available, we do routinely publish planned expenditure for centrally managed budgets in the annual departmental report publication. The following table provides departmental report references for this expenditure.

Table 1: Departmental report table references (figure numbers) for published figures on three areas of centrally managed budgets<sup>1</sup>

	Centrally funded initiatives and services and special allocation (CFISSA)	Central health and miscellaneous services (CHMS)	Personal social services (PSS) provision for adults
1996 (1997-99)	Annex A	Annex A	Annex A
1999	4.8	Annex B—Fig B1	5.1
2000	11.6	11.14	11.15
2001	6.6	6.13	6.14
2003	6.6	6.12	6.13
2004	6.6	6.12	6.13
2005	6.9	6.13	6.14
2006	6.9	6.16	6.17
2007	9.21	9.22	9.28
2008	9.18	9.19	9.28
2009	5.1	5.1	5.1

<sup>1</sup> Three areas include: Centrally Funded Initiatives and Services and Special Allocation (CFISSA); Central Health and Miscellaneous Services (CHMS); and Personal Social Services (PSS) provision for adults (PSS)

Aggregated expenditure for the centrally managed budgets from 1997-98 to 2008-09 is contained in the operating cost statement in each year of the Department's Resource Accounts publication. However, these data do not show the expenditure by detailed programme. We are planning on making the equivalent 2009-10 expenditure data available in July 2010.

#### NHS: Standards

**Mr. Lansley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the evidential basis is for the use of models of risk prediction for the NHS Health Check. [324874]

**Ann Keen:** The NHS Health Check programme is a universal and systematic programme for everyone between the ages of 40 and 74 that will assess individuals' risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and diabetes and will support people to reduce or manage that risk through individually tailored advice. The programme was developed on the basis of advice from the National Screening Committee, is based on guidance produced by the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) and is both cost effective and clinically effective.

The risk assessment stage of the NHS Health Check uses a risk engine to calculate a person's 10-year risk of cardiovascular disease. Evidence on cardiovascular risk estimation has developed considerably, with a number of risk engines available, including Framingham and QRISK. These have been calibrated to reflect risk factors within specific populations, such as ethnicity, and a number of scientific reviews have been published on their validity. The Department takes its advice from NICE on matters such as which risk engines are most appropriate for the national health service to use. NICE has recently revised its guidance to allow the NHS to decide locally which risk engine best predicts risk for their population mix.

Of equal importance however is that people are given individually tailored advice and the necessary follow up which is suitable for their particular circumstances to help them manage or reduce their risk. The advice, interventions and follow up that are offered will involve professional judgment and will help ensure that everyone's individual needs are met.

#### Nurses: Schools

**Dan Rogerson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 29 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 806W, on nurses: schools, to how many school clusters in England a school nurse is allocated. [325733]

**Ann Keen:** This information is not collected centrally.

It is for primary care trusts in partnership with local authorities, strategic health authorities and other local stakeholders to determine how best to use their funds to meet national and local priorities for improving health, and to commission services accordingly.

#### Opposition

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether his Department has undertaken costings of the policies of the (a) Conservative party and (b) Liberal Democrat party at the request of Ministers or special advisers in the last 36 months. [324245]

**Phil Hope:** I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Exchequer Secretary (Sarah McCarthy-Fry) on 30 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1044W.

#### Prosthetics: Health Services

**Justine Greening:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what statistics his Department collects on (a) demographic, (b) diagnosis and (c) treatment information held at prosthetics service centres in England; and whether there are plans to replace the National Amputee Statistical Database. [325064]

**Phil Hope:** Between 1997 and 2007 the National Amputee Statistical Database collected data from a number of providers using its minimum dataset which contained fields such as:

Patient Number;  
Date of Birth;  
Commissioning Code;  
Centre Code;  
Gender;  
Category of patient;  
Ethnic Origin;  
Date of Referral following Amputation;  
Date of Amputation;  
Level of Amputation; and  
Cause of Amputation (Aetiology).

There are no plans at present to replace the database.

Health Episodes Statistics which collates data on the care provided by national health service hospitals and for NHS hospital patients treated elsewhere does not include any data on application of prosthesis as this rarely occurs in a hospital setting.

Health Episodes Statistics does measure in-patient amputations using the OPCS classification of Interventions and Procedures. When combined with other data from the Admitted Patient Care Commissioning Data Set (age, sex, postcode, ethnicity, diagnosis), Health Episodes Statistics can be used to retrieve a great deal of the amputation data previously provided by National Amputee Statistical Database.

Comprehensive central data is not collected about the numbers of people with prostheses or the number of prostheses that are supplied.

#### Radiotherapy

**Mr. Stephen O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health with reference to his Department's press release of 18 August 2009 on proton therapy services, what progress his Department is making in identifying possible providers of proton therapy treatment for NHS patients in England; what estimate he has made of the maximum annual number of patients who could be treated at a proton therapy treatment centre; and if he will make a statement. [325722]

**Ann Keen:** We are currently evaluating bids to identify a shortlist of potential providers of proton beam therapy (PBT) services in England. The project team will then work with those trusts to develop a full business case by the end of 2010. We estimate that 1,500 patients could benefit from PBT per annum.

**Mr. Stephen O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 4 March 2010, *Official Report*, columns 1400-01W, on medical treatments abroad, in which countries the patients for whom proton therapy treatment was commissioned in (a) 2008-09 and (b) 2009-10 were treated. [325723]

**Ann Keen:** In 2008-09 patients were treated in France and Switzerland.

In 2009-10 patients were treated in France, Switzerland and the United States of America.

**Mr. Stephen O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 4 March 2010, *Official Report*, columns 1400-01W, on medical treatments abroad, which individuals sit on the proton reference panel. [325724]

**Ann Keen:** The following sit on the panel. Not all members are involved in clinical decisions on the referral of patients abroad for treatment.

Dr. Adrian Crellin, Consultant Clinical Oncologist, St. James's Institute of Oncology. Chairman-NCG National Reference Panel.

Professor Roger Taylor, Clinical Director Cancer Services, ABM University Health Board, Professor of Clinical Oncology, Swansea Clinical School.

Donna Routsis, Lead Research Radiographer, Addenbrooke's NHS Trust.

Dr. Neil Burnet, Consultant Oncologist, Addenbrooke's NHS Trust.

Dr. Nicola Thorp, Consultant Paediatric Oncologist, Clatterbridge Cancer Centre.

Professor Bleddyn Jones, Director, Gray Institute for Radiation Oncology and Biology University of Oxford.

Dr. Susan Short, Consultant and Senior Lecturer in Clinical Oncology, University College Hospital London.

Dr. Daniel Ford, Consultant Clinical Oncologist, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust.

Dr. Michelle Kwok-Williams, Consultant Clinical Oncologist, St. James's Institute of Oncology.

Dr. Edmund Jessop, Medical Advisor, National Commissioning Group.

Sarah Watson, Senior Commissioning Manager National Commissioning Group.

**Mr. Stephen O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 4 March 2010, *Official Report*, columns 1400-01W, on medical treatments abroad, what the average cost of an individual course of proton therapy treatment commissioned from abroad was in (a) 2008-09 and (b) 2009-10; and what the total cost of such treatment was in each such year. [325725]

**Ann Keen:** The average cost of an individual course of proton therapy treatment commissioned from abroad in 2008-09 was £28,000. This figure relates to the treatment of six patients at a total cost of £168,000.

The average cost of an individual course of proton therapy treatment commissioned from abroad in 2009-10 was £62,000. This figure relates to the treatment of 26 patients at a total cost of £1,600,000. These figures are taken from draft accounts which have yet to be finalised.

The increase in average cost in 2009-10 over 2008-09 relates to patients being treated in the United States of America for the first time in 2009-10.

