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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
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**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

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House of Commons

Monday 17 October 2011

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EDUCATION

The Secretary of State was asked—

Academies (GCSE Results)

1. **Annette Brooke** (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (LD): What assessment he has made of the 2011 GCSE results for academies; and if he will make a statement. [74418]

The Minister of State, Department for Education (Mr Nick Gibb): The 2011 GCSE self-reported figures from academies suggest an increase of 5.6 percentage points in the proportion of pupils achieving five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and maths. That increase is, once again, greater than the historical national improvement rates for all maintained schools. Individual 2011 GCSE school level results will be not be available until January 2012.

Annette Brooke: I thank the Minister for his answer, and I congratulate all those pupils who did so well this summer, but I seek assurances from him. In the event of less than 10% of an academy's pupils achieving five A to C grades at GCSE, or even of less than 5%, would he expect full involvement from the local authority, playing a key role? Also, will he be giving support from his Department?

Mr Gibb: Where the performance of an academy is unacceptably low, we will ensure that urgent action is taken to bring about sustained improvement. There is nothing to prevent local authorities from offering help to underperforming academies, but ultimately it is for the academy or the sponsor to decide whether to accept that help. The success of the academies programme has meant a changing role for local authorities and they will have an important role to play as the champions of pupils and parents in the area, ensuring both sufficiency and quality of places.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): Many head teachers and governors in my constituency tell me that they feel pressurised into converting to academy status, not only because of the financial incentives but because it is the Government's policy that as many

schools as possible should become academies. Could the Minister say whether that is the case and explain the role of local authorities in state education in future?

Mr Gibb: There is no compulsion to convert to academy status, but all the evidence from around the world is that three factors give rise to higher performance: autonomy, high-quality teaching and external accountabilities—and it is autonomy that head teachers seek when they apply for academy status. There is no incentive, financially, to become an academy, as academies are funded on exactly the same basis as maintained schools.

Mr James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con): Wootton Bassett comprehensive was, until Friday, an outstanding comprehensive, having achieved outstanding results in all five categories. Will the Minister join me in congratulating what from today will be called Royal Wootton Bassett academy on its achievement?

Mr Gibb: I congratulate both Royal Wootton Bassett and the school. It is a tremendous achievement for the town, and the academic results that my hon. Friend cites are a tribute to the teachers at that school.

Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): I am pleased to join the Minister in welcoming the GCSE results of academies in 2011; their progress in English and maths is especially welcome. Some of them have focused successfully on improving vocational education—progress which is not reflected in the Government's E-bac. Will the Secretary of State give serious consideration to creating a technical baccalaureate as has been proposed by many, including the Minister's noble friend Lord Baker?

Mr Gibb: May I welcome the hon. Gentleman to his post? I know that he has a passion for education and I look forward to working with him in the months and years ahead.

The English baccalaureate is designed to increase the take-up in our schools of history, geography and modern foreign languages, which has declined significantly in recent years, particularly in modern languages since 2004. That is something we seek to reverse. However, the E-bac is sufficiently small to enable pupils to take a vocational subject in addition to the E-bac and to take music, art, economics—[*Interruption.*]*]*—and religious education, indeed, and all the other subjects that pupils want to take.

Stephen Twigg: We will return to that in later questions.

The Government give the impression that they are interested only in the progress of academies and free schools. I welcome the great results that academies have achieved, but can the Minister tell me what proportion of the schools that he and the Secretary of State have visited are neither academies nor free schools?

Mr Gibb: Certainly the vast majority of schools that I have visited are maintained schools, and that may well be the case for the Secretary of State—we can send the hon. Gentleman the figures. It is important that we raise standards right across the board, and that is why the Secretary of State has raised the floor standards for all schools to 35% this year and to 40% from next year.

By the end of the Parliament, we expect all schools to have at least half of their pupils achieving five good GCSEs.

GCSE Mathematics

Duncan Hames (Chippenham) (LD): Question 2, Mr Speaker—no, Question 3.

Mr Speaker: We are grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who is discussing mathematics.

3. **Duncan Hames:** What his policy is on the inclusion of financial education in the mathematics GCSE. [74420]

The Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning (Mr John Hayes): I should have more than a normal spring in my step today, because my son, William, passed his 11-plus, and I heard about it this weekend.

The Government are currently reviewing the national curriculum, which will go out to public consultation in the new year. We will await the outcomes of that work before making any decisions on the content of GCSE mathematics, to ensure that it aligns with the new national curriculum and reflects the core mathematical knowledge and skills that young people need.

Duncan Hames: Only in this place could three follow one.

Having taken as many maths qualifications as I possibly could when at school, I certainly appreciate the eternal beauty of geometry, but does the Minister not accept that, for many school leavers in today's world, it is more valuable to understand the true value of a compound annual growth rate on an investment or, more likely, the annual percentage rate on a loan?

Mr Hayes: The hon. Gentleman is right that finance education matters. Indeed, as a governor of the George Ward school in his constituency, he will take seriously the role that core mathematical education plays in providing people with those applied mathematical skills necessary for their well-being and our collective well-being. The Government take that seriously, and we will certainly work to ensure that maths does the job that it should.

Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School

4. **Mr Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): What progress has been made towards resolving the dispute at the Cardinal Vaughan memorial school. [74421]

The Secretary of State for Education (Michael Gove): In the past week, I have spoken to parents at the Vaughan and the diocesan authorities. I am confident that the appointment of a new headmaster will bring new harmony.

Mr Leigh: I thank the Secretary of State most warmly for his personal efforts in trying to resolve this matter and in ensuring that, finally, the diocese caved in last week and a head teacher was appointed in line with parent wishes, but I wonder what lessons can be learned—in particular, to ensure that, in future, education authorities, whether or not diocesan, understand that the whole

ethos of our policy is to enable parents, not education authorities, to have the dominant say in the governance of schools?

Michael Gove: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words. The Vaughan is an outstanding school, and the diocese and the Department are determined to do everything possible to ensure that it remains outstanding in the future. One of the changes that is being made in the other place by my noble Friend Lord Hill is a change to the provision that relates to governors, to ensure that parent governors and foundation governors who are drawn from the ranks of parents accurately represent the parents' wishes, because part of the Vaughan's success has been the close relationship between the parents who love the school and the teachers who have made it so great.

GCSE Mathematics

5. **Justin Tomlinson** (North Swindon) (Con): What consideration he has given to offering two GCSEs in mathematics. [74422]

The Minister of State, Department for Education (Mr Nick Gibb): We are reviewing the national curriculum requirements for mathematics and will take decisions on the content and number of maths GCSEs in the light of the review. A pilot of a pair of mathematics GCSEs—applications of mathematics and methods in mathematics—began last September and continues to 2013. Evidence from the pilot will also inform our decisions.

Justin Tomlinson: As part of the review, may I urge the Minister to provide an opportunity to include financial education as part of the syllabus?

Mr Gibb: My hon. Friend has worked tirelessly on financial education, and the all-party group on financial education for young people, which he chairs, is about to produce a report, following its inquiry into the issue. As he has said, financial education is important, and we will look carefully at his report when it is published and its conclusions will be taken into account as part of the national curriculum review and the review of personal, social and health education.

John Mann (Bassetlaw) (Lab): On 19 June, an AQA GCSE maths examination paper contained an error, along with two other exam papers. How could that be, as a week earlier, we were told that every exam paper had been rechecked for mistakes? What has gone wrong, and what explanation has been given to the Minister?

Mr Gibb: The hon. Gentleman is right to raise these issues. The number of errors in exam papers this summer was unacceptable. A review is being conducted by Ofqual, which will report later in the year. As a consequence of the errors that took place this summer, we have reviewed Ofqual's powers, and in another place, we are considering introducing into the Education Bill new powers for Ofqual to fine the awarding organisations when they are not delivering high-quality exams without error.

Elizabeth Truss (South West Norfolk) (Con): Does the Minister agree that the distinction between methods and applications is spurious in a subject that is all about

practice, and that instead we should have mathematics and additional mathematics at GCSE, or pure and applied? That would be more logical and more mathematical.

Mr Gibb: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for her passion for the subject of maths education in this country. She is right to raise, and continue to raise, the issue. We will wait to see the outcome of the pilot of the twin maths GCSEs, and we will take into account its conclusions before considering what further reforms to maths GCSE we will make.

English Baccalaureate

6. **Tony Baldry** (Banbury) (Con): What assessment he has made of the potential effect on student choices of the English baccalaureate. [74423]

The Secretary of State for Education (Michael Gove): A survey of nearly 700 schools indicates that the English baccalaureate is having an immediate impact on subject choices. The numbers of students electing to study modern foreign languages, geography, history, physics, chemistry and biology are all up.

Tony Baldry: Is my right hon. Friend aware that secondary schools report a significant decline in the number of students opting to study religious studies? The reason given is that it is not included in the E-bac. This year, will he at least give thought to whether, in the humanities, there could be a choice of two out of three subjects—geography, history and religious studies? If religious studies is not included in the E-bac, it will be increasingly marginalised.

Michael Gove: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. He is a very effective spokesman for the Church of England, and indeed for the place of faith in the nation's life. However, the data suggest that the number of people taking religious studies at GCSE is rising. It was up 17.6% to 222,000 in the last set of figures that we have, overtaking history and geography.

Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Secretary of State say whether he, his officials or his advisers are using private e-mail accounts in assessing the impact of the baccalaureate? Does he accept the Information Commissioner's view that private e-mail accounts that are used to talk about Government policy could be the subject of freedom of information requests?

Michael Gove: I admire the elegance with which the hon. Gentleman manages to insinuate into his question a matter that is dramatically different from issues relating to the English baccalaureate. All Government business in the Department for Education is at all times conducted with extreme propriety.

Dan Rogerson (North Cornwall) (LD): In consideration of the impact of the English baccalaureate, will the Secretary of State discuss with Ofsted how it should evaluate schools' performance to ensure that work on vocational and other subjects is taken into account?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. The English baccalaureate is a powerful nudge to encourage take-up in the sorts of subjects that lead students to be able to progress to good universities and great jobs, but it is important that Ofsted applies a nuanced measurement when it judges how schools are performing, and schools that do superbly in vocational, technical, cultural and other areas should expect Ofsted to applaud them as well.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary of State will have seen that on Thursday the Skills Commission launched a report on the training of technicians. We desperately need more technicians, and there is great fear that the changes in the curriculum will squeeze out design and technology, which is, for many students, often the bridge to science, technology, engineering and maths subjects.

Michael Gove: That is a very fair point, and design and technology has many powerful champions, including the hon. Gentleman, but I would emphasise that the single most important thing that we can do if we are to ensure a generation of not just technicians but manufacturing leaders in future is make sure that we perform better in mathematics and that there are more students studying physics and chemistry. They are the key to success, and one of the reasons why the English baccalaureate has been so successful is that it has encouraged students to study those essential subjects.

Damian Hinds (East Hampshire) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there have always been core subjects and option subjects, and that the value of the E-bac is in signalling the most widely valued core subjects without precluding option subjects? That advice is of most value to the most disadvantaged in our society.

Michael Gove: That is a typically acute point from my hon. Friend. The subjects in the E-bac bear a close resemblance to the sorts of subjects in an Arnoldian vision of liberal education but, more than that, they are the subjects that modern universities and 21st-century employers increasingly demand. One of the problems that we have had in the past is that too few students from poorer areas have been able to access and benefit from great subject-teaching in those disciplines.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): The first university technical college in the country, the JCB academy, achieved 0% this year in the Secretary of State's misleadingly titled English baccalaureate. I presume from what he has just said that he regards that as a failure, or are the rumours true and is he just distancing himself now from his Schools Minister's pet policy?

Michael Gove: I was asked last week by the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg) about the JCB academy, and by his predecessor, the right hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), about the JCB academy, so let me repeat once again for the slower learners at the back of the class: I applaud the amazing achievements of the JCB academy. The English baccalaureate is just one measure of excellence and there are many others. As I underlined last week, the success of the university technical college—a school whose success was made possible by a Conservative

party donor and whose success is burnished by Conservative party policies—is a success that I am happy to trumpet from any platform.

PGCE Bursary

7. **Caroline Nokes** (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con): What assessment he has made of the effects of the withdrawal of bursary funding on PGCE students who commenced their courses in September. [74424]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Tim Loughton): All PGCE students can apply for the same student support as undergraduate students, including maintenance loans and means-tested grants. As an additional recruitment incentive, the Department pays bursaries. These are adjusted regularly according to the size of the pool of potential teachers and the demand from schools for new teachers. For certain subjects we have therefore removed the bursaries for 2011-12. Other subjects, including maths, foreign languages and sciences, attract bursaries of up to £9,000.

Caroline Nokes: Can the Minister tell the House how the changes to the bursaries have affected recruitment to initial teacher training courses this year?

Tim Loughton: The hon. Lady is right. We will have recruitment numbers to courses in November, when the Training and Development Agency for Schools has completed its census of training providers. That will include the figures for initial teacher training, but it looks as though we will have high numbers of quality applicants in all subjects. The latest evidence suggests that this will be another strong year for recruitment, and that we are on course for the best year ever in the recruitment of physics and chemistry trainees in particular.

SEN Support

8. **Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): What progress he has made on extending support for children with special educational needs. [74425]

The Minister of State, Department for Education (Sarah Teather): We have finished consultation on our Green Paper, “Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability”. Twenty pathfinders, covering 31 local authority areas, are under way and will be testing proposals set out in the Green Paper. We will publish details of how we will respond to the consultation and take forward the development of special educational needs and disability provision by the end of the year.

Richard Graham: Some of the experiences of my constituents suggest that adopted children are especially vulnerable to developing special educational needs as a result of trauma. Would the Minister consider extending support to adoptive parents, especially information and advice, so that any latent special educational needs of adopted children can be identified as early as possible?

Sarah Teather: The critical issue is that children in care have particularly high levels of special educational needs. We need to get better at picking up those needs at an early stage and putting in place the right kind of care

and support package for those children so that their needs are not latent and not picked up by the time the children are being put up for adoption. I announced in September which areas would begin the pathfinders. Some of those local authorities will be looking specifically at how they can improve that process of assessment for children in care. I hope that will make significant differences as we begin to learn the results of that for families who adopt a child.

Alison Seabeck (Plymouth, Moor View) (Lab): The Minister touched on the issue of children in care with special needs. Many children with special needs are those living in situations of domestic violence. The Minister’s colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for Education, the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton), recently sent a foreword to support Operation Encompass, which is based in Plymouth. Will the Minister agree to meet those involved, such as Police Sergeant Carney Howarth, and teachers to hear first hand how they are supporting vulnerable young people and how they quickly identify those whose education could be adversely affected by domestic violence, leading to special needs?