### Shropshire

**Mr. Paterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what official visits (a) he and (b) his predecessors have made to Shropshire in the last five years. [325412]

**Phil Hope:** The Department holds records of visits dating back three years. Since 2007, the Secretary of State for Health has not visited Shropshire.

### Social Services: Cambridgeshire

**Mr. Lansley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the number of people eligible for adult social care in Cambridgeshire; and what methodology was used to calculate the estimate of the cost of providing such care for a person in Cambridgeshire of £103 a week. [323666]

**Phil Hope:** Councils with Adult Social Services Responsibilities (CASSRs) assess peoples' eligibility for social care services according to statutory guidance, issued under section 7(1) of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970, entitled "Fair Access to Care Services—guidance on eligibility criteria for adult social care", which was issued in 2003. A copy has already been placed in the Library.

"Fair Access to Care Services" is shortly to be replaced by new statutory guidance, "Prioritising need in the context of Putting People First: A whole system approach to eligibility for social care", which was published on 25 February 2010 and will take effect from 1 April 2010. A copy has been placed in the Library.

Data on the number of adults aged 18 and over receiving social care services funded by CASSRs are collected and published by the NHS Information Centre for health and social care as part of the Referrals, Assessments and Packages of Care (RAP) return.

The table shows the number of service users aged 18 and over receiving social care services in Cambridgeshire in 2008-09 by service category.

*Number of service users receiving social care services in Cambridgeshire, 2008-09<sup>1</sup> Cambridgeshire*

Type of service	Number of clients (rounded numbers)
Residential care	2,075
Nursing care	930
Community based Services <sup>3, 4</sup>	12,775
<i>Of which:</i>	
Day Care	2,465
Direct Payments	645
Equipment and adaptations	4,915
Home Care	6,165
Meals	260
Other	555
Professional support	2,020
Short term residential, not respite	30
Total number of clients receiving services <sup>2</sup>	15,130

<sup>1</sup> Data for 2008-09 are provisional, final data are expected to be published on 28 April 2010.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Total number of clients receiving services' is the number of clients receiving one or more services at some point during the year, excluding double counting.

<sup>3</sup> This is the total number of clients receiving community based services during the year, excluding double counting.

<sup>4</sup> A client may have received more than one type of community based service during the year and thus there may be some double counting across service categories.

Source:  
RAP form P1 and P2f

There has been no estimate made that providing adult social care in Cambridgeshire would cost £103 a week. The impact assessment which accompanies the Personal Care at Home Bill sets out the methodology used to estimate the additional costs of providing free personal care at home nationally to those in the highest

need. The figure was arrived at using information contained in annex B of the impact assessment—which has already been placed in the Library—as follows:

1. Average number of hours of personal care per week provided for those in highest need = 6.54.
2. Estimated cost of that care per hour, based on 2011-12 prices = £15.75
3. 6.54 x £15.75 = £103 per week.

### Social Services: Finance

**Mr. Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of people in each local authority area (*a*) have been assessed for a personal social care budget, (*b*) are in receipt of payment from a personal social care budget, (*c*) have declined to use a personal social care budget and (*d*) are awaiting assessment for a personal social care budget. [325052]

**Phil Hope** [*holding answer 30 March 2010*]: The NHS Information Centre for health and social care collects data on the number of clients (aged 18 and over) planned to receive services commissioned or provided by councils with adult social service responsibilities (CASSRs) via a personal budget as at 31 March 2009.

Information on the numbers of people assessed for, awaiting assessment for, or declining a personal (social care) budget is not collected centrally.

The table provides provisional information on the number of clients planned to receive services provided or commissioned by CASSRs via a personal budget as at 31 March 2009. Final data for 2008-09 are expected to be published on 28 April 2010.

*The number of clients (aged 18 and over) planned to receive services via a personal budget as at 31 March 2009<sup>1</sup> by CASSR—As at 31 March 2009*

	<i>Rounded</i>
	<i>Clients (aged 18 and over) receiving personal budgets<sup>2</sup></i>
Barking and Dagenham	35
Barnet	25
Barnsley	475
Bath And Somerset Unitary Authority (UA)	145
Bedfordshire	0
Bexley	0
Birmingham	3
Blackburn with Darwen UA	0
Blackpool UA	0
Bolton	3
Bournemouth UA	4
Bracknell Forest UA	0
Bradford	3
Brent	165
Brighton and Hove UA	30
Bristol UA	3
Bromley	0
Buckinghamshire	0
Bury	0
Calderdale	3
Cambridgeshire	55
Camden	0
Cheshire	20
City of London	0
Cornwall	0
Coventry	300
Croydon	4

*The number of clients (aged 18 and over) planned to receive services via a personal budget as at 31 March 2009<sup>1</sup> by CASSR—As at 31 March 2009*

	<i>Rounded</i>
	<i>Clients (aged 18 and over) receiving personal budgets<sup>2</sup></i>
Cumbria	3
Darlington UA	0
Derby UA	0
Derbyshire	3
Devon	935
Doncaster	140
Dorset	105
Dudley	0
Durham	20
Ealing	3
East Riding of Yorkshire UA	0
East Sussex	0
Enfield	0
Essex	485
Gateshead	0
Gloucestershire	0
Greenwich	3
Hackney	5
Halton UA	0
Hammersmith and Fulham	0
Hampshire	1,290
Haringey	0
Harrow	135
Hartlepool UA	0
Havering	0
Herefordshire UA	65
Hertfordshire	2,150
Hillingdon	0
Hounslow	0
Isle of Wight UA	15
Isles of Scilly	0
Islington	0
Kensington and Chelsea	55
Kent	0
Kingston Upon Hull UA	0
Kingston Upon Thames	25
Kirklees	370
Knowsley	5
Lambeth	0
Lancashire	90
Leeds	3
Leicester UA	120
Leicestershire	0
Lewisham	0
Lincolnshire	205
Liverpool	3
Luton UA	3
Manchester	3
Medway Towns UA	0
Merton	0
Middlesbrough UA	20
Milton Keynes UA	0
Newcastle Upon Tyne	3
Newham	150
Norfolk	265
North East Lincolnshire UA	0
North Lincolnshire UA	0
North Somerset UA	5
North Tyneside	4
North Yorkshire	0
Northamptonshire	75
Northumberland	4

The number of clients (aged 18 and over) planned to receive services via a personal budget as at 31 March 2009<sup>1</sup> by CASSR—As at 31 March 2009

	Rounded Clients (aged 18 and over) receiving personal budgets <sup>2</sup>
Nottingham UA	0
Nottinghamshire	265
Oldham	2,080
Oxfordshire	10
Peterborough UA	10
Plymouth UA	0
Poole UA	0
Portsmouth UA	10
Reading UA	3
Redbridge	310
Redcar and Cleveland UA	3
Richmond Upon Thames	550
Rochdale	3
Rotherham	0
Rutland UA	580
Salford	0
Sandwell	10
Sefton	0
Sheffield	25
Shropshire	0
Slough UA	0
Solihull	0
Somerset	20
South Gloucestershire UA	0
South Tyneside	3
Southampton UA	5
Southend-on-Sea UA	4
Southwark	0
St. Helens	420
Staffordshire	30
Stockport	0
Stockton-On-Tees UA	3
Stoke-On-Trent UA	4
Suffolk	235
Sunderland	3
Surrey	3
Sutton	0
Swindon UA	0
Tameside	0
Telford and The Wrekin UA	0
Thurrock UA	0
Torbay UA	4
Tower Hamlets	0
Trafford	0
Wakefield	0
Walsall	0
Waltham Forest	0
Wandsworth	0
Warrington UA	0
Warwickshire	80
West Berkshire UA	30
West Sussex	910
Westminster	40
Wigan	35
Wiltshire	0
Windsor and Maidenhead UA	0
Wirral	3
Wokingham UA	30
Wolverhampton	0
Worcestershire	10

The number of clients (aged 18 and over) planned to receive services via a personal budget as at 31 March 2009<sup>1</sup> by CASSR—As at 31 March 2009

	Rounded Clients (aged 18 and over) receiving personal budgets <sup>2</sup>
York UA	75

<sup>1</sup> Data for 2008-09 is provisional, final data is expected to be published on 28 April 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Two personal budgets are currently being rolled out and councils are at varying stages of roll out, therefore there is a large variation in figures at CASSR level.

<sup>3</sup> Missing data items.

<sup>4</sup> Data less than six has been suppressed.

Figures within the table include clients in receipt of direct payments as part of a personal budget, but do not include carers in receipt of direct payments or with a personal budget.

An England total for the figures is not provided as data was not provided by all CASSRs. This data is provisional, and final data, including an England total with calculated estimations for those councils that have not provided data will be published on 28 April 2010.

### Vaccination

**Anne Milton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he plans to publish guidance on the vaccination of women and girls who do not meet the criteria for inclusion in the national programme; and what estimate he has made of the number of women and girls to whom that guidance will apply. [325388]

**Gillian Merron:** The aim of the national human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme is the prevention of cervical cancer. HPV is passed through sexual contact which means that the vaccine is most effective if given before the start of sexual activity. The HPV vaccination programme is based on advice from the independent Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation which considered a number of factors, including cost-effectiveness. Girls aged 12 to 13 years in school year 8 are routinely offered the vaccine and girls up to the age of 18 are being offered the vaccine in a time-limited catch up programme. General practitioners can only prescribe the HPV vaccine outside the specified cohorts in exceptional clinical circumstances.

The Immunisation website provides information about cervical cancer and the HPV vaccine to girls that are 18 or over and therefore too old to be part of the national vaccination programme. The website also urges them to attend cervical screening when they are invited from the age of 25.

The website address is:

[www.immunisation.nhs.uk/Vaccines/HPV/Having\\_the\\_vaccination/Im\\_over\\_18\\_and\\_would\\_like\\_to\\_have\\_the\\_HPV\\_vaccination.\\_Can\\_I\\_get\\_it\\_done\\_by\\_my\\_GP](http://www.immunisation.nhs.uk/Vaccines/HPV/Having_the_vaccination/Im_over_18_and_would_like_to_have_the_HPV_vaccination._Can_I_get_it_done_by_my_GP)

### Viral Diseases

**Paul Rowen:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the number of people who are infected with the xenotropic murine leukaemia virus-related virus. [325313]

**Ann Keen:** We have made no estimate of the number of people infected with xenotropic murine leukaemia virus-related virus.

## CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

### CAFCASS

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what recent estimate he has made of the time taken by staff of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service to prepare for an Ofsted inspection. [307487]

**Dawn Primarolo:** The resources used in preparation for, and facilitation of, an Ofsted inspection were estimated as being equivalent to some 4,000 hours of staff time, comprising a combination of front-line, managerial and support staff. This estimate was made during 2009 as part of the work on an issues analysis carried out by PA Consulting for DCSF and relates to a single Cafcass service area.

### Children In Care: Missing Persons

**Mark Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many children went missing from care in each local authority area in each of the last five years. [320236]

**Dawn Primarolo:** The information has been placed in the Libraries.

### Children: Abuse

**John Mann:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what steps his Department is taking to ensure that recent reforms to child protection systems are (a) implemented and (b) resourced in full in Nottinghamshire. [322871]

**Dawn Primarolo:** The Department's children and learners teams in regional Government offices support and challenge local areas to improve all outcomes for children including child protection and wider safeguarding performance. Since the publication in 2009 of Lord Laming's report "The Protection of Children in England: A Progress Report" we have reviewed the role of those teams in relation to safeguarding and have also recruited a new cadre of specialist safeguarding advisers. These will be in place from April 2010.

Expenditure on children's social care, which includes child protection, has increased nationwide from £2.22 billion in 1997-98 to £5.73 billion in 2008-09 in cash. This is a real terms increase of over 90 per cent., equating to an average real terms increase of 6.1 per cent. per annum. Nottinghamshire has benefited from this extra investment.

The Secretary of State announced on 17 March the publication of "The Government's Response to Lord Laming: One Year On" an update on progress made thus far on implementing the Government's Action Plan in response to Lord Laming's report. It includes a commitment of an investment of more than £200 million in 2010-11 to support the social work reform programme as well as a new Local Social Work Improvement Fund of £23 million in 2010-11.

### Children: Human Trafficking

**Mark Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what steps his Department has taken to increase provision of accommodation for child victims of trafficking. [320235]

**Dawn Primarolo:** Effective matching of a child to the right carer to meet their needs is a key factor in achieving stable and secure placements for all looked after children, including unaccompanied children from abroad who may have been trafficked. Local authorities will be responsible for identifying the most suitable placement for the children they look after and each authority will have arrangements in place to secure a sufficient number of good quality placements.

The Department supports a number of initiatives designed to increase the supply of good quality placements for children in care, including children who may be victims of trafficking. For example, we are currently revising the National Minimum Standards for children's homes and fostering services to improve the focus on outcomes for children, so that all are given personalised support in line with their needs and wishes. We are also working with the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) to develop and implement foster care training, support and development standards and improve professional devolvement for children's homes staff.

These initiatives are designed to increase the number of suitably skilled foster carers and residential care staff at local level with the right skills to support all looked after children, including any child who may be a victim of trafficking.

### Children: Internet

**Mr. Hunt:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how much funding from the Home Access Programme has been allocated; how many families have received assistance from the scheme; and what the maximum limit is on expenditure by each family on (a) a laptop and (b) connectivity. [313473]

**Mr. Coaker** [*holding answer 26 January 2010*]: We expect the total expenditure on the Home Access programme to be in the region of £300 million, with around £240 million of this released in the current spending period (to March 2011) for the pilot and specialist activities and the initial stage (key stages 2 and 3) of the national programme. 270,000 households are due to benefit from the current phase of funding, with over 30,000 already benefitting to date. Customers will be able to get a full package grant worth up to £528, or up to £400 for a device and support only or up to £180 for connectivity only.

**John Mann:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what steps he is taking to minimise the risks to children arising from their use of the internet. [322814]

**Dawn Primarolo:** Prof. Tanya Byron's report, "Safer Children in a Digital World" was published in March 2008 and its recommendations on child internet safety were accepted in full by the Government. Subsequently, the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) was launched in September 2008. Chaired by DCSF and Home Office ministers, the council unites over 160 organisations from across industry, the third sector, law enforcement and the devolved administrations to deliver the recommendations of the report.

UKCCIS published its first strategy on 9 December 2009, the first of its kind in the world, which laid out the steps that will be taken to help keep children safe online. These include: a £2 million public awareness campaign, launched in February this year, to help parents keep their children safe online; a range of guidance for internet companies, as a further step towards effective self regulation for the industry; and the planned introduction of e-safety to the National Curriculum for Primary Schools in England from September 2010. The UKCCIS strategy can be found at:

[www.dcsf.gov.uk/UKCCIS/](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/UKCCIS/)

The Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families asked Prof. Tanya Byron to report on the progress made on improving children's digital safety following her original review in 2008. Prof. Byron's findings are due to be reported shortly.

### Children: Social Services

**Chris McCafferty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what recent assessment he has made of the standard of services for vulnerable children in Calderdale; and what steps his Department plans to take to ensure the protection of children.

[320121]

**Dawn Primarolo** [*holding answer 3 March 2010*]: Ofsted published a report of an inspection of safeguarding and looked after children's services on 26 February which judged Calderdale metropolitan borough council's safeguarding services to be "inadequate". After meeting with representatives of the council I have decided that the council should be issued with an improvement notice; that an external chair should be appointed to the Improvement Board established by the council; and, to offer some additional support to ensure that these services improve quickly and sustainably.

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families on how many occasions each Government Office of the Regions agreed to extend a deadline for the publication of a serious case review in the most recent year for which figures are available.