Sarah Teather: I am sure that I or my colleague, depending who is most appropriate, will be happy to meet people to discuss that matter.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): I am pleased that the Minister seems to be aware that looked-after children are nine times more likely than their peers to have special educational needs, yet while the number of children in care is increasing, support for special educational needs is decreasing. A recent report from Action for Children suggests that the impact of Government cuts on children and families will mean even more children being at risk of neglect and taken into care. There is no time to waste. What action will the Minister take now to reverse these worrying trends?

Sarah Teather: I welcome the hon. Lady to the Front Bench and look forward to working with her on these issues. I know that she has taken a particular interest in looked-after children and children in care. We have made it clear to local authorities that the early intervention grant should be spent on early intervention. We know that it is difficult for local authorities at the moment, just as it is difficult for the Government. We are all having to make difficult decisions, but I think that local authorities are the right people to make those decisions. In areas that are beginning pathfinder work, we will be able to test exactly how we can ensure that we support children with special educational needs better in a range of settings.

University Technical Colleges

9. **Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): How many university technical colleges he expects to open in 2012. [74426]

The Secretary of State for Education (Michael Gove): We now have 16 new university technical colleges approved, up to half of which may open in September 2012.

Philip Davies: May I tell the Secretary of State how much I support the introduction of UTCs, but will he guarantee that they will not be delayed by any unnecessary bureaucracy and red tape and that he will ensure that the process is not frustrated and slowed down by officials in his Department?

Michael Gove: When it comes to dealing with bureaucracy and red tape, the officials in my Department are allies. They are terrible, swift swords cutting through the bureaucracy that has so far held this country back.

Meg Munn (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab/Co-op): This country is desperately short of skills in science, engineering and technology and far too few girls and women study those subjects. What will the Secretary of State do to ensure that at least 50% of the pupils who will go to UTCs are female?

Michael Gove: I am grateful to the hon. Lady and know that she has recently completed a report on some of the barriers to young women taking advantage of the opportunities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. A new UTC is opening in Sheffield and I hope to be able to work with her to ensure that it generates enthusiasm among boys and girls in Sheffield and across South Yorkshire for the superb education it will offer.

Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot) (Con): The Secretary of State will perhaps be aware of recent correspondence I sent to his ministerial team about the possibility of opening a UTC in Newton Abbot. Has he had an opportunity to consider the proposal, which would transform our local economy, and would one of his team be prepared to meet me to discuss it?

Michael Gove: One of my team will be more than happy to meet my hon. Friend—I imagine my colleagues will be fighting to see her. Plymouth is already benefitting from a new UTC, but there is no reason why other equally beautiful parts of Devon should not also benefit.

Sure Start (Finance)

10. **Mr Adrian Bailey** (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op): What assessment he has made of reductions in the budgets for Sure Start children's centres in the financial year (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12. [74427]

The Minister of State, Department for Education (Sarah Teather): There was no reduction in revenue funding for Sure Start children's centres in 2010-11. From April 2011, funding for children's centres is included within the early intervention grant. It is for local authorities to decide how to use that funding, taking account of their statutory duties and local needs.

Mr Bailey: I thank the Minister for her reply. The changes to the funding streams for Sure Start amount to a slashing of expenditure of around 22% nationally and 25% in my local authority of Sandwell, and the removal of the ring-fencing condition gives local authorities the opportunity to plug their gaps in other services with Sure Start funding. Will the Minister undertake to conduct a full assessment and monitor the impact of those cuts on Sure Start centres in future?

Sarah Teather: The Government continue to monitor what is happening on the ground. We have made sure that enough money is available in the early intervention grant for a network of children's centres. Local authorities have a statutory duty to provide sufficient children's centres and to consult before opening, closing or significantly changing those services. We want to ensure that those are not just empty buildings and that they are providing high-quality services that are focused on outcomes that really matter, which is why I have recently announced the start of payment-by-results trials, which will focus much better on outcomes, and why we are consulting on a new core purpose, which will also focus on outcomes. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would agree that it is the outcomes that matter.

Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con): I support Sure Start centres, and I know that Her Majesty's Government do and always have done. Will the Minister confirm that, despite the Opposition's apocalyptic warnings, there are broadly the same number of Sure Start centres now as there were when the coalition came into power?

Sarah Teather: There is information available on directgov, and it links to what information we have about the children's centres that are available in local authority areas. From speaking to local authorities, I certainly know, as I said in my answer just a few minutes ago, that on the whole good local authorities, which do have to make difficult decisions, are merging back-office functions and management functions to make sure that they can focus on outcomes—the point that I just made, and which I think every Member would want.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): As the Minister does not have a clue about the actual impact on the ground of her decision to cut Sure Start funding—cutting it by more than a fifth and removing the ring fence—I decided to find out for myself, and I will let her know what I have found: 83% of councils are cutting their funding this year; 89% of councils are cutting it next year; they are being forced to lay off qualified teachers; and in some areas children's centres are actually closing. Given those findings, is she prepared to rethink her decisions and act to ensure that families are given the support that they need in the foundation years?

Sarah Teather: I believe I read in the press that the hon. Lady said that 47 children's centres would close, and it would be helpful if she sent me that information. I suspect that not all local authorities replied to her, in just the same way as not all local authorities replied to us. She could do much to chivy her local authorities to reply, because we could then make absolutely sure that the information on directgov was completely accurate. I am not sure that I have an awful lot more to add to the point that I have already made clear: the money is available in the early intervention grant, and we are making it clear to local authorities that Sure Start children's centres are a priority. Indeed, some of her colleagues complained that I had placed a moral ring fence—

Mr Speaker: Order. Can I just point out that we have a lot to get through? We must press on.

Faith Schools

11. **Patrick Mercer** (Newark) (Con): What recent assessment he has made of the funding of faith schools; and if he will make a statement. [74428]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Tim Loughton): No separate assessment has been made of faith school funding. The only distinction in funding between faith schools and other maintained schools and academies is in the contribution to capital-funded projects made by voluntary-aided schools.

Patrick Mercer: I am grateful for the Minister's reply. I am sure that he will join me in congratulating the al-Karam Muslim school in Eaton in my constituency on its extraordinary achievement. Will he be kind enough to give me an idea of what we might do further to help not just that school, but the Everyday Champions school in Newark?

Tim Loughton: I am delighted to pass on my good wishes to those schools that have done well in my hon. Friend's constituency. It contains no fewer than 17 schools with a religious character which have done well. I am aware that the Everyday Champions organisation applied for a free school but was unsuccessful, and I think that he has been copied in on the reasons why, but we will continue to encourage those faith schools that offer a particularly excellent education for the many children whom they now look after.

Music

12. **Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): What plans he has for the future of music education in schools. [74429]

The Secretary of State for Education (Michael Gove): We will shortly publish a national plan for music education, which will reform the delivery and funding of music education. It will ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn an instrument, to sing and to play in ensembles.

Valerie Vaz: I thank the Secretary of State for his reply. He will be aware of Plato's theory of education, which says that musical training is one of the most important instruments in education. Is he aware also of the Institute of Education research which found that one in nine primary schools does not have a piano? Will he take steps to ensure that all primary schools have a musical co-ordinator and, more importantly, a piano?

Michael Gove: I am very grateful to the hon. Lady for making those points. She is absolutely right that the wider provision not just of trained music teachers, but of musical instruments will ensure not just that more children have access to the greatest of all art forms, but that more children as a result do better in every other subject.

Paul Maynard (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con): I am sure the Secretary of State is aware of the excellent Blackpool Music Service, which has won national awards for bringing music provision to children who would otherwise not be able to afford it. As we debate the role of local education authorities alongside the new aims of

academies, does he not agree that such co-ordination is a role that local authorities can still play, adding value to the work of all schools in their local area?

Michael Gove: That is a typically acute point by my hon. Friend; he is absolutely right. In many cases, though not all, county music services do a superb job. One of the reforms that will be central to our national music plan is a way of making sure that the best county music services can do more while those that are weaker can have the service they provide supplanted by someone who is in a better position to raise standards for all children.

British Sign Language

13. **Tessa Munt** (Wells) (LD): What his policy is on the inclusion of British sign language as a modern foreign language option at GCSE. [74430]

The Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning (Mr John Hayes): I understand that an awarding organisation is considering whether to develop and pilot a GCSE in British sign language. It will be for the independent regulator, Ofqual, to consider whether any such qualification meets the appropriate criteria for being recognised as a foreign language GCSE.

Tessa Munt: I thank the Minister for that answer. As he knows, I have very strong feelings about British sign language, which offers an opportunity for people of all ages to develop their vocabulary and to expand their communication skills, and particularly for young people to develop speech and language skills, including their comprehension. It breaks down barriers for everybody, including those with significant learning disabilities. Action on Hearing Loss runs a campaign called "Read my lips", which seeks recognition for lip-reading as an essential skill, not a leisure skill, as it is classified at the moment, and proposes that classes should be free for those with hearing loss and those who have family members—

Mr Speaker: Will the hon. Lady ask the question?

Tessa Munt: I will indeed, Sir. Will the Minister please update me on progress on reclassifying lip-reading as an essential skill?

Mr Hayes: The hon. Lady has a long-standing interest in this subject, as I do, given my own hearing loss and my long-standing similar interest in disability issues more generally. I see British sign language as a bridge to learning and a key aid to communication, and I entirely agree that we need to look at ways to support it and to ensure that people old and young can learn to sign. There is an issue about whether we treat it in the way that the hon. Lady suggests, but I am more than happy to meet her to discuss this and see whether we can take it further.

Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): Some deaf children have been successful in learning foreign languages, but while deaf children are behind all children as an average, they do particularly poorly in languages. Given that,

and with the Government wanting foreign languages to play a greater part, what plans do they have to ensure that deaf children do not fall further behind?

Mr Hayes: I have already had meetings with the Royal National Institute for Deaf People on the subject of signing, and, as I said, I am happy to meet the hon. Member for Wells (Tessa Munt) on the subject. However, I am not absolutely sure that treating BSL as a foreign language, as the original question suggested, is the best way forward. BSL is a preferred language of many deaf people in the UK, rather than a language of a different nation or culture. Some good qualifications are already in place, but I take the point that we need to examine whether they are effective in achieving the kind of results for deaf children that they deserve so that they can fulfil their potential.

Schools and Employers

14. **Mr Marcus Jones** (Nuneaton) (Con): What steps he is taking to encourage links between schools and employers; and if he will make a statement. [74432]

The Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning (Mr John Hayes): Increasing schools' autonomy is central to our mission. Of course the Government take business very seriously and understand the importance of the relationship between business and education. It is therefore absolutely right that local businesses cement links with schools. It is not for me to dictate what those links should be; that will depend on local circumstances. Organisations such as the chambers of commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses, in which my hon. Friend plays a distinguished part, are best placed to make those judgments.

Mr Jones: I thank the Minister for his response. Over the past seven years, we have seen a trend of rising youth unemployment, and we are now also starting to see a real skills gap in engineering and manufacturing. Does my hon. Friend agree that if we are truly to rebalance our economy and reduce youth unemployment, we must, in partnership with our world-class manufacturing companies, put in place a strategy to energise and promote the future of engineering and manufacturing within our schools?

Mr Hayes: As ever, my hon. Friend makes a point that is both salient and persuasive. The Government need no persuading, however, that STEM—science, technology, engineering and maths—matters. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spoke earlier of our work with university technical colleges, which were originally devised by Rab Butler, a great Education Secretary, and driven by the noble Lord Baker, who was another. We have delivered that policy a third great Education Secretary in the making, who is sitting next to me.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Was any assessment undertaken of the approach taken by business education partnerships? In my area, the Humber, we had an excellent business education partnership, and most of the business leaders who sat on it are distraught that its funding was withdrawn without any notice at all.

Mr Hayes: As I said, such things are best dealt with locally, but make no mistake: this Government regard skills as at the top of the political agenda. If we are to equip businesses with what they need and allow people to fulfil their potential, we must, once and for all, give those with practical, technical tastes and talents their place in the sun, their chance of glittering prizes.

Mr Rob Wilson (Reading East) (Con): I confirm for my hon. Friend that university technical colleges are providing a fantastic platform for bringing employers and schools together. Reading's new UTC is supported by Microsoft, BT and many other leading companies. Considering that so many important companies are stepping up to these important responsibilities, is he not disappointed by the reaction of the teaching unions and some Labour Members?

Mr Hayes: I should declare an interest as an associate member of a teaching union.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): Which one?

Mr Hayes: The Association of Teachers and Lecturers. It is absolutely essential that teachers, businesses and learners combine to best effect to ensure that we equip our young people, and our country, with the skills that they need to prosper.

Mr Speaker: We are all greatly enlightened by the Minister of State's observations.

IT (Primary Schoolchildren)

15. **Alun Michael** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): What steps he plans to take to promote the involvement of primary schoolchildren in IT and internet-related activities. [74433]

The Minister of State, Department for Education (Mr Nick Gibb): Information and communications technology in the national curriculum will be considered as part of the national curriculum review. The effective use of technology can support good teaching and raise educational standards, but primary schools are best placed to make decisions on how to use technology to meet the needs of their pupils.

Alun Michael: But enthusiasm and encouragement are also important. With your support and encouragement, Mr Speaker, MPs across all parties have encouraged their local primary schools to engage with the "Make IT happy" competition, organised by the Parliamentary Information Technology Committee, which I have the honour to chair. Will the Minister join me in urging schools to enter that competition, because it is good for pupils, good for Parliament and good for the early engagement of children with issues that are important to our economy?

Mr Gibb: I am happy to do so, and I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on the initiative. Already, about 90% of primary school pupils say that teachers help them understand how to use technology. That is a great success story, and I wish his project every success.

Teaching Standards

16. **Mark Menzies** (Fylde) (Con): What plans he has to improve the quality of teaching. [74434]

The Minister of State, Department for Education (Mr Nick Gibb): Nothing has more impact on a child's achievement than the quality of the teaching that they receive. We are raising the bar for new teachers, supporting existing teachers to improve and making it easier for head teachers to tackle underperformance among teachers who cannot meet the required standards.

Mark Menzies: I thank the Minister for his answer, but exactly how will he raise the bar to ensure that we get the best possible new entrants into the teaching profession?

Mr Gibb: We are offering strong financial incentives to the best trainees, and are consulting on issuing bursaries of up to £20,000 to the best trainees in priority subjects. We are also expanding and doubling the successful Teach First programme and introducing trips for teachers to bring the skills of service leavers into schools. We will ensure that all trainees have a good understanding of maths and English, by requiring them to take tests prior to entering initial teacher training. We are reviewing the qualified teacher status standards under the excellent chairmanship of Sally Coates, the principal of Burlington Danes academy. I could go on, Mr Speaker, but I will stop there.

Ian Lucas (Wrexham) (Lab): Does the Minister think that lessening teachers' employment protection and worsening their terms and conditions will improve or diminish teachers' morale?

Mr Gibb: That is not our policy. Teachers in academies are generally paid more. What we are doing is reviewing the performance management regulations to make it easier for head teachers to tackle underperformance in our schools and to bring the employment regulations in schools in line with employment practices in other professions and industries.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Does the Minister feel, as I do, that the quality of teaching is adversely affected by the recently reported high number of false complaints made by children against teachers? If so, what sort of protection can the Government give innocent teachers who are put in that situation?

Mr Gibb: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise the issue. For a teacher to have an accusation made against them by a pupil, which ultimately turns out to be false, can have a devastating impact on not only their career but their private life. We are therefore determined to do all we can to protect teachers, to enable them to maintain discipline and improve behaviour in our schools. That is why the Education Bill, which is currently going through another place, has a provision giving school teachers anonymity in the reporting of such accusations in the press.

In-service Training

17. **Michael Fallon** (Sevenoaks) (Con): Whether academies are able to move in-service training days to dates outside term time. [74435]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Tim Loughton): Academies are able to allocate time for teachers' learning and development, including training days, at the most suitable time for the academy and its staff, including outside an academy's published term time.

Michael Fallon: Given the inconvenience to some parents when in-service training days are simply tacked on to the half-term holiday, does my hon. Friend agree that the evolution of academies and free schools provides an opportunity to see how we can better match the training needs of teachers to the school year?

Tim Loughton: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. Of course, one advantage of academies is the flexibility that they can offer in training their teaching staff. Of course, that is also an advantage for the pupils and their parents, who may have to make arrangements for child care when training days are taken during term time. That flexibility is available to academies, and I hope that it will benefit everybody.

Topical Questions

T1. [74444] **Mr Douglas Carswell** (Clacton) (Con): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Education (Michael Gove): I was delighted that last Friday, Her Majesty's new chief inspector of schools, Sir Michael Wilshaw, was appointed. I am confident that under his leadership, Ofsted will continue to do its fantastic work in driving up standards in state education. May I take this opportunity to pay an appropriate debt of gratitude to his two predecessors, his acting predecessor Miriam Rosen and, of course, Christine Gilbert, who did such a distinguished job as Her Majesty's chief inspector?

Mr Carswell: Many mums and dads in my part of Essex would like to see local free schools, but for all their enthusiasm there are still too many obstacles and obstructions. What will the Government do to make it easier to establish free schools? Will they perhaps allow specialist charities and businesses to do so? May I bring a delegation of mums and dads to discuss with officials how it can be done?

Michael Gove: We will do everything possible to support the establishment of free schools, but there is one barrier that I can do nothing about—the confusion on the Labour party Benches. Just last Friday, the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg) said that he would back the setting up of free schools, but yesterday he said on Sky television that the Labour party opposed the free schools policy. That U-turn within 72 hours leaves parents and teachers in a quandary, which is why so many of them are saying, "Thank heavens it's a coalition Government in power rather than Labour!"

Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): May I first join the Secretary of State in welcoming the appointment of Sir Michael Wilshaw, who has a fine track record, and in thanking Miriam Rosen and Christine Gilbert for their service?

May I take the Secretary of State back to my earlier exchange with the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Bognor Regis and Littlehampton (Mr Gibb)? I welcome the increase in the number of young people taking history, geography and modern foreign languages, but schools are getting very mixed messages about the E-bac. Will he answer the question that I put to his colleague? Will he look to create a technical baccalaureate, as proposed by many including his noble Friend Lord Baker? If he does not, the UTCs and others will simply be frozen out of the improvements to education that he says he wants to deliver.

Michael Gove: It is a curious type of freezing out that has seen the number of UTCs increase by 800% as a result of the changes that we have made. If we are going to talk about freezing out and frostiness, what about the cold shoulder that the hon. Gentleman is turning to the parents and teachers who want to set up free schools everywhere? If we are talking about a chilling effect, what about the chilling effect on all those who believe in education reform, who will have seen his brave efforts to drag the Labour party into the 21st century, only to see him dragged back within 72 hours? We detect the cold and pulsate hand of his leader dragging him back from a posture of reform to one of reaction.

T2. [74445] **Paul Uppal** (Wolverhampton South West) (Con): Recently, at the WorldSkills competition in London, Britain came fifth out of 49 countries that were entered, above Germany, France and the USA. However, we still face a skills gap, and in some areas of the country, such as the area just north of Wolverhampton where there are new developments involving, for example, Jaguar and Land Rover, worries are high that jobs will not go to local graduates. What measures are in place to ensure that school leavers are in a position to fulfil the needs of business and manufacturing in the 21st century?

The Minister for Further Education, Skills and Lifelong Learning (Mr John Hayes): My hon. Friend is absolutely right that WorldSkills was a triumph. In an event involving 1,000 competitors from 52 countries and more than 40 skills, Britain achieved its best ever result. It is our commitment to excellence and our belief in rigour that combines our approach to academic learning and vocational learning. Whether it is Pliny or plumbing, or Plutarch or plastering, we believe in excellence, excellence, excellence.

T6. [74449] **Steve Rotheram** (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): Labour Members believe that the E-bac might be for some, but certainly not for all. Some people are better suited to more vocational courses rather than purely academic routes. Why does the Secretary of State not believe in parity of esteem?

Michael Gove: I certainly do believe in parity of esteem. In particular, I think that we should esteem working-class students in the same way that we esteem those from other backgrounds. The fact that under the previous Government working-class students were too

often denied the opportunity to study the academic subjects that would lead them to university is a contributory factor in the freezing of social mobility over the course of the past 15 years. A fatal flaw in this country's approach to education is that we automatically assume that just because children come from poorer backgrounds, they cannot succeed academically. At last, under this coalition Government, that unhappy prejudice is being uprooted from the education system.

T4. [74447] **Mr David Burrowes** (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend send a message to Enfield council—two days ago, such a message would have been endorsed by my predecessor, the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg)—which has a policy of opposing free schools despite a shortage of primary school places, and which decided last week to sell off the old town hall rather than offer it up for a free school?

Michael Gove: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. Just last Thursday, the hon. Member for Liverpool, West Derby visited an outstanding free school in Enfield. I would have hoped that that would have been a powerful signal to the reactionary elements within the Enfield Labour party that they should support education reform in the interests of the poorest rather than stand against it. However, I am afraid that his words on Sky television will have given heart to those reactionary elements rather than put them in their place. He has a direct responsibility to reassure reformers that he is on their side.

Mr Speaker: Order. That is quite enough. Could I just remind the Secretary of State—I know that he tends to make this mistake—that he is not today at the Oxford Union making a speech, but answering questions in the Chamber of the House of Commons? He does so brilliantly, but from now on he will do so more briefly. That is the end of it.

T9. [74452] **Simon Danczuk** (Rochdale) (Lab): Charities play an increasingly important role in education—indeed, the Secretary of State has been involved in a variety of charities. Can he assure the House that he took all appropriate steps to ensure that Atlantic Bridge did not abuse its charitable status?

Michael Gove: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question. I was proud to play my part in ensuring that the relationship between this country and the United States of America was strengthened, and I will always stand in favour of the Atlantic alliance. As a member of the advisory board of Atlantic Bridge, I took the opportunity, as I will on all platforms, to say that I believe—

Mr Speaker: Order. The Secretary of State will resume his seat. He will answer questions on matters for which he is responsible, not on other matters. I have made the position clear, and no dilation from the Secretary of State is required.

T5. [74448] **Nicky Morgan** (Loughborough) (Con): My right hon. Friend will be aware that so far two secondary schools in my constituency have become academies, and that a further two are applying to do so.

However, one of those schools has run into problems because it runs a nursery. Rawlins college tells me that it has received unclear advice from his Department on the best way for the nursery to be constituted, which must be sorted before the college can become an academy. Will he agree to assist me in finding the most effective solution to this problem, so that Rawlins can hit its preferred conversion date of 1 November?

Michael Gove: I shall do everything in my power.

Mr Speaker: We are grateful to the Secretary of State.

Gloria De Piero (Ashfield) (Lab): I have been contacted by parents and teachers about the difficulties of online registration for school milk. There have been reductions in the past year of between a quarter and a third in some schools in Ashfield. Are Ministers aware of that situation, is it a national trend, and what can they do about it?

Michael Gove: I am now aware of that situation. I do not know whether it is a national trend. Of course, every child deserves the opportunity to have school milk.

T7. [74450] **Jessica Lee** (Erewash) (Con): In light of the recent UK adoption rate figures, will my hon. Friend set out what steps the Government are taking to continue to encourage prospective adopting parents to come forward to be assessed? Those in Erewash and throughout the UK could provide much-needed homes for looked-after children.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Tim Loughton): My hon. Friend makes a very good point, and she knows that the Government are absolutely committed to improving the lot of looked-after children in this country and getting more of those for whom it is appropriate into adoption. We need to get the message across loud and clear that people who want to do the noble deed of coming forward and showing an interest in adoption should be welcomed with open arms at the town hall door and given every encouragement, rather than the “Don’t call us, we’ll call you” attitude that has prevailed in too many places up to now. We will make that change.

Paul Goggins (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): Further to that question, will the Minister update the House on plans to introduce savings accounts for looked-after children?

Tim Loughton: The right hon. Gentleman and I had a conversation on this matter recently when I was on my way from Leeds airport, and I hope to be able to update the House on it shortly, because we are committed to the scheme. Sorting out the practical details has been a complete nightmare, but we are now close to doing so and I hope that he will welcome the good news that will be coming soon.

T8. [74451] **Julian Sturdy** (York Outer) (Con): I am sure that the Education team will be delighted to hear that the highly acclaimed Manor Church of England school in my constituency has experienced a smooth transition to academy status. Now, however, it is moving into its second year as an academy, and it has

raised concerns about the delayed allocation of its annual budget. Is the Secretary of State aware of these issues, and will he be addressing them before the next round of budget allocations?

Michael Gove: I am very aware of these issues, and that is one of the reasons we are consulting on replacing the system of funding that we inherited from the previous Government.

Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Lab): Many 16 to 18-year-olds choose to study at a college rather than in a school sixth form, and they are therefore not eligible for free school meals. How and when are the Government going to address that anomaly?

Michael Gove: I am familiar with that anomaly; it is a situation we inherited from the previous Government. We are seeking to ensure that funding is equalised between colleges and school sixth forms.

Simon Hughes (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (LD): Following the very popular announcement that there is to be a university technical college on the Southwark college site in Bermondsey, may I encourage the Secretary of State to complete the set by allowing a college, a UTC and a secondary school all to be on the same campus, given the breadth of experience that many youngsters in an inner-city seat such as mine are really looking forward to?

Michael Gove: I will do everything I can. How lucky Southwark is to have such an outstanding MP, and what a pity it is that the local authority has taken a grudging response to new school provision.

Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab): Ministers will have been horrified to see that the UK Border Agency is still routinely detaining children, and that it does not know where, for how long or how many there are. Will the Minister responsible for safeguarding call on her colleagues urgently to investigate this matter, not only to meet the coalition’s pledge but to ensure that the Government whom she represents are not actively putting children at risk?

The Minister of State, Department for Education (Sarah Teather): The hon. Lady will be aware that we have a commitment to abolish detention—[HON. MEMBERS: “By last Christmas.”] We have already set up the panel, and that is now beginning. I am aware of the article that the hon. Lady mentioned, and the reports that have appeared in the press. This is a matter of concern to me as well.

Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) (Con): In Calderdale, 15% of all schools have now converted to academy status, but that is unique in our region, particularly because of the disinformation that is being peddled on the subject. Will the Secretary of State consider increasing the amount of communication to schools on conversion to academy status to help to dispel many of the myths that are being peddled?

Michael Gove: I will certainly do everything in my power. We could of course be helped by the Labour party, and not least by the hon. Member for Liverpool,

West Derby, who says that he is “relaxed” about an enormous expansion of academies. Let us hope that the next time he has an opportunity to share his views with us, he will be enthused about this.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I was very pleased that the Government continued the capital funding for myplace, and the Fuse has now opened in my constituency, but we are very concerned about revenue funding to ensure that we are not simply left with a beautiful empty building. Can the Government offer any advice or assistance that would help to make a difference to some of the most disadvantaged young people in my community?

Tim Loughton: The hon. Lady is right to highlight myplace, and I was delighted that we were able to find £124 million for the building of some 63 myplace centres. I want them to be the hub of communities up and down the country. If there are particular problems with her myplace, she should speak to the Big Lottery Fund, which manages the scheme on our behalf. We will be putting forward our policy in “Positive for Youth” later in the autumn, which will set out how we can bring in new, mixed sources of revenue that I hope will help myplace centres and other youth provision.

Jack Lopresti (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con): My right hon. Friend will be aware that his Department has received a bid from Patchway community college in my constituency for investment under the Government’s priority schools building programme. Given that the school was overlooked by the previous Government’s Building Schools for the Future programme, will he look seriously at Patchway’s deserving bid? I must tell the House that one of my children still goes to that school.

Michael Gove: A beautifully tailored bid from my hon. Friend! We will look as favourably as we can on all schools that were overlooked by the previous Government’s BSF programme.

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): The Association of Colleges has surveyed its members and found a fall in recruitment to colleges this autumn. What steps is the Secretary of State putting in place to monitor and evaluate the effect on student recruitment, retention and achievement of his decision to scrap education maintenance allowance?

Michael Gove: I was interested to look at the Association of Colleges survey, which showed that an equal number of colleges were, in fact, attracting more students. The truth is that there is increased competition among colleges to attract students, with strong colleges, like the one of which the hon. Gentleman used to be the principal,

doing a fantastic job, but with weaker colleges—of which, sadly, there are still one or two—having to up their game.

Greg Mulholland (Leeds North West) (LD): Last week, the governing body of the historic Prince Henry grammar school, which is a comprehensive school in Otley, voted by 10 to nine to become an academy, although one governor, who had made it clear that she was going to vote against it, was away. Regardless of that decision, does the Secretary of State understand the concern that such an important decision has been taken on such a close vote?

Michael Gove: When schools become academies, it is important that governors are clear about the advantages and the issues. It is always difficult, when the vote is narrow, to discern what any individual who was not there, having heard all the arguments, might have done when the decision was taken. I would be happy to discuss the pros and cons of this case with my hon. Friend. If the school does become an academy, I am sure it will flourish as one, but if it chooses to keep its current status, I am sure it will benefit as well.