[323263]

**Dawn Primarolo** [*holding answer 22 March 2010*]: Government offices do not have a role in granting extensions for the publication of SCRs. However, paragraph 8.15 of the statutory guidance "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2006) (as amended), which has now been superseded, said that

"there should be a discussion with the Government Office for the region to agree a timescale for completion of SCRs"

The revised "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2010) is clear that, where it emerges that a SCR cannot be completed within the six-month time scale, the LSCB is responsible for revising its timetable and immediately consulting with the relevant Government office. Where a LSCB decides an extension is necessary, it should provide the Government office with a revised project plan and an update on progress, which includes action already taken and an explanation for the extension. The role of the Government office includes providing advice, support and challenge to LSCBs.

The following table gives details of SCRs that were in progress at the time where one or more extensions were granted between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009. The SCRs in the table were not necessarily commissioned within the same period.

*Number of serious case reviews (SCRs) for which one or more deadline extensions were granted between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009*

Region	Number
East	19
East Midlands	6
London	14
North East	9
North West	36
South East	23
South West	12
West Midlands	14
Yorkshire and Humber	35

**Michael Gove:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what the average number of pages was in a (a) report on and (b) summary of a serious case review in the most recent period for which figures are available.

[323490]

**Dawn Primarolo** [*holding answer 22 March 2010*]: The figures requested are not recorded centrally.

The statutory guidance "Working Together to Safeguard Children" (2010) sets out the requirements for SCR overview reports and executive summaries. Their length will vary according to the different features and levels of complexity of individual cases. Working Together does, however, include a template for overview reports and for executive summaries. The latter was added to the guidance in March 2010 to help ensure that each executive summary provides a full, thorough account of the SCR and includes the actions to be taken.

### Departmental Buildings

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many smoking shelters have been built for his Department's staff in the last five years; and at what cost.

[324363]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The Department for Children Schools and Families have erected two smoking shelters in the last five years at a cost of £7,146.

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families whether his Department provides subsidised gym facilities for its staff.

[324567]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The Department for Children, Schools and Families does operate a subsidised gym facility at its Sanctuary Buildings headquarters. The subsidy to the managing contractor amounts to £62,500 per annum which is offset by the annual aggregate of membership charges which is £57,516. So far the total cost to the Department from the opening of the gym to the present time is £20,609.

### Departmental Energy

**Gregory Barker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what (a) voltage optimisers and (b) equivalent technologies are used within buildings occupied by his Department.

[324982]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The Department for Children, Schools and Families has three voltage optimisers in its London HQ building which cover all incoming supplies.

#### Departmental Food

**Mr. Drew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what account his Department's food procurement policy takes of animal welfare.

[325534]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The internal food catering contract is predicated on the Public Sector Food Procurement Initiative (PFSPI) that supports the Government's "Strategy for Sustainable Farming in Food—Facing the Future". In addition, the supplier is encouraged to meet Food Assurance Standards through accredited bodies such as Red Tractor, Marine Stewardship Council and the RSPCA Freedom Food Schemes.

#### Departmental Higher Civil Servants

**Mr. David Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many grade 2 civil servants are employed in his Department.

[324955]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson** [*holding answer 29 March 2010*]: Grade 2 as a description of staff level is no longer in general use. Senior civil servants in similar sized roles are now referred to as being in Pay Band 3 and usually have the job title of Director General. The Department has four full time equivalents at this level.

#### Departmental Information Officers

**Mr. MacNeil:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many (a) communications and (b) press officers were in post in his Department on the latest date for which information is available.

[320793]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The Department employs 26 press officers.

The Department's human resources systems holds information on individuals by their generalist civil service grade and therefore it is not possible to identify everybody engaged in communications work in the department, and this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

#### Departmental Internet

**Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families (1) how many designs for its (a) internal website and (b) intranet his Department and its predecessor have commissioned since 2005; and what the cost was of each such design;

[321997]

(2) pursuant to the answer of 3 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 1293W, on departmental internet, what the cost was of the website redesign.

[321936]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The Department's main website homepage

[www.dcsf.gov.uk](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk)

and standard web page template have undergone four redesigns since 2005, as a result of changes to the Department's name and brand. The dates and costs of the redesigns, excluding VAT, are outlined in the following table.

	Cost (£)
April 2007	6,300
July 2007	2,370
September 2008	0
June 2009	7,390

The cost of the September 2008 redesign was met from internal resource. The Department's intranet has had one redesign since 2005, and the total cost was £116,525.

#### Departmental Marketing

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how much his Department, its predecessor and its agencies spent on promotional items carrying the Department's branding and logo in the last five years; and what those items were.

[324719]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** It is not possible to provide a comprehensive answer without incurring disproportionate cost.

#### Departmental Official Hospitality

**Mr. Philip Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what the five most expensive hospitality events hosted by his Department and its agencies were in the last three years; and what the (a) cost and (b) purpose of each such event was.

[324665]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The requested information cannot be supplied without incurring disproportionate cost.

#### Departmental Telephone Services

**Mr. Oaten:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what public information helplines his Department runs; and what contracts have been awarded by his Department for the running of them.

[323510]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The Department holds records centrally of six policy-specific helplines which it sponsors. These and the associated costs are outlined in the following table. The Department also jointly runs the Frank helpline but does not fund it.

A full survey of helplines and contracts would be possible only at disproportionate cost.

Helpline	Cost (£)
School Performance Tables contact centre	17,124.00
Sexwise	800,414.00
Childcare pilot services helpline	550,575.00
Childcare Helpline	129,224.00
Sure Start helpline	65,000.00
Extended Services helpline	9,000.00

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what the (a) average time taken to answer a call, (b) average waiting time for members of the public during a call, (c) percentage of calls dropped or not answered and (d) average length of calls was in call centres run by the Child Support Agency and its successor body in the latest period for which figures are available. [323963]

**Helen Goodman:** I have been asked to reply.

The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission is responsible for the child maintenance system. I have asked the Child Maintenance Commissioner to write to the hon. Member with the information requested and I have seen the response.

*Letter from Stephen Geraghty, dated 6 April 2010:*

In reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission, the Secretary of State promised a substantive reply from the Child Maintenance Commissioner.

You asked the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, what the (a) average time to answer a call, (b) average waiting time for members of the public during a call, (c) percentage of calls dropped or not answered and (d) average length of calls was in call centres run by the Child Support Agency and its successor body in the latest period for which figures are available. [323963]

The Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission (the Commission) took over responsibility for the Child Support Agency (CSA) on 1 November 2008.

In the period April 2009 to December 2009, (a) the average time to answer telephone calls was 7 seconds, (b) The average waiting time a client is kept on hold during a call was 9 seconds, (c) 0.25 per cent of calls were not answered from the queue of waiting callers. In addition, 6 per cent did not reach the queue as they were terminated by the client during the automated touchtone routing to the most appropriate queue, (d) The average handling time (from the moment a telephone call is answered to the end of the call) was 5 minutes and 2 seconds.

As well as the CSA the Commission provides an information and support service to separated families known as Child Maintenance Options. If you would like details of call handling by this service please let me know.

I hope you find this answer helpful.

#### Departmental Temporary Employment

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families pursuant to the answer of 16 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 734W, on departmental temporary employment, what the total amount spent on employing temporary staff was in each of the last three years. [324330]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The Department was created on 28 June 2007. The Department has used three agencies for the provision of its temporary staff (admin and clerical)—Adecco, Reed Employment and Hays Office

Support. The contract with Adecco expired on 31 August 2007, when new contracts were established with Reed and Hays.

Total spend with the agencies:

2007/08—£1.7 million

2008/09—£3.3 million

April 2009 to December 2010—£2.0 million

For a small number of specialist temporary staff and interim managers the Department has used other agencies but information on this could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

#### Electronic Warfare

**Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what assessment he has made of the effects on the critical infrastructure of his Department of an electromagnetic pulse strike caused (a) deliberately and (b) through solar activity. [321756]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The Department for Children, Schools and Families is able to draw on the Government's Cyber Security Strategy of the United Kingdom, published alongside and reflected in the National Security Strategy update of June 2009, and on the advice of the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) and CESA as part of its Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity planning.