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): How many children do not have access to a breakfast club or an after-school club place because of the removal of extended school funding?

Tim Loughton: I was delighted to attend in Leeds recently the Magic Breakfast charity, which has done fantastic work. It is a social enterprise that has worked its brilliant magic on schools up and down the country to make sure that kids get a healthy breakfast. We want to see more of that through organisations such as Magic Breakfast. I would hope that the hon. Lady supported such organisations.

Joseph Johnson (Orpington) (Con): There is a strong feeling in Bromley, which is in the vanguard of the academies movement, that the proposed formula for the top-slicing of LACSEG—local authority central spend equivalent grant—unfairly penalises very efficient local authorities. Will the Secretary of State agree to a meeting to discuss this concern?

Michael Gove: Strong feelings in Bromley always weigh with me. It is the case that the approach to LACSEG needs reform, and we are consulting on it. I expect that, as ever, voices from Bromley will be among the most persuasive.

Mr Speaker: I am extremely grateful to the Secretary of State and his colleagues for those brilliant and brief replies over the last few minutes, which meant that I was able to accommodate more colleagues than would otherwise have been possible.

Speaker's Statement

3.32 pm

Mr Speaker: I have a statement to make. Following it, I will not take questions or points of order.

In July, I instituted an independent review of security arrangements, following the attack on Rupert Murdoch while he was a witness before the Culture, Media and Sport Committee. I have now received a report on the matter and have had an opportunity to consider its findings.

The review found that at the time of the attack none of the security staff in the room was in a position to be able to reach the assailant before he got to Mr Murdoch. Those present commented upon the chaotic nature of scenes inside and outside the Committee Room following the incident. The inadequate security in the room was the result of a serious failure of planning for this event, based upon the wrong assessment of risk. These and other deficiencies should have been recognised and rectified in advance. They were not.

Public access to Committee sessions is of fundamental importance and must be protected. Not only is it a precious freedom, but it provides a valuable opportunity for engagement between this House and the people it serves. Equally important is our duty to protect the personal safety of witnesses appearing before our Committees and to ensure the effective operation of these Committees. Clearly, the personal safety of all involved—witnesses, Members, staff and the public—must be the guiding principle for those charged with security.

The review makes a number of practical recommendations. All of those relating only to this House I have accepted in full, and all of them either have been, or are in the process of being, implemented. In future, risk assessments for the most high-risk events will be reviewed, robustly scrutinised and formally approved by the most senior security official in the House. There will be enhanced physical security arrangements in Committee Rooms for high-risk events, and a regime has already begun to prevent visitors from bringing bags into a meeting room for such an event.

There is a recommendation that the establishment of a post of director of security be reconsidered. I will begin discussions—including with my counterpart in the House of Lords, the Lord Speaker—about whether that merits further attention, and could complement existing roles.

I have placed copies of the recommendations, and of an update on progress in giving effect to them, in the Library, the Vote Office and on the parliamentary website.

The safety of those participating in, or visiting, public Committee hearings must not be compromised, and I will do everything I can to ensure that it is not.

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: As I have just explained, I am not taking points of order on this matter.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. It is on a different subject.

Mr Speaker: I have another statement to make. If Members will hold their horses, they will have their opportunity.

I wish to tell the House about implementation of the resolutions agreed on Thursday 13 October on electronic devices and e-tabling of questions for written answer.

The House agreed to allow the use of hand-held electronic devices, but not laptops, in the Chamber,

“provided that they are silent and used in a way that does not impair decorum”,

and to allow Members to refer to such devices in making speeches

“in place of paper speaking notes”.—[*Official Report*, 13 October 2011; Vol. 533, c. 555.]

The occupants of the Chair will seek to enforce the resolution as from today, but in practice it is up to individual Members to give effect to the will of the House by complying with the resolution. I therefore ask colleagues for their co-operation in this matter. Implementation of the resolution in Committees is a matter for the Liaison Committee and the Panel of Chairs.

The House agreed to an experimental regime for a daily ration of five e-tabled questions for written answer and a 6.30 pm deadline for tabling such questions. This will have effect from the rise of the House on Friday 21 October, for an experimental period of three months. A detailed memorandum on its operation is available in the Table Office, it will be printed in the Order Paper, and it will be accessible on the intranet. A message will also be sent to all Members who are signed up for e-tabling. The Table Office will of course be happy to give further advice on the new experimental regime.

Points of Order

3.37 pm

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Things have certainly moved on since last Monday, when the then Defence Secretary made a statement to the House. There has been a great deal of comment, and reports in the press, about various individuals and United States-based companies that were apparently involved with the individual who described himself at the time as the adviser to the Defence Secretary.

In view of the undoubtedly serious matters and allegations involving the Ministry of Defence, will the House have an opportunity to hear a statement? We heard a statement last Monday, but we have not heard one since, and these are very serious allegations.

Paul Flynn (Newport West) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I will take it, and then respond to the hon. Member for Walsall North (Mr Winnick).

Paul Flynn: During business questions last week, the House was reminded of the promise the present Prime Minister made shortly before the election that the most serious threat to the reputation of the House—after MPs' expenses—was the possibility of abuse of our procedures by big corporate lobbyists. Sadly, the Government have taken no action to ensure that some control is exercised over the affairs of lobbyists, and there is now abundant evidence that that is an urgent priority.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Have Ministers informed you that they will come to the House to make a statement on that report before releasing it to the media?

Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I think that the hon. Lady's point of order is on an unrelated matter.

Lisa Nandy *indicated assent.*

Mr Speaker: I am correct in my surmise. We shall therefore come on to the hon. Lady's point of order shortly—we will save her up. First, I shall respond to the earlier point of order and the subsequent comments on it.

The short answer to the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle), speaking from the Labour Front Bench, is

no: I have not received any such notification. My response to the hon. Member for Walsall North (Mr Winnick) is that I have, of course, noted what he has told me and the House this afternoon, but, as he will know, responsibility for deciding to make statements, and then for making them, lies with Ministers. It is a matter of calculation or good fortune that as the hon. Gentleman was raising his point of order with me he was in the presence of the Leader of the House, who is sitting on the Treasury Bench. The comments that have been made will therefore have been heard, and I feel sure that if as a result of the publication of documents, or because decisions have been reached, a Minister wishes to make a statement, he or she will do so. Finally, I note what the hon. Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn) has said, and others will also have done so.

Lisa Nandy: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Following last week's Westminster Hall debate on disabled access to public transport, I seek your advice on the treatment of visitors in wheelchairs to this place. This weekend, I received a number of complaints from people who missed the start of the debate because, despite stating their destination very clearly on arrival, they were directed to another Committee Room where a lobby meeting held by employees of Remploy was taking place. They, and others, were unable to fit into Westminster Hall. The majority of the chairs had not been removed because if they had been left in the corridor it might have disrupted a later debate. Our office gave notice that some visitors in wheelchairs were expected, but it does not seem right that people with disabilities should be required to give notice to come to this place when others are not. I have the greatest respect for the staff in this House and I do not attribute responsibility to any individual, but it seems that we have, collectively on this occasion, fallen far short of the standards that the 12 million people in this country with disabilities should be able to expect from their elected representatives. I therefore ask that you urgently investigate this matter, Mr Speaker, and ensure that such situations never arise again.

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for providing me with notice of her intended point of order, I am grateful to her for what she said and I am grateful for the manner in which she said it. I attach the greatest importance to all our proceedings being accessible to everyone, without discrimination. The hon. Lady relates to me a sequence of events with which until a short while ago I was entirely unfamiliar. The best I can say to her and the House is that I will inquire into the matters she raises, reporting back as necessary to her and the House. I hope that is helpful.

Parliamentary Contributory Pension Fund

3.43 pm

The Leader of the House of Commons (Sir George Young): I beg to move,

That this House reasserts its view that the salaries, pensions and expenses scheme for hon. Members ought to be determined independently of this House; accordingly invites the Leader of the House to make an order commencing those provisions of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 which transfer responsibility for the pensions of hon. Members to the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA); supports the approach to public service pension reform set out in the Final Report of the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission chaired by Lord Hutton of Furness; believes that IPSA should introduce, by 2015, a new pension scheme for hon. Members which is informed by the Commission's findings and their subsequent application to other public service pension schemes; recognises the case for an increase in pension contributions made in Lord Hutton's interim report; and accordingly invites IPSA to increase contribution rates for hon. Members from 1 April 2012 in line with changes in pension contribution rates for other public service schemes.

Mr Speaker: I should inform the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope).

Sir George Young: Should the House agree to this motion, we will have completed the transition to a wholly independent system for setting and administering MPs' remuneration. The first and most pressing task was to establish a transparent new expenses scheme in time for the beginning of this Parliament. That was achieved, albeit not without some issues about the operation of the scheme, which have been aired on other occasions. Since May this year, responsibility for setting MPs' pay has also rested with the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority; under the relevant legislation, MPs will not vote on their own pay again. Today's debate on MPs' pensions represents the final piece of the jigsaw. Once the powers in relation to pensions have been transferred to IPSA, it will have responsibility for looking in the round at the whole remuneration package for Members of Parliament.

The motion before us should not come as a surprise to the House.

Bob Russell (Colchester) (LD): The right hon. Gentleman says this is the last piece of the IPSA jigsaw. Is he satisfied that all the other pieces of the jigsaw are perfectly placed?

Sir George Young: I know that my hon. Friend is not so satisfied. He will know that a Committee of the House is looking into the legislation and that there is a committee that liaises between this House and IPSA. I think that the latter is aware of his views on the improvements that need to be made to the scheme. This motion relates not to the allowances that, I believe, are his preoccupation but to pensions.

Before we rose for the summer recess, I set out the Government's approach to hon. Members' pensions in a written ministerial statement, and I also published the motion we are debating. Should the House agree to support the motion, we will have protected the principle that MPs' remuneration should be independently assessed and determined and demonstrated to our constituents

that we understand that Parliament must not be insulated from the fiscal circumstances affecting the rest of the country.

Mr John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): The Leader of the House said that we will never vote again on these matters. Does that mean that the House will not vote the money needed to pay these salaries? What will be done about the overall budget for the costs of government and Parliament, which I thought was of interest to the Government?

Sir George Young: The position is exactly as I said: under legislation passed by the House we will not vote on our own pay, which IPSA will determine independently. It will have the authority to do that and, without primary legislation, which the House would have to agree, its determination will be the last word.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): May we get this clear? Some of us will be rather surprised to hear that we will never again vote on our salaries, because Ministers have told us that before but we have always been persuaded to vote again on them.

Sir George Young: Primary legislation precludes that. Were the Government to be minded to change that, they would have to persuade the House to reintroduce primary legislation overturning the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009, which deals with IPSA, and the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010, which have taken the matter out of our control, so there is no longer a parallel with the previous position.

Mr Redwood: I understand the narrow point about rates of pay, but my question is rather different: are the coalition Government still interested in the overall costs of Parliament and of MPs? Will we vote through the money, or will somebody else do that?

Sir George Young: It would be quite wrong to say that, in principle, our pay should be determined by IPSA but to try, by the back door, to circumscribe that decision by voting down the money it had determined should be paid as our salaries. That would not be an independent determination of our salaries.

Mr Brian H. Donohoe (Central Ayrshire) (Lab) rose—

Sir George Young: I will give way to the chairman of the trustees.

Mr Donohoe: May I ask why the motion does exactly what the right hon. Gentleman is saying?

Sir George Young: I am not sure that I follow the hon. Gentleman. The motion transfers responsibility for determining MPs' pensions to IPSA and delivers a commitment made in the Parliamentary Standards Act and the CRAG Act, which I believe were passed without dissent in the previous Parliament.

Mr Donohoe: The second part of the motion does the exact opposite. The Leader of the House is trying to suggest that the independent IPSA should take on board what he proposes in the motion, which is that

the contributions made by Members of Parliament should increase in line with those of people in the public sector.

Sir George Young: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for clarifying his point. If he looks at the legislation, he will see that he and the House are statutory consultees for IPSA: if it wishes to make any changes to the scheme, it is obliged to consult the trustees, the Senior Salaries Review Body and anyone who might be affected, which includes all of us in this Chamber. We therefore have some locus in the consultation. The second part of the motion expresses a view on behalf of the House, which we are entitled to do under the legislation. It is right that Members make it clear to their constituents that they expect to be treated no differently from others in the public sector in the determination of their pension contributions.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Sir George Young: I would like to make a bit of progress before I give way.

It is accepted by Members on both sides of the House that the UK faces an unsustainable structural deficit that must be brought down. The Government have been forced, as any Government would be, to take difficult decisions across the public sector that have consequences for hon. Members. In March, the House agreed that Members' salaries should be frozen this year in line with the two-year pay freeze on public sector workers earning more than £21,000. After that debate, I commenced the relevant parts of the CRAG Act, formally transferring power to IPSA. I am sure that the chairman of the trustees and the House will recognise the comparison of that procedure and the one we are debating this afternoon—we are transferring responsibility while at the same time expressing a view.

Before the election, all parties publicly agreed that the current final salary terms of the parliamentary pension scheme should be brought to an end. However, as with other public service pension reform, changes will not be made retrospectively, nor will they have an impact on past benefits—an assurance that is as important to Members of the House as it is to those in other public sector schemes.

Looking ahead to a future scheme, the coalition agreement committed us to consult IPSA on moving from the final salary arrangements. In June last year, the Government established the independent public service pensions commission, chaired by Lord Hutton of Furness, to make recommendations on how to put public service pensions on a sustainable footing. Although the Hutton report did not include hon. Members within its scope of inquiry, it was immediately apparent that reform of the parliamentary pension scheme must be tackled in the light of the commission's findings and their subsequent application to other public service schemes. I do not believe that there is any case for our scheme being treated differently from other public service schemes. Indeed, there would be justifiable disbelief if it were.

Mr Mark Field (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): I accept that there is much to be said about our needing to set the public an example, particularly given the reforms we are trying to make to public sector

schemes, but unlike many public sector schemes the parliamentary scheme is—or is near to being—fully funded and the contributions are rather larger. Will the Leader of the House go into more detail on the nature of the parliamentary scheme, which is slightly misunderstood in much of the press coverage?

Sir George Young: The contributions for those subscribing at one fortieth are indeed higher than those for many elsewhere in the public sector, but so are the benefits. The Exchequer contribution, at some 28%, is also substantially higher than for other public sector schemes. One needs to consider it in the round when one comes to a judgment about the appropriate treatment of the scheme.

Today's motion supports the approach to public service pension reform set out in the final report of the independent public service pensions commission.

Mr Julian Brazier (Canterbury) (Con): Some of us strongly support the principle behind my right hon. Friend's motion, but our dilemma is that once again IPSA is acting as administrator and as the body that sets the rates—an arrangement that one does not often find anywhere else. If the committee chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor (Adam Afriyie) finds that there should be some division between the administration of our pay, pensions, allowances and so on and the setting of their rates, will my right hon. Friend reassure us that the motion, if passed, will not be the final word on the matter?

Sir George Young: The administration will be performed by the trustees; there is no change in that. The contribution rates and ultimately the shape of the scheme will be determined by IPSA, which will set the rules. The trustees will continue to administer the scheme, with some slight change in their membership to reflect IPSA's new involvement.

Mr Andrew Love (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Leader of the House give way?

Sir George Young: If I may, I will make a little more progress, and then I will give way.

The amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope) suggests that the parts of the motion relating to the Hutton review should be removed. Its implication is that our scheme should not be treated the same as other public sector schemes, and I do not think our constituents would welcome such an interpretation.

Mr Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): On what basis does my right hon. Friend think that is a fair assessment of my amendment, which seeks to put in the motion the fact that IPSA is independent and should reach its own judgment? That is the effect of my amendment and I am sorry that my right hon. Friend seeks to misrepresent its purpose.

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend's amendment would delete the following words:

“and accordingly invites IPSA to increase contribution rates for hon. Members from 1 April 2012 in line with changes in pension contribution rates for other public service schemes.”

[*Sir George Young*]

It is perfectly legitimate to say that one can deduce that he does not want Members' pension schemes to reflect other public service schemes.

Mr David Anderson (Blaydon) (Lab): On that point, will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir George Young: Let me make a bit more progress and then I will give way.

The motion also states that

"IPSA should introduce... a new pension scheme for hon. Members which is informed by the Commission's findings"

by 2015. That is a similar timetable to that for the rest of the public service. However, as with other public service pension reform, changes should neither be retrospectively made nor have an impact on past benefits.

Mr Love: In his final report, Lord Hutton spoke warmly about the continuation of defined benefit schemes in the public sector. Is the Leader of the House fully aware of that, and does he support that recommendation?

Sir George Young: Indeed; the Government welcomed Lord Hutton's report, including the interim report, the final report and the budget. He made it clear that he wanted to retain a defined benefit scheme, and on that basis negotiations are continuing. IPSA will be mindful of that recommendation by Hutton—and, indeed, of the hon. Gentleman's views.

The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act already provides full protection for pension benefits already earned, including a link to the salary on leaving the scheme, so any new scheme would apply only to future service. Furthermore, the legislation includes comprehensive provisions requiring IPSA to consult widely before making any changes to parliamentary pensions.

Bob Russell *rose*—

Sir George Young: I think I had better give way first to the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr Anderson).

Mr Anderson: I was pleased to sign amendment (a), but I want to make it clear that my case is very different from what the Leader of the House described. I believe that we are in exactly the same boat as every other public sector worker in the country and that we should be treated the same. We should be allowed, with our trustees, to negotiate with IPSA as local government pension schemes are being negotiated with their trustees and their employers. It should not be the Government who set the standard for the pensions—it should be the pension schemes.

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman will know that paragraph 15 of schedule 6 to the CRAG Act states:

"Before making a scheme under paragraph 12 the IPSA must consult...the trustees of the Fund,"

so there is that opportunity for dialogue.

Tony Lloyd (Manchester Central) (Lab): I should make it clear that I will support the motion, but something is causing alarm bells to ring. The Leader of the House

rightly says that the motion means that the parliamentary scheme will not be better than those for other public sector workers, but will he make it quite clear that nothing in the motion has any implications for the negotiations that are taking place with other public sector schemes?

Sir George Young: The motion is purely declaratory, so the hon. Gentleman is quite right. The second half of it expresses a view, on behalf of the House, that we believe we should be treated no better or worse than those in other public sector schemes. It is important that our constituents know that that is our view and that we do not expect to be treated any differently from others in the public sector.

A further development is the increase in pension contribution rates for public service schemes, as already announced by my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury. The case for public service employees to pay more into their pensions and therefore reduce the burden on the taxpayer was made clearly in Lord Hutton's interim report, which was published last autumn. The report states:

"In the short term, however, I consider there is also a strong case for looking at some increase in pension contributions for public service employees, to better meet the real costs of providing these pensions, the value of which has risen in recent years with most of these extra costs falling to taxpayers".

The subsequent statement made by the Chief Secretary made it clear that each scheme would be required to find savings equivalent to a 3.2 percentage point increase, phased in over three years, with scheme-specific discussions to make proposals on how the savings were to be achieved.

If the House accepts the principle that hon. Members should not be out of step with changes that affect other public service schemes, we should also accept that our contributions should rise at the same time. I can therefore confirm that the Government propose to increase contributions to the ministerial scheme, with increases being applied from 1 April next year on a staged basis, and we will consult on that proposal as required by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act.

Finally, I shall end where I began: the most important development of which account needs to be taken is the acceptance that MPs' remuneration should be assessed, determined and administered independently.

Claire Perry (Devizes) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although there might be concerns over IPSA's role, we should not make the perfect the enemy of the good and that this debate is long overdue? We must all look our public sector constituents in the face every day and justify changing their pensions schemes.

Sir George Young: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her support and for the views she expresses.

There were constraints on IPSA taking over absolutely everything right at the beginning of this Parliament. The priority was allowances, so that was its first commitment, followed by pay. As I have said, this is the final piece in the jigsaw puzzle. We will have then passed over responsibility for the total package by 1 April next year.

Sir Menzies Campbell (North East Fife) (LD): Let me make it clear that I support the motion and the thinking that lies behind it, but what will be the role of the trustees between now and 2015, and what will it be after 2015? Will they have any fiduciary responsibility for the new scheme, or will their responsibility be limited to the current scheme?

Sir George Young: The trustees will continue to administer the scheme. The chairman of the trustees might want to catch your eye, Mr Speaker. Under our changes, the rules that govern the scheme will no longer be made by the Government or the House; they will be made independently by IPSA. After the process of transfer on 1 April next year, the scheme will continue to be administered by the trustees until such time as IPSA makes any change. If it wants to make changes, it must consult the trustees. The motion indicates that the first change should be an increase in the contribution rate. It then suggests that, along with other public sector schemes, a new scheme, perhaps moving from final salary, should be introduced by 2015, but the scheme will continue to be administered by the trustees, and I pay tribute to the work they do.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): Will the right hon. Gentleman confirm my understanding that the arrangements being put in place for the trustees, some of which come from the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act, are in line with best practice for other pension schemes?

Sir George Young: Yes; I believe that to be so. There has been no representation on the issue the hon. Lady raises. There are some changes in the composition of the trustees to reflect IPSA's responsibility, as part of the 2010 Act.

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir George Young: I propose to conclude.

Independence is a crucial part of the process of restoring trust in Parliament. Any decision to defer the transfer to independence would result in MPs continuing to determine their own remuneration, which the House has firmly rejected. It is not incompatible—this goes back to some of our discussions during the debate—to argue that responsibility for our pensions should be made independent and, by agreeing to the motion today, to send a strong signal about the direction we feel the scheme should take in the light of the application of the Hutton recommendations to other public service schemes.

Subject to today's debate, I will move as quickly as possible to commence the relevant sections of the CRAG Act, transferring all responsibility for MPs' pensions to IPSA. Once responsibility for MPs' pensions has been handed to IPSA, the House will have finally relinquished the power to set the terms of its own remuneration. I hope that that will represent a significant further step in drawing a line under the problems of the past and in helping to rebuild public confidence. I commend the motion to the House.

4.4 pm

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): As the Leader of the House says, the motion seeks to deal with some unfinished business from the previous Parliament. The order that we are debating is necessary to commence the provisions of section 40 and schedule 6 of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010. Those parts of the Act transfer responsibility for hon. Members' pensions to the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority. That legislation was passed, with all-party agreement, by the previous Government. It gained Royal Assent in April last year, just before the general election, and there was a general feeling that it was wrong for existing arrangements to be left unchanged, and that the independent determination of salaries should extend to cover pay and pensions. Having voted for the primary legislation that brings about that switch of responsibilities, we Labour Members will not oppose the motion today.

The order will change the current arrangements, under which the Leader of the House—in effect, the Government—determines MPs' pension arrangements through regulations. Following the 2009 report by the Committee on Standards in Public Life, the previous Government accepted in principle that the independent regulator should be given statutory responsibility for MPs' pay and pensions. While that change was being legislated for, there was, quite properly, input from the trustees of the parliamentary contributory pension fund, which ensured that Members' accrued rights had protection consistent with that provided to members of other occupational pension schemes. There was also agreement to amendments that ensured that the parliamentary contributory pension fund would continue to be a trustee-based scheme with appropriate member representation, and that required IPSA to obtain trustees' consent before making changes in the administration of the scheme.

Bob Russell: The hon. Lady rightly draws attention to the history that has led to us discussing the motion today, and to what happened in the previous Parliament. After 18 months' experience of IPSA, does she have total confidence in that organisation's ability to deliver our pensions?

Ms Eagle: We all have our IPSA stories, and we could probably dine out on them—with each other, and we would not claim it back. We all have stories about some of the absurdities of the scheme, especially at the beginning, when it was bedding in. There has been considerable progress, and I would like further progress to be made. There are ongoing ways in which we in this House can bring to light any remaining absurdities, and I hope that we can continue to iron them out. The principle of independent determination is right. IPSA seems as good a body as any—not withstanding the chaos at its beginning—to undertake all that responsibility. Clearly, we will have to wait and see whether my confidence will be rewarded, but I am willing to give IPSA a try. I know that the hon. Gentleman is somewhat more sceptical about them than I am.

Mr Winnick: When the Leader of the House spoke, he was justifying, on behalf of the Government, what is happening to public servants across the country, including many of our constituents who are on relatively low pay, and justifying the attack on their pensions. I certainly

[*Mr Winnick*]

do not agree with what is happening, and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (*Ms Eagle*) does not.

Ms Eagle: I will come on to make a few short, in-order remarks about that aspect of our debate, but I think that most Members of the House would agree that we cannot expect to be treated differently from other public sector workers; that is a principle that most of us would share.

I was talking about appropriate Member representation on the trustee board, and the fact that IPSA, under the primary legislation and the order, will have to obtain the trustees' consent before making changes to the administration of the scheme or the management of the scheme's assets. Again—this is an important principle—it is entirely in keeping with the usual practice of other funded schemes. It is important that we maintain that parallel.

The order will change the legal structure of the parliamentary contributory pension fund. It will become an IPSA scheme and the power to amend it will be vested in IPSA rather than in the Government via regulations tabled by the Leader of the House, so the Leader of the House is giving away powers in the order. He seems to be quite happy about that. IPSA will acquire the duty to do all this, rather than the current Leader of the House.

The primary legislation ensures that there is a requirement, though, for IPSA to consult interested parties prior to determining benefits or contributions in future. In the primary legislation interested parties include the Speaker, the trustees of the scheme, the Senior Salaries Review Body, the Government, and in many ways the most important organisation in all pension deliberations—the Government Actuary's Department. This is all entirely sensible, and I look forward to IPSA undertaking this work in due course.

Bob Russell: It is incapable.

Ms Eagle: Time will tell. If IPSA proves incapable, which I doubt, I suspect we will be back here quite quickly, dealing with the consequences. I do not anticipate that we will be in that position.

Mr Redwood: The hon. Lady is making an important contribution. May I see if I have understood what she is saying? She is saying that the order does not suspend normal trustee law, so are the trustees under a duty to give their consent or to seek to modify the scheme that IPSA brings forward? I do not know whether this is a normal scheme or not.

Ms Eagle: This will be an IPSA scheme. My understanding of it, in my reading of the primary legislation which we all supported prior to the last election, is that the trustees would have the normal legal requirements and fiduciary duties in the new scheme that trustees of other schemes have. That is my understanding. I am looking at the Leader of the House, who does not seem to be shaking his head. I assume that if the Government had a different interpretation, we would have heard about it by now.

Sir George Young *rose*—

Ms Eagle: The right hon. Gentleman is rising, so there may be a different interpretation. I am happy to give way.

Sir George Young: The hon. Lady is right. Paragraph 12 of schedule 6, which deals with the MPs' pension scheme, makes it absolutely clear that it is up to IPSA to devise the scheme. There are rights of consultation, but it is an independent scheme set out by IPSA.

Ms Eagle: The question from the right hon. Member for Wokingham (*Mr Redwood*) that I was answering was about the duties of the trustees. My understanding, from reading the primary legislation, is that it does not impact in any differential way on the legal duties of trustees.

Bob Russell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. If those on the two Front Benches cannot agree on a matter of such fundamental importance as this, how on earth can we proceed?

Mr Speaker: That is definitively not a point of order. It is a point of obvious and intense frustration.

Ms Eagle: I do not want to use the word "frustrated" in the Chamber because it is rather a difficult one to use. I did not think we were disagreeing. I thought I was answering slightly more accurately the point that the right hon. Member for Wokingham had made about trustees' duties in law. The Leader of the House was answering a slightly different question about the fact that IPSA would be in charge of the scheme. Again, that does not undermine our existing understanding of trustee law and the fiduciary duties of pension trustees.

Stephen Phillips (*Sleaford and North Hykeham*) (*Con*) *rose*—

Ms Eagle: I suspect that a lawyer is going to help us with this point of debate.

Stephen Phillips: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. I do not know the answer, but can she, and in due course the Leader of the House, confirm the position as I expect it to be, which is that the trustees will continue to administer the scheme for the benefit of the beneficiaries, but the terms of the scheme for existing entrants but not for their accrued contributions will be set by IPSA, as indeed will the terms of the scheme for new entrants in due course? The trustees will retain the duties that I understand them to have under the relevant legislation.

Ms Eagle: That is also my understanding, although I am not a trained lawyer, unlike the hon. and learned Gentleman, but I did a stint as Pensions Minister so have some understanding of these matters.

Other aspects of the motion have proved more controversial, if the presence of the amendment, which proposes deleting everything from line 6, is anything to go by. The wording of the motion was not decided by cross-party agreement, unlike the decision in principle to transfer responsibility for pension arrangements to

IPSA. It is the Government's wording and appears to reflect their position on public sector pensions more generally.