It would not be in the interests of national security to provide information about specific vulnerabilities, assessments or protective measures relating to electromagnetic pulse attack.

#### Families: Government Assistance

**Michael Gove:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many recipients of Family Unit Current Grants there are expected to be in each category in 2010-11. [315726]

**Dawn Primarolo [holding answer 5 February 2010]:** We do not recognise the grant as described.

#### Free School Meals

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many white boys eligible for free school meals finished compulsory schooling in (a) 2003 and (b) 2008. [321259]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson [holding answer 9 March 2010]:** The available information is shown in the table. This is based on pupils who were aged 15 as at 31 August prior to the academic year reported and who turned 16 in the academic year reported i.e. those in the final year of compulsory schooling.

*State funded secondary<sup>1, 2</sup> and special schools<sup>3</sup>: Number and proportion of white British boys aged 15 known to be eligible for free school meals<sup>4, 5</sup>.  
6. As at January 2003 and 2008—England*

	White British boys aged 15		
	All pupils <sup>4, 5</sup>	Number known to be eligible for free school meals <sup>4, 5, 6</sup>	Percentage known to be eligible for free school meals <sup>7</sup>
2003	232,540	26,680	11.5

State funded secondary<sup>1, 2</sup> and special schools<sup>3</sup>: Number and proportion of white British boys aged 15 known to be eligible for free school meals<sup>4, 5</sup>.  
6. As at January 2003 and 2008—England

	All pupils <sup>4, 5</sup>	White British boys aged 15	
		Number known to be eligible for free school meals <sup>4, 5, 6</sup>	Percentage known to be eligible for free school meals <sup>7</sup>
2008	247,720	25,100	10.1

<sup>1</sup> Includes middle schools as deemed.

<sup>2</sup> Includes city technology colleges and academies.

<sup>3</sup> Includes maintained and non-maintained special schools, excludes general hospital schools.

<sup>4</sup> Includes pupils who are sole and dual main registrations.

<sup>5</sup> Boys aged 15 as at 31 August the previous year.

<sup>6</sup> Those eligible may choose not to take up their offer of a free school meal for various reasons eg through preference or through non-attendance on the day. Pupils are counted as eligible only if they meet the eligibility criteria and make a claim.

<sup>7</sup> The number of white British boys aged 15 known to be eligible for free school meals expressed as a percentage of the total number of white British boys aged 15.

Note:

Numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10.

### Freud Communications

**Mr. Hurd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families pursuant to the answer of 15 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 1068W, on Freud Communications: public relations, for what reasons the Year of Music was not undertaken in-house by departmental staff; and on what dates Ministers in his Department have met Matthew Freud in the last 12 months. [324404]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** Tune In—Year of Music was conceived as a branded campaign aimed at making a significant and high-profile communications impact and intended to involve well-known music professionals, to interest and engage young people in music.

The challenge to unite the music sector under a common brand, with the aim of maximising the reach and impact of existing and future music opportunities for young people, as well as developing and implementing the Tune In programme of activity, and securing effective media coverage at national and local level, required a specialist integrated communications agency, as outlined in the campaign brief. Freud Communications were successful in a competitive pitch process run by the Department.

Neither Ministers nor officials in the Department have met with Matthew Freud in the last 12 months.

### GCE A-level

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many and what proportion of pupils (a) eligible and (b) not eligible for free school meals achieved three A grades at A-level in (i) 1997 and (ii) the most recent year for which figures are available. [312063]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson [holding answer 19 January 2010]:** Pupil level data relating to free school meal eligibility was not collected in 1997.

In 2008, 160 (3.5 per cent.) pupils eligible for free school meals achieved three or more A grades at A-level. The percentage is of all pupils eligible for free schools meals entered for at least one GCE/Applied GCE A level/Double Award in 2008.

This compares with 14,431 (10.5 per cent.) pupils not eligible for free school meals achieved three or more A grades at A-level. The percentage is of all pupils not

eligible for free schools meals entered for at least one GCE/Applied GCE A level/Double Award in 2008.

The figures relate to 16 to 18-year-olds (age at start of academic year, i.e. 31 August 2007) in maintained schools only who were eligible for free school meals when they were academic age 16. The figures do not include the achievement of students in further education sector colleges previously eligible for free school meals.

### GCE A-Level: Disadvantaged

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many pupils eligible for free school meals achieved (a) one or more A to G grades, (b) three or more A to C grades and (c) three or more A grades at A-level in (i) 1980 and (ii) the most recent year for which records are available. [310370]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson [holding answer 12 January 2010]:** Pupil level data relating to free school meal eligibility was not collected as far back as 1980, therefore we have provided 2003.

Figures for 2003 are shown in the following table.

	Pupils eligible for FSM achieving	
	Number	Percentage
(a) One or more A to E grades	4,610	93.4
(b) Three or more A to C grades	845	17.1
(c) Three or more A grades	94	1.9

Figures for 2008 are shown in the following table.

	Pupils eligible for FSM achieving	
	Number	Percentage
(a) One or more A to E grades	4,516	97.5
(b) Three or more A to C grades	1,370	29.6
(c) Three or more A grades	160	3.5

Percentages indicated are of all students eligible for free school meals who were entered for at least one GCE/Applied GCE A level/Double Award in 2008.

The figures relate to 16 to 18-year-olds (age at start of academic year, i.e. 31 August 2007) in maintained schools only who were eligible for free school meals when they were academic age 16. The figures do not include the achievement of students in further education sector colleges previously eligible for free school meals.

### GCE A-Levels: Disadvantaged

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many white (a) boys and (b) girls eligible for free school meals achieved three A grades at A-level in (i) 1980 and (ii) the most recent year for which figures are available.

[310103]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson** [holding answer 11 January 2010]: Pupil level data on ethnicity and eligibility for free school meals was not collected as far back as 1980.

In 2008, 38 (4.2 per cent.) white British boys and 29 (2.6 per cent.) white British girls eligible for free school meals achieved three or more A grades at A-level. Percentages indicated are of white British students eligible for free school meals of the appropriate gender who were entered for at least one GCE/Applied GCE A level/Double Award in 2008.

*Number of schools at which the indicated percentage of pupils at the end of key stage 4 achieve five or more GCSEs at grade A\*-C including English and maths GCSEs*

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
30 per cent. or more	2,843	2,979	2,991	3,130	3,242
50 per cent. or more	1,637	1,756	1,760	1,846	1,912
70 per cent. or more	805	842	776	780	795

Only schools with greater than 10 pupils at the end of key stage 4 have been counted. Academies and city technology colleges have been included.

Figures are cumulative in nature. If a school is featured in the 70 per cent. or more row then it will also be in the 30 per cent. and 50 per cent. rows.

**Michael Gove:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many pupils in

The figures relate to 16-18 year olds (age at start of academic year, i.e. 31 August 2007) in maintained schools only who were eligible for free school meals when they were academic age 16. The figures do not include the achievement of students in further education sector colleges previously eligible for free school meals.

### GCSE

**Mr. Laws:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many and what proportion of secondary schools there were at which over (a) 30, (b) 50 and (c) 70 per cent. of pupils achieved five GCSEs at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, in each of the last five years. [304750]

**Mr. Coaker:** The following table gives the requested time series.

receipt of free school meals achieved seven GCSEs, including (a) physics, (b) biology, (c) chemistry, (d) mathematics, (e) English, (f) English literature and (g) history in (i) 1997, (ii) 2003, (iii) 2008 and (iv) 2009.

[304902]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The requested figures have been presented in the following table. However, achievement data matched to pupil characteristics (including free school meals) are not available for 1997.