When Lord Hutton produced his final report on public sector pensions, it fell to me, as shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury at the time, to respond to it on behalf of the Opposition. We certainly welcomed Lord Hutton's commitment to the ongoing provision of pay-as-you-go pensions in the public sector—our own included—as a matter of principle. We also noted his view that the pensions currently provided were not—to use the phrase that is bandied about—gold-plated. It is easy to forget in the welter of propaganda about the generosity of public sector pension provision that the majority of public sector pensioners receive less than £5,600 a year. Indeed, many beneficiaries are part-time women workers who take home considerably less than that after a lifetime of service. Both the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister have been guilty of using that alarmist phrase. We may have a far better and more measured debate about these important matters if they would accept what Lord Hutton has said and stop using that highly misleading and derogatory phrase about public sector pension provision.

Although Lord Hutton made the case for an increase in contributions, which is mentioned in the motion, he did not specify what it should be. He stated on page 119 of his interim report that the Government

“should have regard to protecting the low paid and to the possibility of significant increases in the number of employees opting out of schemes and should consider staging increases in contributions where appropriate, to minimise this risk.”

After the Hutton report was published, the Opposition recognised the merit of considering a move to career average benefits, rather than final salary schemes. We also recognised the pressure generated in all pension schemes—again, ours is no different—by increasing life expectancy. We had acknowledged this in government by negotiating changes to existing schemes involving increases in contributions, later retirement ages and “cap and share” arrangements. These agreements will save £1 billion a year.

Clearly, MPs' pensions cannot be immune from such changes, and I am sure that IPSA will consider that in due course when it looks at what our future contributions and benefits should be. I am also sure that it will take into account the 1.9% increase in contributions that was agreed in 2009 as a cost-saving measure in our scheme, which takes Members' contributions to 11.9%, 7.9% or 5.9% of salary depending on the chosen accrual rate. Likewise, I expect IPSA to take into account the fact that the average time a Member serves in the House is 15 years.

I know that some right hon. and hon. Members have suspicions about the timing of today's motion, which is ahead of any outcome of the so-called negotiations on the pension provision for millions of public sector workers. The motion might be read in a certain way, as if it is pre-empting those negotiations, because it states that IPSA should increase Members' pension contributions “in line with changes in pension contribution rates for other public services schemes.”

The fact is that the talks are ongoing. If they are to have any meaning whatsoever, rather than being exposed as a charade, we cannot know in advance what their results will be.

Mr Mark Field: I understand some of the hon. Lady's concerns about pre-emption, but does she not also think that at this juncture we need to take a lead on this, despite all the concerns I have—I hope that she will be able to say a little more on the relatively generous rates for parliamentary contributions, compared with others—given the difficulties we will face throughout the public pensions sphere?

Ms Eagle: It is certainly important that we are not seen to exempt ourselves from the required changes, and in this debate so far that sense has been put across by speakers on both sides of the House.

The Government have to show understanding and good will if they are to make progress on public sector pensions.

Tony Lloyd: My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech, as ever, and the point that she makes is the real one: nothing in today's vote in the House should be seen to pre-empt the legitimate negotiating process that is taking place with millions of public sector workers. If something should not be pre-empted in particular, it is the opportunity for the Government to say that, somehow, the motion before us gives them legitimacy in refusing to negotiate in good faith with public sector unions.

Ms Eagle: I agree. I certainly hope that the Government want to negotiate in good faith with public sector unions, and I understand that sector-specific talks have been going on. In education there were meetings last Wednesday, in health there are meetings tomorrow, and the civil service has had a few meetings, because on public sector pensions it is hard to generalise. The schemes are quite different, and the local government scheme is funded completely differently.

I understand also that a meeting is due a week today between the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Cabinet Office Minister with responsibility for the central talks, and I certainly hope that all sides show flexibility so that there can be a negotiated settlement.

Mr Winnick: Does my hon. Friend agree that, after a lifetime working in public service, and with the expectation of a pension somewhere in the region of £5,000, many of our constituents will not accept a reduction because the House has today decided that its pension scheme is going to be different? They would be daft to be so persuaded, and they will not be.

Ms Eagle: I do not think that I was making that argument, and I hope that the negotiations will be meaningful and successful.

Mr Anderson: It is quite clear from my discussions with people in the negotiations that the Government are not negotiating seriously: they have made the point that they want a 3% reduction no matter what. All they are talking about is how they should do it, not whether they should do it, and no evidence has come forward—there are no actuarial reports and there is no cognisance—of the impact that the number of people dropping out, which could be in the hundreds of thousands, will have not just on those schemes, but on the investment potential of those schemes.

Ms Eagle: My hon. Friend makes a perfectly good point, and I hope that the Government are listening. They have to show understanding and good will if they are to make appropriate progress on public sector pensions, especially at a time of pay freezes and the most ferocious squeeze on living standards since the great depression.

The Government should not play politics with this issue, and they cannot take our support for the motion as any endorsement of the way in which they have so far chosen to pre-empt meaningful negotiations with public sector trade unions to resolve the outstanding issues on pensions caused by the announcement of an across-the-board 3.2% increase in contributions, a shift from RPI to CPI for indexation—

Mr Bone: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Eagle: Yes, of course.

Mr Bone: The shadow Leader of the House is making quite a powerful argument. I think that she is arguing for the amendment, because it would remove all the talk that she is particularly concerned about. Is she arguing for the amendment?

Ms Eagle: The trouble with the amendment, as the hon. Gentleman would probably admit if he sat down and thought about it, is that, if we amended the motion in that way, we would look like we wanted our public sector pension to be treated differently from the generality of public sector pensions, and that would give an unfortunate impression. I hope that he reflects on that meaning of the amendment, to which he has put his name, and thinks better of it when it comes to the debate.

I was in the middle of saying that the outstanding issues caused by the announcement of an across-the-board 3.2% increase in contributions, a shift from RPI to CPI for indexation and speeding up the increase of retirement ages, the latter of which hits women particularly hard, are real issues that I hope the Government will address with good will in the negotiations, rather than regard as a complete *fait accompli*.

Mr Mark Field: Does not the hon. Lady recognise that one reason for what she would regard as this breakneck speed of reform of the age of retirement and pension arrangements is that so little was done, and not just in the past 13 years, since one could argue, given the actuarial evidence about life expectancy, that the inaction goes back well before 1997? The force of necessity has meant that the Government have had to act relatively quickly to make up for very slothful action from past Governments.

Ms Eagle: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's interpretation at all. We sometimes agree on things; we do not happen to agree on this. We made some good reforms and we saved considerable amounts of money through the negotiations that we had on public sector pensions, which came to an agreement. I am arguing that MPs' pensions should not be exempt from changes, regardless of whether they are independently provided for and decided on.

I hope that the Government show determination and good will in having meaningful negotiations with the representatives of millions of public sector workers

whom they are meeting, and that they recognise the real challenges and dangers, as Lord Hutton pointed out, of going too far and too fast on contribution rates and driving people to leave schemes at a time when there is a ferocious squeeze on living standards. There is a balance to be negotiated, and I am not at all certain that the Government are getting that balance right. If they get it wrong, many hundreds of thousands, even millions, of people will leave schemes and will then look forward to a life on means-tested benefits when they retire, which, paradoxically, will cost the country more than if we can keep them paying into schemes. There is a delicate balance that has not often been reflected in the rhetoric—the bellicose rhetoric, in some cases—from Government Members as these negotiations proceed.

I hope that there will be a new and constructive approach from the Government in the ongoing negotiations on public sector pensions. In the meantime, we will support the motion.

4.27 pm

Mr Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): My amendment effectively separates the two distinct issues in the motion and says that the first of those—whether the issue of pensions should be referred to the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority—is something that we should support today. Indeed, it might not have been necessary to have a debate, because the Government could have dealt with it, and done so earlier, by laying an order under subordinate legislation.

The second part of the motion was described by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House as being declaratory in that we do not expect to be treated any better or any worse than other public sector employees. If that is what it actually said, I am sure that there would not be any dispute. Certainly, I would not have tabled an amendment, and I do not think that the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr Anderson) would have been as troubled as he, too, is about this issue.

My right hon. Friend said that the essence is that we are handing over to IPSA the responsibility for looking at our whole remuneration package, including salary, allowances and pensions, and ensuring that it should be able to do that independently. As he and the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) said, once IPSA has that responsibility, it will make proposals or issue a consultation paper and invite comments from you, Mr Speaker, from the Government, from Members of Parliament, from members of the public, and from other so-called stakeholders. The Government seem to be pre-empting that consultation process by saying, “Irrespective of whether IPSA asks us any questions, we’re going to volunteer some answers before we’ve been asked the questions.”

The hon. Member for Wallasey raised a number of key issues that she thinks IPSA should take into account when it considers parliamentary pensions. It was not an exhaustive list, but it contained a number of points that are not included in the second part of the motion. The second part of the motion therefore invites colleagues to sign up to a selective list of propositions, including that there should be an increase in contribution rates from 1 April next year

“in line with changes in pension contribution rates for other public service schemes.”

However, no standard formula affects all other public service schemes, which vary from one to another. The Government have said that any increases in contributions should be made in progressively and in stages. That is not included in the motion.

The motion states that the House

“supports the approach to public service pension reform”.

I do not think that is a controversial issue, but it is important that we do nothing to undermine our commitment to the belief that this is now the responsibility of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority. We should not give it authority with one hand while putting constraints on it with the other. That is where the Government have got it wrong; they are seeking to interfere in the process.

Margot James (Stourbridge) (Con): I see no discrepancy in the Government seeking to apply the principles of public sector reform to the decisions that IPSA will ultimately take, as is stated in the motion. That does not preclude IPSA from consulting on the finer details, as my hon. Friend said. It is important that it is explicit in the motion that the principles of the wider public sector reforms should be applicable to MPs' pensions. It is imperative that the message goes out that that is what we are voting for.

Mr Speaker: Order. I am extremely grateful to the hon. Lady. That may well be imperative, but it is also imperative that interventions from now on are brief, because a number of people wish to speak. I remind the House that a debate of exceptional importance is to take place under the auspices of the Backbench Business Committee. I do not think that I am alone in hoping that that debate will not be delayed unduly.

Mr Chope: I will make a brief response to my hon. Friend the Member for Stourbridge (Margot James), Mr Speaker. What she says about perceptions is important. That is why it is essential that the Government do not bring forward motions that seem to be designed to appeal to an outside audience, while at the same time leaving things rather vague and open to the accusation that they are trying to tie the hands of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority.

Stephen Phillips: Surely all that the second part of the motion does is establish that we should be treated in precisely the same way as other public servants.

Mr Chope: It does not say that, actually, because if it did, it would be worded in that way. That is how it is being interpreted. If nothing else comes from this debate, something will have been achieved if that is how the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority interprets the motion. My concern and the concern of many colleagues is that it seems as though the Government have picked a few items and put them in the motion.

To take one public service scheme as an example, the Government have made it quite clear that they do not think that the principles we are talking about today should apply to the armed forces scheme. I support the Government in that, but it is a completely separate issue from trying to tie the hands of IPSA at this stage. IPSA will come forward with its proposals and they will

go out to consultation, at which point the Government will have a chance to express a view, as will everybody else.

Mr Redwood: Am I right in remembering that the idea of the Hutton proposals was that they should be negotiated between the representatives of the employees and the employers? Does my hon. Friend think that that is the idea in this case as well?

Mr Chope: My right hon. Friend is, as almost always, absolutely right. The hon. Member for Blyden made the point that in the public sector, proper negotiations are going on based upon information about specific schemes and about employment issues overall. It seems that for some reason, the Government are trying to pre-empt that negotiation, although we have a strong and independent group of trustees for our pension scheme.

As you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, I tried to negotiate with the Government a slightly longer debate on this issue, believing that we should take it up to 7 o'clock. I lost out in that negotiation, so now I feel it is incumbent on me to reduce my remarks pro rata to give others the chance to participate. I have tabled the amendment as a probing amendment, and I have been quite interested in the reaction that it has engendered. Since I tabled it I have heard colleagues say that they think I am on to a good thing, and that they would support it if the House were to divide. However, I will wait and see the view of others before making a final decision on that.

4.36 pm

Mr Brian H. Donohoe (Central Ayrshire) (Lab): As the chairman of the pension fund, I have had many meetings with the Leader of the House and with the chairman of IPSA. As a consequence of my concerns and those that other trustees had expressed, I wrote to every Member of Parliament. They should have received the letter on Thursday by e-mail and over the weekend by post. I presume that, as a consequence, much that I would have said does not need to be said, but I can assure all Members and former Members that I and the trustees will take on board any observations and questions that they may have.

I would argue that we are where we are today as a consequence of successive Government's, since time immemorial, interfering with MPs' conditions of service. That is the whole reason for this debate today and why IPSA was introduced. On that basis, it seems strange that even at this late stage, the Government continue to think they can interfere with our conditions of service by putting motions such as this before the House. I reject their position and do not think it is right.

I believe that, having been given its new responsibility, IPSA should be fully independent. It is proving itself to be so in the discussions that I have with it. It has assured the board of trustees that it will operate free of Government interference on this subject and on conditions of service across the board.

Bob Russell: Will the hon. Gentleman clarify precisely what he has been promised and who promised it to him? Is it in writing?

Mr Donohoe: What has been suggested is in the minutes of the board of trustees, and it is open to the hon. Gentleman to ask for a copy of them. He will see the discussions that have taken place.

Bob Russell *rose*—

Mr Donohoe: I do not have time to give way again, because I am conscious of the fact that so many Members want to intervene or make speeches. Rather than reading out the minutes of meetings, if the hon. Gentleman writes to me I will furnish him with that information.

Mr Redwood: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Donohoe: I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman if I get to a point at which I have some leeway, but I have some important things to outline before I take any further interventions.

The trustees of the time had no choice about the move to IPSA, which was agreed by a motion of the House. However, they fought for and won significant concessions within the Bill that made the change. There is absolutely no doubt that the protection of Members' pensions was at the forefront of their discussion, and I have to praise the staff and advisers of the pension unit and its previous chairman, Sir John Butterfill. They are to be congratulated on the protection that they got for the pensions of Members and retired Members.

The legislation necessary to transfer the Leader of the House's powers to IPSA was in place before my appointment as chairman of the board of trustees, but as I continue I shall tell the House that the trustees will have important powers that they did not have previously. The transfer of powers was agreed, as all hon. Members will know, in the wake of the expenses scandal, following the recommendations of the Kelly report. One recommendation was that IPSA should have statutory responsibility for setting Members' pay, which of course includes pensions, and other conditions of service. It is important to understand that that must be done in consultation with the House. IPSA also has the responsibility of oversight for the administration of Members' pensions.