	2003		2008		2009	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Physics	1,012	1.2	2,053	2.7	2,932	3.9
Biology	1,207	1.5	2,558	3.4	3,376	4.5
Chemistry	1,112	1.4	2,104	2.8	2,963	4.0
Mathematics	51,155	63.0	54,154	72.4	56,584	76.1
English	52,077	64.2	54,282	72.6	56,818	76.4
English Literature	47,129	58.1	42,321	56.6	41,263	55.5
History	13,565	16.7	12,143	16.2	12,459	16.8

<sup>1</sup> In 2003 figures are based on pupils aged 15-years-old whereas in 2008 and 2009 they are based on pupils at the end of key stage 4.

<sup>2</sup> In 2003 figures include GNVQs as GCSE equivalents. In 2008 and 2009, figures include additional equivalent qualifications approved for pre-16 use.

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many and what proportion of pupils (a) eligible and (b) not eligible for free school meals did not achieve A\* to C at GCSE in both English and mathematics in (i) 1997 and (ii) 2009. [312245]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson** [holding answer 21 January 2010]: Pupil level data relating to free school meal eligibility was not collected as far back as 1997. The

information requested is presented for 2003 (the earliest available year) and 2009 in the following table and is for maintained schools only.

	Number of pupils not achieving A*-C at GCSE in both English and mathematics	Proportion of pupils not achieving A*-C at GCSE in both English and mathematics (percentage)
2003		
Eligible for FSM	67,195	82.8
Not eligible for FSM	266,217	53.9

	Number of pupils not achieving A*-C at GCSE in both English and mathematics	Proportion of pupils not achieving A*-C at GCSE in both English and mathematics (percentage)
2009		
Eligible for FSM	54,190	72.9
Not eligible for FSM	227,963	45.2

Note:

Figures for 2003 are based on pupils aged 15 and for 2009 are based on pupils at the end of key stage 4.

Source:

National Pupil Database

Proportion of pupils at end of key stage 4 achieving 5+ GCSEs at grades A\*-C including English and mathematics

FSM group (based on pupils of all ages in school)	2005	2006	2007	2008	Percentage 2009
Schools with fewer than 10 FSM pupils	55	57	58	60	62
Schools with 20 or more FSM pupils	26	29	32	34	38
Schools with 50 or more FSM pupils	24	27	31	34	37

Notes:

1. Figures for 2009 are revised. All other years are final.

2. Pupils present in the >50 per cent. FSM data will also be present in the >20 per cent. FSM data.

**Michael Gove:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many pupils who gained five GCSEs at grades A\* to C did so by passing a qualification equivalent to (a) one, (b) two and (c) more than two GCSEs in 2009. [315529]

**Mr. Coaker:** There were 444,302 pupils at the end of key stage 4 who achieved five or more GCSEs (or equivalent) at A\*-C in 2009. A number of these pupils achieved less than 5 GCSE passes (full, double awards and short courses) and reached the threshold by including non-GCSE qualifications (referred to as equivalents) in their attainment. Of the pupils including non-GCSE qualifications to reach the threshold:

22,605 achieved four or 4.5 GCSE qualifications and therefore at least include non-GCSE qualifications up to the size of one full GCSE.

17,791 achieved between three and four GCSE qualifications and therefore include non-GCSE qualifications at least equivalent to between one and two full GCSEs.

39,367 achieved less than three GCSE qualifications and therefore include non-GCSE qualifications equivalent to more than two GCSEs.

**Lynne Featherstone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what proportion of students in each London borough achieved five or more grades at A\* to C at GCSE or equivalent in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [319062]

**Mr. Coaker:** The information requested can be found in the following Statistical First Release (SFR) (table 17):

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000909/index.shtml>

### GCSE: Disadvantaged

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many and what proportion of white (a) boys and (b) girls eligible for free school meals did not achieve A\* to C at GCSE in both English and mathematics in (i) 1997 and (ii) 2009. [312243]

**Phil Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what proportion of children obtained five GCSEs at grades A\* to C including English and mathematics in schools where (a) fewer than 10, (b) more than 20 and (c) more than 50 per cent. of pupils were eligible for free school meals in each year since 2005. [314581]

**Mr. Coaker:** The information requested is presented in the following table and covers maintained mainstream schools:

**Mr. Coaker [holding answer 21 January 2010]:** Pupil level data relating to ethnicity and Free School Meal eligibility was not collected as far back as 1997. The information requested for 2003 (the earliest year available) and 2009 is presented in the following table and is for maintained schools only.

	Number of white pupils eligible for free school meals not achieving A*-C at GCSE in both English and mathematics	Proportion of white pupils eligible for free school meals not achieving A*-C at GCSE in both English and mathematics (percentage)
2003		
Boys	24,404	86.9
Girls	23,022	83.8
2009		
Boys	20,684	80.0
Girls	18,723	75.0

Note:

Figures for 2003 are based on pupils age 15 and for 2009 are based on pupils at the end of Key Stage 4.

Source:

National Pupil Database

### Gifted Children: Sussex

**Norman Baker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what percentage of pupils in (a) Lewes constituency and (b) East Sussex have participated in gifted and talented programmes in each year since 2000. [308532]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The Department does not collect data about participation in gifted and talented programmes. Through the School Census schools are asked to confirm the number of gifted and talented pupils they have identified. The following tables show the number and percentage of children identified as gifted and talented in the local authority of East Sussex and in the constituency of Lewes in the January census between 2006, when the question was first asked, and 2009.

2006 records include secondary G&T pupil data only. Otherwise, figures include primary<sup>1</sup> and secondary<sup>1, 2</sup> school data broken down by the number<sup>3</sup> and percentage of gifted and talented pupils.

<sup>1</sup> All data include middle schools as deemed.

<sup>2</sup> All data include city technology colleges and academies.

<sup>3</sup> All data show solely registered pupils only.

*Maintained primary and state-funded secondary<sup>1, 2</sup> schools: Number<sup>3</sup> and percentage of gifted and talented pupils, as at January each year, in East Sussex local authority*

	Maintained primary schools		State-funded secondary schools		Primary and secondary schools	
	Number of gifted and talented pupils	Percentage of gifted and talented pupils	Number of gifted and talented pupils	Percentage of gifted and talented pupils	Number of gifted and talented pupils	Percentage of gifted and talented pupils
2009	3,770	10.7	4,154	15.0	7,920	12.6
2008	4,020	11.3	4,190	14.9	8,210	12.9
2007	4,570	12.8	3,750	13.1	8,320	12.9
2006	—	—	2,990	10.4	—	—

*Maintained primary<sup>1</sup> and state-funded secondary<sup>1, 2</sup> schools: Number<sup>3</sup> and percentage of gifted and talented pupils, as at January each year, in the Lewes constituency*

	Maintained primary schools		State-funded secondary schools		Primary and secondary schools	
	Number of gifted and talented pupils	Percentage of gifted and talented pupils	Number of gifted and talented pupils	Percentage of gifted and talented pupils	Number of gifted and talented pupils	Percentage of gifted and talented pupils
2009	580	10.0	840	18.7	1,410	13.8
2008	620	10.6	930	20.7	1,550	15.0
2007	740	12.7	540	11.7	1,280	12.3
2006	—	—	630	13.4	—	—

<sup>1</sup> All data include middle schools as deemed.

<sup>2</sup> All data include city technology colleges and academies.

<sup>3</sup> All data show solely registered pupils only.

Note:

Pupil numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10.

Source:

School Census.

A data table showing information for all constituencies in England has been placed in the Libraries.

### Health Visitors: Children's Centres

**Justine Greening:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many Sure Start (a) centres and (b) health visitors there are in each London borough; and how many such (i) centres and (ii) health visitors he expects there to be in each London borough in each of the next five years.

[323776]

**Dawn Primarolo:** The following table details how many designated Sure Start children's centres there were in each London borough at the end of February 2010, and how many are planned to open or merge for the rest of 2010.

Local authority	Designated children's centres at end of February 2010	Net expected increase due to planned designations and mergers for rest of 2010
Barking and Dagenham	16	2
Barnet	18	4
Bexley	13	3
Brent	15	5
Bromley	19	3
Camden	17	0
Croydon	26	0
Ealing	22	6
Enfield	24	0
Greenwich	24	1
Hackney	19	1

Local authority	Designated children's centres at end of February 2010	Net expected increase due to planned designations and mergers for rest of 2010
Hammersmith and Fulham	15	0
Haringey	17	2
Harrow	13	3
Havering	13	1
Hillingdon	12	6
Hounslow	14	4
Islington	16	0
Kensington and Chelsea	8	0
Kingston upon Thames	11	0
Lambeth	29	-1
Lewisham	17	2
London, City of	1	0
Merton	11	0
Newham	20	0
Redbridge	14	8
Richmond upon Thames	9	3
Southwark	21	0
Sutton	14	0
Tower Hamlets	23	0
Waltham Forest	17	0
Wandsworth	23	1
Westminster, City of	15	0

There are currently no further children's centres planned beyond 2010. Figures for the number of current health visitors working in children's centres in each London borough, and the numbers expected in the next five years, are not collected centrally.

**Languages: GCSE**

**Mr. Graham Stuart:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many and what percentage of pupils at the end of Key Stage Four in current National Challenge schools (*a*) took and (*b*)

achieved a grade A\* to C at GCSE in a modern foreign language in each of the last five years. [314465]

**Mr. Coaker:** The number and percentage of pupils in the 2009 national challenge schools, who entered and achieved a GCSE in modern foreign language is as follows:

	<i>Number of pupils who entered MFL in national challenge schools</i>	<i>Percentage of pupils who entered MFL in national challenge schools</i>	<i>Number of pupils who achieved GCSE A*-C MFL in national challenge schools</i>	<i>Percentage of pupils who achieved A*-C MFL in national challenge schools</i>
2005	10,818	33.9	4,278	13.4
2006	7,805	23.7	3,526	10.7
2007	6,679	19.0	3,277	9.3
2008	7,280	19.9	3,636	10.0
2009	6,447	17.0	3,227	8.5

*Notes:*

1. Qualifications included are full GCSEs, GCSE double awards and GCSEs in Applied subjects only.
2. The percentage of pupils achieving is based on all pupils in national challenge schools, not just those entered.
3. A pass rate based on those entered can be calculated by dividing the number of pupils who achieve a grade A\* -C by the number of pupils entered for MFL.

**Mathematics: GCE A-Level**

**Tim Loughton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many white (*a*) boys and (*b*) girls eligible for free school meals achieved an A grade in A-level further mathematics in (i) 1980 and (ii) the most recent year for which figures are available. [310104]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson** [*holding answer 11 January 2010*]: Pupil level data relating to ethnicity and free school meal eligibility was not collected as far back as 1980.

In 2008, nine (42.9 per cent.) white British boys and three (50.0 per cent.) white British girls eligible for free school meals achieved an A grade in A-level further mathematics. The percentages indicated are of white British students eligible for free school meals of the appropriate gender who were entered for a GCE A level in further maths.

The figures relate to 16 to 18-year-olds (age at start of academic year, i.e. 31 August 2007) in maintained schools only who were eligible for free school meals when they were academic age 16. The figures do not include the achievement of students in further education sector colleges previously eligible for free school meals.

**Multiple Births**

**Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what steps his Department is taking to assist multiple birth families; and if he will make a statement. [325184]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** High quality parenting and family support services in children's centres with appropriate outreach can help ensure that all parents—including families with twins and other multiple births—have access to the support they need to give them the best possible start in life. There are now over 3,000 designated children's centres many of which run Twins Groups providing support and activities for parents with twins enabling them to meet and share their experiences. The Schools Admissions Code includes guidance at paragraph 2.25 on siblings and twins, stating:

'the admissions authorities for primary schools should ensure in their oversubscription criteria that siblings (including twins, triplets or children from other multiple births) can attend the same primary school, as long as they comply with the Education (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 1998'.

**Music: Primary Education**

**Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what steps his Department is taking to encourage the teaching of music in primary schools; and if he will make a statement. [320841]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** Music is a legal entitlement for all young people aged five-14 in England as it is a statutory subject within the national curriculum.

In addition the Government have, since 1999, provided funding to local authorities through the Standards Fund Music Grant to support local music provision. Since the Government's pledge in 2001, that over time all primary pupils who wanted to should have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument, the widening of access to instrumental provision at Key Stage 2 has been a priority call on the Music Grant. Also, since 2006, there has also been an additional element to the grant solely for delivering local instrumental and vocal tuition to children at Key Stage 2. Some local authorities also make their own contribution to local music making.

Another important element of the Government's £332 million commitment to music education 2008-11 is their support for the national singing programme, 'Sing Up'. The programme, which receives £10 million a year, aims, by March 2011, to enable every primary school-aged child to take part in daily high-quality singing activity, and for all primary schools in England to become 'Singing Schools'.

Over the current academic year, music is being celebrated through "Tune In—Year of Music". The wide range of music related experiences available to children and young people across England will be showcased over the year, and all children—whatever their talent—are being encouraged to get involved in music.

### Olympic Games: Canada

**Mr. Don Foster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many (a) Ministers and (b) officials from his Department are planning to attend the Winter Olympics in Vancouver in February 2010; and what estimate he has made of the cost of such attendance. [310854]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** Since 1999, the Government have published, on an annual basis, a list of all overseas visits by Cabinet Ministers costing in excess of £500, as well as the total cost of all ministerial travel overseas. From 2007/08, the list was extended to include all Ministers. The list also provides information on the number of officials who accompany Ministers. Copies are available in the Libraries. Information for 2009/10 will be published as soon as the information is available.

All travel by Ministers and civil servants is undertaken in accordance with the 'Ministerial Code' and 'Civil Service Management Code', respectively.

### Primary Education: Curriculum

**Mr. Gibb:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how much his Department had spent on preparations for implementation of the recommendations of the Rose Review of the Primary Curriculum on the latest date for which figures are available. [324173]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** From the beginning of the current financial year until the end of February 2010, the Department had spent £158,000 on preparations for implementation of the recommendations of the Rose Review of the primary curriculum.

In addition to this figure, the Department has allocated £2,014,000 this financial year to the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency for this purpose and a further £250,000 to the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services.

### Public Sector

**Mr. Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what steps his Department is taking to share services, functions and back offices with local authorities as part of the Total Place initiative. [323958]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The Government's report on Total Place will be published alongside Budget 2010.

### School Meals

**Michael Gove:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what guidance schools have been given on the implementation of the Healthy Eating in Schools paper; and how much has been spent on that implementation. [316092]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** In March 2006, Ofsted published its report 'Healthy Eating in Schools', which assessed how schools had responded to guidance on school meals and healthier eating.

The report made a small number of recommendations relating to: the training of catering staff; lunch time management and the dining environment; school food policies; involvement of pupils and parents and quality monitoring by schools. Those recommendations have all been addressed over the course of the last four years, during which time mandatory standards have been introduced for all maintained primary, secondary and special schools, covering all food served by schools during a school day.

A number of pieces of guidance have been produced by the School Food Trust, as the Department's key delivery partner, including: A Fresh Look at the School Meal Experience; Guide to the Nutrient-based Standards for School Lunches; Nutritional Analysis Support Package (NASP); Calculating the Nutrient Content of School Lunch Recipes: A Caterer's Guide; and Special Educational Needs Schools guidance.

There has been significant government investment of over £676 million between 2005 and 2011. This includes funding to help support the cost of a school lunch, to help build or refurbish kitchen and dining facilities, to better support the development of training centres for the school food work force and for improved marketing and communications to increase take up.