Therefore, amendments to schedule 6 to the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 were made to give effect to the decision to transfer powers over pensions. That is what the Act was all about, and that is what it achieves. However, Members who read the Act will find that aspects of it clearly transfer more powers to the board of trustees.

Mr Redwood: Will the hon. Gentleman make that clear, because I do not quite understand him? Is he saying that the trustees have the power and the duty either to consent to IPSA proposals or to withhold their consent? If they have that power, how might they use it?

Mr Donohoe: The trustees do not have that power. Given IPSA's independence, which is enshrined in legislation, at the end of the day, it makes the ultimate decision, but it must do so after meaningful consultation with the trustees. Any changes that IPSA wishes to make to the pension fund must be reported to the Speaker and laid before the House. That is the power within the Act.

The trustees at the time were presented with the proposals to amend the 2010 Act. They asked for and got a number of amendments, but they had no power to overturn the Government's proposals, which were eventually agreed. I can tell the House that the trustees made an exceptional effort and fought extremely hard in that period, and they won numerous and significant protections for Members' pension benefits. By way of an example, accrued benefits will be fully protected after the transfer. Because the benefits have been built up, they obviously must be protected, but they are not currently protected and they could be interfered with. That is a clear indication of what the trustees were able to implement—that protection will be enshrined in legislation following the transfer. I do not have time to give more examples, but I can give them to hon. Members after the debate if they want me to.

IPSA can make changes to MPs' future pension benefits and contributions only after formal consultation with the trustees, the majority of whom, following the transfer of the power, which will happen whenever the Leader of the House gets round to signing the order, will be Members of Parliament or former Members of Parliament. That is an enhancement of the trustees' powers, because there is currently no such requirement.

Currently, there are 10 trustees—eight are Members of Parliament and two are former Members, but when the order is signed, one trustee will be appointed by the board of IPSA and one will come from the Government. The Ministry for the civil service, the head of which is the Prime Minister, will appoint the latter. I do not suppose the Prime Minister wants to become the trustee of the Members' pension fund, but who knows?

Mr Bone: I do not understand why we have suddenly created a post for the Government in the running of Members' pensions.

Mr Donohoe: I will explain. That individual would be responsible only for representing the Ministers' section of the pension fund. A former Minister would have a different contribution rate. I see the Leader of the House agreeing with me on this. The pension fund administrators that at present and will continue to do so, but by virtue of the contribution, it will come from the Department that the person was in or from the civil service. The Government are not going to start playing a part in the Members' pension fund. I hope that that answers the hon. Gentleman's question.

There was originally a proposal in the Bill that members of the board of trustees could be removed by IPSA. That has now been forgotten, and the eight members of the board will continue to be appointed by this House and no one else. They will continue to be elected or selected from this place or from among former Members. At our trustees' meeting on Thursday, we thought it sensible to determine that we would lose two members at this stage so that this whole process could be carried out smoothly. Otherwise, all sorts of complications could have arisen. As a consequence, I would like to put on record my appreciation—and that of the other members of the board—for my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) and the hon. Member for Watford (Richard Harrington), both of whom have now withdrawn as trustees.

The increase in contributions is the main point of any argument on this matter. I have already argued, and I want to reinforce the point, that IPSA must be seen in every respect as independent. I see no reason why the House should indicate that it would like our pension contributions to be treated in the same way as those of other public service workers. IPSA has a statutory duty to act independently of Parliament, and by giving such an indication, the House is putting undue pressure on IPSA. It should not be influencing IPSA in that way. IPSA must undertake its role as laid down in statute, and in no other way.

Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): Surely it is important, however, for the House to make it clear that MPs should not be treated differently from other public sector workers. In particular, we should try to avoid a repeat of the bizarre situation earlier this year in which we had to take back powers to set our own pay because the Senior Salaries Review Body had recommended a pay rise for MPs in a year when the rest of the public sector faced a pay freeze. Any such pay rise would have been entirely inappropriate.

Mr Donohoe: I have to disagree with the hon. Lady, and I will tell her why. If we put things out to independent arbiters such as the Senior Salaries Review Body, and they make recommendations after consultation with all sorts of bodies, I would argue that the Government should not intervene in those circumstances. In that case in particular, we should not have overturned that decision. This is where we have gone wrong so many times in the past. In the great number of years that I have been a Member of Parliament, I have seen this happen time and again, and my research leads me to believe that every Prime Minister since 1945 with the exception of John Major has interfered in the conditions of service of Members of Parliament to the detriment of those conditions.

I feel strongly about this—so strongly that, as the arch-enemy of IPSA, I argue on the basis of what I have seen that it is far better for it to have that independence, which is clearly documented in legislation, than to have this constant interference in the conditions of service of Members of Parliament. There has not been a great understanding by the Government of some of the elements of the arguments with IPSA.

Given that pay and pensions are linked, it is only sensible for IPSA to take stock not only of all elements of conditions of service, but of the whole question of pensions, which I have always believed to be deferred income for any individual in employment who has a pension fund.

Other considerations relating to IPSA in consultation with trustees include the fact that it has to wait for a valuation. Here, as I say, the Government have not fully understood the position on Members' pensions or the calculations of where they should go in respect of any increase in contributions, any increase in the age of retirement or any other element affecting those pensions. Clearly, the results of the 2011 valuation of the scheme will shortly be finalised, which I take as a very strong argument for leaving the decision about increases in contributions, if there are to be increases, to IPSA itself. As far as we are concerned, we are in a cost-sharing scheme, as a result of which we must see what the

actuary says about any changes to contribution rates before taking a decision that puts us in line with anybody else. As Members will know, there have been increases to pension contributions over a relatively recent period, which I do not think any other members of the public sector have had to face. I suggest that it is important to take that into account, as we are told it will be by IPSA.

I suggest that trustees would also recommend giving further thought to other cost-saving measures in the scheme to make it simpler and to make the benefits clear in a way that everybody understands. From the discussions I have had with Members of Parliament over the last few weeks, I believe that there has been a misunderstanding of many aspects of the scheme. That needs to be taken into account. We also need to consider, if possible, as a means of getting away from increases in contributions, the whole question of increasing the pension or retirement age. It could be part of the answer to some of the problems we face.

Another misunderstanding is the view that this scheme is expensively funded in itself. Schemes like this should be treated differently from unfunded or notionally funded schemes, as assessing changes to member contribution rates should take into account any excess returns generated by funded schemes from the investment strategy. I understand that the London Pension Fund Authority scheme, which is a funded scheme, might not be subject to the general contribution increase that the Government hope to implement. If there are exceptions there, they can be made anywhere else. I am convinced that an awful lot of negotiations are still to take place, and these will bring to the fore some of the elements of the pension fund that are not best understood.

Mr Anderson: Is there not a big problem with this whole debate in that we talk about these things as if they are a matter of negotiation, but in fact what we are really talking about is the fact that the Government are imposing a stealth tax on all public sector workers? They are not having negotiations about that, and they are not taking actuarial advice or the effect of the schemes into account. All they are saying is, "There will be an increase on public sector workers' pensions" as a matter of fact—without allowing negotiations about any scheme to be taken into account.

Mr Donohoe: I am not in a position to answer that, as it is for the Leader of the House to do so, although I certainly have some sympathy with what my hon. Friend says.

Some of the closest comparators to Members are senior civil servants. Members of the civil service pension scheme and other schemes such as the scheme for staff of the House of Commons and the House of Lords pay either 3.5% or 1.5% contributions, depending on when they joined the civil service. For that contribution, they either build up a pension at the rate of one sixtieth, or one eightieth plus tax-free cash sum—which equates to one sixty-fourth—with a retirement age of 60, or they build up a pension at the rate of one forty-third with a retirement age of 65. That must be taken into account along with everything else in which we will be involved between now and 2015. It is clear from the discussions that have taken place that consideration must be given to all elements of Members' contributions.

[*Mr Donohoe*]

People may think that I only represent the House in this regard, but I have constituents who are aggrieved by what is happening to their pension funds, and I have every sympathy with them. However, I am here almost as a shop steward—I am not sure that that expression is much liked on the Government Benches—to represent Members in the context of their conditions of service. People describe this as a gold-plated scheme, but although it is a good scheme—indeed, I would argue that it is a brilliant scheme—what is not understood is that only a few Members of Parliament retire from this place with a full pension. Of the 650 serving Members of Parliament, only 35 would leave with one today. Another thing that is not understood is that most Members pay for the rate of one fortieth, which means paying 11.9%. So the scheme cannot really be described as gold-plated.

Dr Thérèse Coffey (Suffolk Coastal) (Con): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that Members may have already contributed to pension schemes before being elected to the House? They do not generally come here at the age of 21.

Mr Donohoe: The regulations restrict the level of pension that can be paid on retirement. The limit is generally two thirds of pay inclusive of pensions that people have built up before becoming Members of Parliament. I think that that answers the hon. Lady's question. As most MPs have other pension entitlements, the restriction means that a number of them are not paid the pension of one fortieth for each year of their parliamentary service. Worse, a small number of MPs who have not transferred their pensions to the fund end up subsidising the Exchequer by continuing to make contributions for a period for which they will receive no pension. That, too, is not best understood by those who criticise us.

I understand that the legislation allows Members to opt out. If there were an increase in the level of the contribution and if I were 45, I should find things very difficult. Given domestic circumstances, not every Member of Parliament is rich, and those who are not would find it difficult to continue to make their contributions. I understand that that also applies to many members of the fire service, for instance. There will be a drift, and if that gathers pace—as it could—the pension fund will suffer and the Exchequer will eventually have to fund more than it does at present. That must be factored into the equation before any change is made.

Our discussions with IPSA suggest—and Sir Ian Kennedy himself has stated—that it has determined that MPs' conditions of service will be dealt with fairly, that it will work closely with the trustees once the powers are transferred, and that it would welcome proposals from the trustees on how the relationship should work. I have put that on record because it was said. At the trustee meeting Sir Ian attended, he went on to say that IPSA's statutory independent role will be maintained. Importantly, that includes independence in respect of public perception. I think the public realise that, and I know the trustees will hold them to that point.

5 pm

Bob Russell (Colchester) (LD): My perception of IPSA over the past 18 months is such that I have zero confidence in it. Although the amendment's wording is

not perfect, it offers me the only opportunity I will have to put that perception on the record, which I can do by voting against the motion. I fear that in the fullness of time Members will rue the day they handed their pensions to IPSA.

However, if it were not for my experience of the last 18 months, which the vast majority of Members share, I would be voting for the motion, as I recognise the importance of our pension scheme and salaries being independent. My reason for not voting for the motion is purely lack of faith in the competence of IPSA. I want to stress, however, that I am not talking about its hard-working staff. They are up the same creek as us; they are in a different canoe, as it were, but, in common with us, they have no paddle.

My criticism is entirely of the IPSA board. One only has to read the minutes of its meetings to realise that it has in mind not user-friendliness in respect of Members of Parliament but, rather, hostility. I serve on the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority and, interestingly, in the 18 months since it was established we have yet to meet the full IPSA board. That is astonishing.

I have concerns about the part of the motion that the amendment would delete. The motion says that following on from the work of the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission, IPSA will draw up a new scheme “which is informed by the Commission's findings and their subsequent application to other public service pension schemes”.

I venture that we could latch on to some such schemes without IPSA being involved in any shape or form.

I appreciate that many other Members wish to speak. I have put my concerns on the record and stressed that I am not criticising IPSA staff. My criticisms are purely of the policies of the IPSA board. I conclude by noting that the National Audit Office has issued a report that is not exactly flattering to IPSA. It says it does not represent value for money and that it has brought in a scheme in which 38% of all claims cost more to administer than the claim itself. It has also found that 91% of Members of this House are now subsidising their work and that a large part of the reason for that is the systems introduced by IPSA.

5.3 pm

Mr David Anderson (Blaydon) (Lab): It would be hard to argue with what the hon. Member for Colchester (Bob Russell) has just said if we had not already agreed to do this. We are halfway down the line, and we have been since before the last general election when we said we would give IPSA this responsibility. The debate should have stopped then. We should have said, “Right, we agree today that we're going to do something we should have been doing over the last 16 months. We're going to tell IPSA to get on with it by sitting down with our trustees and negotiating a settlement based on the way pension schemes across the world operate.”

Why are we having this debate tonight on a lengthy motion that pulls in public sector pensions? I take the Leader of the House at his word of course, but I am convinced that other people will use this debate as a stick to beat public sector workers over the head with. They will say, “MPs have agreed to have their pensions changed, so why don't you?” That is the wrong way to deal with something as integral to someone's terms and

conditions as their pension. The terms and conditions of public sector workers, or of any other worker in this country, should be based on a genuine debate between the employer representative for the pension scheme—IPSA in our case—and the trustees. They should come together to weigh up the evidence about what the scheme does, what it is there for, whether it is sustainable and whether there is evidence to back changes.

This country faces a situation in which the Treasury is telling us that a levy must be imposed on those in the public sector, which in some cases will be 3% and for us could well be 5%, without any account having been taken of whether it is legitimate, whether it makes schemes affordable or whether, as has been said, it makes them less sustainable. A survey carried out by YouGov for the Fire Brigades Union suggested that 27% of its members could opt out and 12% would be very likely to opt out of their scheme if these changes go through. Unison has suggested that 350,000 people could opt out of these schemes. These schemes are good for the people in them. They are not gold-plated, but they are probably as good as most people in work can get. If people opt out, that will affect not just those individuals but will have a huge effect on the investment potential of this country, because those pension schemes invest heavily in the stock market.

Mr Bone: The hon. Gentleman is putting his point fairly. I might well agree with the Government's approach to pension reforms, but I am surprised that the motion states that "this House" supports it. This is the wrong debate in which to make that statement.

Mr Anderson: I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman. This debate should be about the processes of this House—House business is about that, not the politics of this House. It should be about whether we agree that this is the right way for Members of this House, and whoever comes after us, to be treated. This should not be about whether this suits someone's political agenda and allows them to go outside and say, "Look, MPs think it's legitimate to have a 5% or 3% levy. Why won't you do the same?", but my worry is that that is what this is about.

Let us not forget that we had a debate that concluded three years ago about public sector pensions, including our own. That resulted in big changes to public sector pensions. As has been suggested by our trustee colleague, my hon. Friend the Member for Central Ayrshire (Mr Donohoe), a cut-off was introduced: people would retain the benefits if they joined before a certain date, but for those who joined after and for new members the pension contributions would be more and their benefits would be less. Public sector workers agreed to that three years ago on the basis that it would make their pensions sustainable for the future. Nothing has changed since then, except for the fact that the Government want to impose a levy on public sector workers to try to dig themselves out of the hole created by the collapse of the global financial system. That approach is clearly wrong. Public sector workers should not have to carry the can for the failure of the banks, and that is clearly the message being given throughout the world.