### Schools: Cadets

**Lembit Öpik:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how much Government funding school combined cadet forces have received in each year since 2005; and if he will make a statement. [323634]

**Mr. Kevan Jones:** I have been asked to reply.

The information is not held centrally.

Funding for any particular MOD Sponsored Cadet Force, such as the Combined Cadet Forces, comes from a wide variety of sources including the single services, the use of subsidised facilities, and non-Government sources such as local donations and fundraising efforts. To determine how much funding has been allocated to specific Cadet Forces would require a manual search of records and incur a disproportionate cost.

The Government remain committed to the Cadet Organisation whose origins date back 150 years. It is one of the oldest and most successful voluntary youth organisations in the world. Today it numbers 131,000 young people, led by 25,000 adult volunteers, in well over 3,000 sites across the country.

### Schools: Email

**Michael Gove:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how much (a) primary, (b) secondary, (c) special and (d) all schools spent on maintaining email addresses for school staff and pupils in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [311879]

**Mr. Coaker:** Schools are funded for technology purposes by the Harnessing Technology Grant. Schools are also free to use money from other sources on technological services and infrastructure. However, data on funding of email addresses specifically is not collected, and

schools and local authorities are free to decide locally how to apportion the funding across the various types of technology.

#### Schools: Racial Discrimination

**Mr. Pope:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families if he will extend the terms of reference of his Department's review of the provisions which prevent the promotion of racism in schools to include the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir. [311557]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** The Secretary of State announced on 30 September 2009 that he had asked Maurice Smith, the former chief inspector of schools, to look into the issue of racism in maintained schools and report his findings by the end of January 2010. Maurice Smith's report was published on 12 March and a copy placed in the Libraries.

The Secretary of State has accepted the recommendations in full and has asked Maurice Smith to conduct an additional review looking at the safeguards in place in independent schools. The handling of the review will be a matter for Maurice Smith to determine, although he will be free to gather evidence about the activities of any group or organisation. He has been asked to submit his report to the Secretary of State in September 2010.

#### Schools: Racism

**Michael Gove:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families if he will place in the Library a copy of the list of all organisations consulted by (a) Mr Maurice Smith and (b) officials of his Department assisting Mr Maurice Smith as part of Mr Smith's review of provisions against the promotion of racism in schools. [314908]

**Mr. Coaker** [*holding answer 2 February 2010*]: The Secretary of State announced on 30 September 2009 that he had asked Maurice Smith, the former chief inspector of schools, to look into the issue of racism in maintained schools and report his findings by the end of January 2010. Maurice Smith's report was published on 12 March. The report includes details of all the organisations that contributed to the review and a copy has been placed in the Libraries.

A copy of the report has been placed in the Libraries when it was published, and it included details of all the organisations that contributed to the review.

#### Schools: St. George's Day

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families whether his Department plans to promote St. George's Day in schools in 2010. [322600]

**Ms Diana R. Johnson:** There are no plans for the Department to promote St. George's day in schools. The citizenship curriculum already contributes towards

building and promoting a British identity and shared British values, and it offers opportunities to explore what it is to be British. However, it is a local decision for schools to choose if they wish to celebrate St. George's day or not.

#### Schools: Vetting

**Robert Neill:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Peterborough of 25 February 2010, *Official Report*, column 695W, on vetting: local education authorities, what the timetable is for the review of requirements for Criminal Records Bureau disclosures. [323035]

**Dawn Primarolo:** I refer the hon. Member to the written ministerial statement of 23 March 2010, *Official Report*, column 29WS.

#### Social Services: Children

**Chris Huhne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what proportion of children in custody have previously been in care. [323434]

**Dawn Primarolo:** This information is not collected centrally.

However, Her Majesty's inspectorate of prisons (HMIP) and the Youth Justice Board publish an annual survey of children and young people in custody. The survey for 2008-09 involved 1,100 young people detained in 18 establishments across the secure estate. This reported that 24 per cent. of young men and 49 per cent. of the 54 young women in the survey had been looked after at some point in their lives. It is important to understand that the overall number of children with a care background in custody is small relative to the total number of looked-after children above the age of criminal responsibility.

This report is available from the HMIP website at:  
<http://www.justice.gov.uk/inspectorates/hmi-prisons/index.htm>

#### Sure Start Programme: Greater London

**Justine Greening:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many Sure Start (a) centres and (b) health visitors there were in each London borough in each year since 2003. [325563]

**Dawn Primarolo:** The following table details how many designated Sure Start children's centres there were in each London borough in each year since 2003.

Figures for the number of health visitors working in children's centres in each London borough since 2003 were not collected centrally.

Local authority	Year of designation								
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	'10	
Barking and Dagenham	0	0	3	6	11	14	16	16	
Barnet	0	0	0	2	3	13	14	18	

Local authority	Year of designation							
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	'2010
Bexley	0	0	1	4	12	12	13	13
Brent	0	0	1	4	5	11	14	14
Bromley	0	0	0	1	10	15	18	18
Camden	1	7	7	10	15	16	17	17
Croydon	0	1	1	3	12	20	20	26
Ealing	2	2	5	10	18	22	22	22
Enfield	0	0	0	7	11	17	24	24
Greenwich	1	1	1	9	16	23	24	24
Hackney	1	1	1	8	13	19	19	19
Hammersmith and Fulham	0	1	4	5	6	12	14	15
Haringey	0	4	7	10	15	17	17	17
Harrow	0	0	0	3	7	9	13	13
Havering	0	0	0	0	3	10	11	13
Hillingdon	1	1	1	1	5	12	12	12
Hounslow	0	0	2	3	13	14	14	14
Islington	2	8	8	9	11	16	16	16
Kensington and Chelsea	0	0	0	4	7	8	8	8
Kingston upon Thames	0	0	0	0	4	7	11	11
Lambeth	1	1	1	12	14	24	28	28
Lewisham	0	1	1	3	8	15	17	17
London, City of	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1
Merton	0	0	1	1	7	9	11	11
Newham	0	0	0	5	13	20	20	20
Redbridge	0	0	2	4	6	14	14	14
Richmond upon Thames	0	0	0	0	6	9	9	9
Southwark	2	2	3	9	14	21	21	21
Sutton	0	0	1	1	4	10	14	14
Tower Hamlets	1	1	1	10	14	21	21	23
Waltham Forest	0	1	3	6	12	14	17	17
Wandsworth	0	0	2	3	12	16	23	23
Westminster, City of	0	4	4	5	7	12	12	15
Total	12	36	61	159	315	473	525	543

<sup>1</sup> Figures valid up until end of February

### Teachers: Males

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many primary schools in each (a) local authority area and (b) constituency did not have a male teacher at the latest date for which information is available. [324535]

**Mr. Coaker:** Information on the number of local authority maintained nursery and primary schools in each local authority and parliamentary constituency that do not have a male teacher in service, in England, January 2009, the latest information available, have been placed in the House Libraries.

### Teenage Pregnancy

**Mr. Anthony Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families what plans he has for a successor strategy to the teenage pregnancy strategy. [324023]

**Dawn Primarolo:** On 24 February 2010—to coincide with the publication of the latest (2008) under-18 conception

data by the Office for National Statistics—The Department and the Department of Health jointly published “Teenage Pregnancy Strategy: Beyond 2010”, which sets out the Government’s on-going commitment to reducing England’s teenage pregnancy rate. A copy can be found at the following link:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/healthandwellbeing/teenagepregnancy>

### Truancy

**Grant Shapps:** To ask the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families how many and what proportion of primary school pupils were persistent absentees in each (a) local authority area and (b) constituency in each of the last 10 years. [324537]

**Mr. Coaker:** Information on persistent absentees in primary schools is only available from 2006/07 onwards. Information at local authority level for 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09, and parliamentary constituency level for 2007/08 and 2008/09 has been placed in the Libraries. To provide further information would incur disproportionate cost.

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