My worry is that if we tell people that they should start paying 50% more for their pensions at a time when they face pay freezes, freezes of increments, a tax on

shift payments, potential redundancies and so on, they will walk away from these pension schemes, as I said earlier. That will be to the detriment of the schemes, investment and the welfare system, because as people reach retirement age there will be a bigger drain on the welfare state than there would have been had they been able to provide for themselves.

This approach is a con trick. It is not about pensions' stabilisation; it is about taking money out of the pockets of nurses, firefighters, street cleaners, social workers and home care workers to pay for the failures of capitalism. The truth is that we should stand together with those workers, as public sector workers, in a debate that is about our terms and conditions. They have a similar debate about their terms and conditions and we should say, "We stand in solidarity with you. It's wrong that the Government are robbing you for your pension and taking money out of your pockets."

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way and I should declare an interest as the chairman of the all-party group on occupational pensions. I am puzzled by where the hon. Gentleman is going on this, because the motion is surely all about the parliamentary pension fund rather than those of trade union members in general.

Mr Anderson: If the hon. Gentleman had been here from the start of the debate, he would realise that it has expanded into discussion about public sector pensions because they are included in the motion, in which the Leader of the House has clearly linked this scheme with other applicable schemes. Some of us who signed the amendment want to remove that link so that we can have a debate about when and whether we will give IPSA the right that it should have had since last May. If we had had that debate, we would not be sitting here now and we could have talked about the issue that most people in the House today want to talk about.

Ultimately, we are showing support for other public sector workers and we are not saying that we are a special case. We are saying that the Government should not make any public sector worker a special case by making them pay a levy to subsidise the failure of the banking system.

5.10 pm

Dr Thérèse Coffey (Suffolk Coastal) (Con): I rise to support the motion, and although I appreciate the sentiments expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope), I think his amendment is unnecessary.

I must admit that I never thought I would be talking about my pension. Perhaps because I do not have dependants, I did not immediately rush to the pension scheme booklet to have a look at what I should or should not do, but just went for the default—as most new Members probably did—of 11.9% of my pay. However, I want to ask a few questions that I would like IPSA to bear in mind, and perhaps the Government might respond to them later.

Will the scheme to which we currently contribute be wound up or frozen? There is a difference, in that the Government might be expected to continue with contributions for the closed scheme in the future depending

[Dr Thérèse Coffey]

on its status. As regards any deficit or surplus—I do not know the latest on that—will the Government confirm that any future contributions will not be used to top up any deficit, but that the Treasury will make good the scheme as and when it is closed to new members and fresh contributions from members?

I encourage IPSA to consider schemes that are permanently funded, not unfunded, as it were, what other quasi-public organisations have done and whether they have used salary sacrifice or similar schemes to ensure—how can I put this?—that the scheme still represents good value for us all. I hope that IPSA will also consider how Members can vary their contribution. I was interested to hear what the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Mr Donohoe), the chairman of the trustees, said about how people might unwittingly end up subsidising other Members or, indeed, the Treasury. Some education on that would be helpful. Will the Government also make a statement about bringing forward proposals on the ministerial pension fund and whether any changes will be made to that on the basis of career average earnings or salary at the time of being a Minister? Some parity would be helpful.

I would say to the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr Anderson) that I do not see the motion as one that beats up public sector workers. I understand his honourable perspective, which leads him to say that we should not accept this if we are not prepared to accept it for the people we represent. I, like other Members on both sides of the House, believe that we cannot make proposals, which were suggested by Lord Hutton, if we are not prepared to follow them ourselves. If we are asking other people to make a sacrifice—I recognise that the hon. Gentleman is not, but those on the Front Benches agree in this instance—it is paramount that we should be prepared to, too.

I appreciate that other Members wish to speak and that there is a very important debate to come, so my final point is that nobody should be surprised by this, either on the Government Benches or elsewhere. If I heard correctly, the Treasury is contributing 28% and our contributions are roughly 12%, and a 40% contribution towards a pension scheme is not sustainable for any organisation. My former employer used to offer contributions into the high 30s and took the decision to close the scheme. We need to ensure that what we do acts as a role model for companies and for the public sector.

5.14 pm

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): It is a great pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey) who, as usual, made a number of good points. I think it would be wrong if I did not mention the speech of the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Mr Donohoe), which I thought was the most reasoned and sensible speech of the whole debate. Uncharacteristically, the Leader of the House was not on his best form and did not show his usual charitable nature. I think that when he reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will regret the remarks he made about the implied position of Members who signed the amendment, which was quite wrong. I really think that, on reflection, he will regret saying that.

The emoluments of Members should be a matter for the House and Members should have a free vote and be allowed to make their own minds up—this should not be party whipped. That is where a lot of the problems with our pensions and salaries have occurred in the past, with every party leader trying to bid lower to attract what they thought was the best press coverage on the issue. I do not think that a single Member has said that our pension scheme should not go to IPSA. What I am concerned about is our sending it to IPSA, and then the Executive—the very Government who say they want there to be an independent look at how our pensions are run—telling that independent scheme what to do. That is the whole problem.

The amendment is very simple. It simply takes out all the garbage, goes to the heart of the matter and transfers our pension scheme to IPSA for IPSA to make up its own mind. I am quite sure that Sir Ian Kennedy will ignore the rest of the motion anyway, say that it is just a representation and that IPSA will make its own mind up. It seems to me that the Government can quite properly make their own submission but that they cannot tie it to the House. Members should be able to make their own submissions and it is wrong to try to force this through. This is what every single Executive have done since I have been here. I say to the Government, “You really have to butt out; you have to leave the pay, conditions and expenses to IPSA.” With all due respect to the Leader of the House, I will have a 10p bet with him that we will be back here again voting on our salaries because the Government at some stage will not like something that IPSA has recommended.

Let me address the comments of the shadow Leader of the House. I am amazed that the Opposition are going to vote for a motion that states that the House

“supports the approach to public service pension reform set out in the Final Report of the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission chaired by Lord Hutton of Furness”.

I might think that is a good idea, but I did not think that was the Opposition’s view. If they vote for this motion, they are voting for that. They cannot argue about it because it is on the Order Paper.

Ms Angela Eagle: I spent a little time talking about some aspects of the Hutton report that we did support, and I also made observations on some aspects of the Hutton report to which I thought the Government should pay more attention. I think my speech was entirely in keeping with our response to the Hutton report to date—as the hon. Gentleman will see if he reads it in *Hansard* tomorrow.

Mr Bone: I listened very carefully to the hon. Lady. If this motion goes through, the Government will quite rightly be able to say that the official Opposition support the wording because they voted for it in the House of Commons. That may well be her position—I am happy to accept that—but this is not the right place to be debating this issue.

Mr Chope: Does my hon. Friend share my disappointment at the obvious lack of intellectual rigour being applied to this issue by those on the Opposition Front Bench?

Mr Bone: That is tempting, but I do not think it is that. I think that the Opposition are between a rock and a hard place. They do not want to support that particular point, but, equally, they do not want to be spun against by the Government who will say, "There we are, the official Opposition didn't want to restrict our pensions." That is what they are really scared of. They have decided that they would rather put the perception in the papers above taking a principled stand. Time and again we do that in the House, and I think it is a huge mistake.

Richard Graham: How would my hon. Friend answer his constituents in the public services whose pensions are about to be significantly downgraded when they ask him why the parliamentary pension scheme remains the most generous of all and whether he missed the opportunity to amend it?

Mr Bone: That is simple to answer in the way that I hope that my hon. Friend would answer it: the House believes that our pensions, expenses and salaries must be determined independently, so they should be determined by the independent body, not by him or me. That is how we got into this mess in the first place. I hope that he and all other Members would make that point.

I came to the House expecting the amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope) to be a probing amendment, because we thought that the Government would say that this was up to IPSA, that this was just their view and that it was an independent matter. Unfortunately, the remarks of the Leader of the House have so incensed me that, if my hon. Friend wishes to put the amendment to the vote, I shall support him.

5.20 pm

Mr Mark Field (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): Although I do not agree with the final few words of my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone), I agree with much of the rest of what he said. If this was genuinely the last time that the House would ever consider these issues, I would be rejoicing and might even be entirely persuaded by what the Leader of the House said. He knows as well as I do that, if IPSA recommends a significant salary increase in advance of April 2013, the Government—perhaps even a Government with him still as Leader of the House—will introduce a two-line Bill to ensure that we do not vote on the proposal.

This is a crying shame: we got into this mess, going back 25 or 30 years, because Executives repeatedly interfered with salaries, general remuneration, pensions and expenses, and there seems to be no end in sight. I have not been reassured by what has been said. I have quite a lot of sympathy with what the Government are trying to achieve, but I would have even more sympathy if they had said, "This is IPSA's responsibility. Let IPSA get on with it." That was the position as we understood it when the bomb went off less than three years ago over the expenses row.

At the beginning of 2009—a somewhat different time—I wrote an article for the *Daily Mail* arguing that the disparity between public sector and private sector funded pensions had the makings of an enormous political controversy. I recognised that MPs would have to take a lead and that the public sector, which

includes us, had to wake up to the reality of higher life expectancy and the unchallenged cost of unfunded pensions.

We must place on record some commonly misunderstood facts about our so-called brilliant pension scheme. We have quite a generous pension scheme, about which the hon. Members for Central Ayrshire (Mr Donohoe) and for Blaydon (Mr Anderson) made important contributions. Compared with many other pension schemes, ours is well funded, but those who are on the 1/40ths scheme already pay a 11.9% contribution, which is considerably higher than the norm for other public sector pensions. Those facts never seem to be mentioned by hon. Members or the press when the issues are discussed.

I very much agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough about the lesson to be learned from recent months: we might have hoped that the Executive would stop trying to pander to every whim of the press. Unfortunately, the motion seems to be a little more governed by tomorrow's headlines than by the justice of the case. I say that with some regret, because I broadly agree that Members of Parliament should take a lead on the issue but should not pre-empt other discussions—that would be wrong, too, given the great difficulties the country will face.

I regret that, once again, the Government, like so many before them, have failed to grasp the nettle on MPs' remuneration and to consider our salaries, expenses and pensions in the round, rather than disjointedly holding a debate every six or nine months and reducing our total remuneration at the margins.

Above all, the lesson that we ought to have learned from recent times is that we should leave this to an independent body. IPSA now, rightly, sets our rules. I understand some of the concerns about IPSA's operation expressed by the hon. Member for Colchester (Bob Russell). I have had some of my own concerns about it, as I am sure many hon. Members have, but it would be far better to leave IPSA to recommend an appropriate contribution, rather than have the sense of interference.

I go along with the motion. I understand from my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope) that the amendment will not necessarily be pressed to a vote. We have a very important debate to follow, so I am glad to hear that, and I praise the Leader of the House for ensuring that we have a fairly full debate on Hillsborough. That debate is not just for Members of Parliament from Merseyside or south Yorkshire, where the terrible events took place; as a keen football fan, and the vice-chairman of the all-party football group, I think it very important that we hold that debate, and I sincerely hope that, after quick winding-up speeches, we can move on to it and put the issue we are discussing to one side. I hope—I speak more in hope than in expectation—that I shall never again have to speak in the House on any matters to do with MPs' pensions, pay or expenses.

5.25 pm

Angela Smith (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab): I will be brief because, as the hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Mr Field) pointed out, we are due to start a debate that is 22 years overdue, and many family members of those who died are here to listen to it.

[Angela Smith]

Three basic principles underlie the topic under discussion. The first and most important is that Members should never again vote on pay and pensions issues. Independent determination of our remuneration and expenses is critical to the integrity of the House. I have always believed that it is invidious that Members are asked to determine their pay and pensions. The same rules should apply to local government and the devolved Assemblies. I absolutely, wholeheartedly agree with the motion, in the sense that it should stop, once and for all, any votes on such issues, although I understand that on at least three occasions we determined never again to vote on them yet have always ended up coming back to them. Let us hope that this is the last time.

The second principle is related and is very much about public confidence in Parliament and its Members. Labour Front Benchers believe that taking the matters we are discussing out of the hands of Members will do a great deal to help restore that confidence, as outlined in the 2009 report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life. We voted on that principle in the previous Parliament, and it would be absolutely consistent with that vote to support the motion on passing responsibility for our pension scheme to IPSA.

The third principle is that of parity. It is absolutely critical that Members understand that we are no different from other public sector workers and that we should be no better or worse off than public sector workers when it comes to our pension scheme. The hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) referred to that point.

We will support the motion and oppose the amendment, because we believe that the principle of parity with public sector workers is of the utmost importance, but it must be understood that we may not entirely support the Government's approach to implementation of the Hutton report. We believe that some of the statements made in the Hutton report are absolutely right, but we do not necessarily support everything the Government are doing to implement it. That is an important distinction to make.

It is also important to re-emphasise the point made by my hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House: there has already been a 1.9% increase in Members' contributions, which was agreed in 2009 as a cost-saving measure. IPSA should also take account of the fact that a Member serves for an average of just 15 years.

I reiterate the importance of consultation. The motion correctly secures the ongoing involvement of the trustees in consultations on changes to the operation of the scheme.

The shadow Leader of the House successfully deconstructed the myth of public sector gold-plated pensions. She restated the often overlooked fact that the average public sector pension is less than £5,600 a year and reminded us of the importance of the Government committing to meaningful negotiations with public sector unions, not going to the negotiating table with predetermined outcomes. I re-emphasise my hon. Friend's point about the Government's use of language, which sometimes seems designed to inflame the situation rather than to resolve the outstanding issues.

Our support for the motion does not in any way stand as an endorsement of the Government's approach to public sector pensions, but because of the principles it outlines we believe that it deserves the support of the House.

5.31 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of the Leader of the House of Commons (Mr David Heath): I thank the hon. Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith) for what she said in support of the motion. She set out the Opposition's position clearly and we are grateful for her comments.

The hon. Lady is right. We ought to emphasise very clearly, first, that MPs' pay, remuneration and pensions should be determined independently—we should not vote on the money we get. I agree with her and with the principles of the legislation, the final part of which we are putting in place today. Secondly, we should say explicitly—this is the crux of the debate—that on pensions MPs should not be in a different position from others in the public sector. We should be treated no better or worse than those whose interests we will be considering and have considered in the past. The public will take a very dim view indeed if, as a parting shot, we try to claim that we are a special case, although there have been some indications, however well wrapped up, that some feel we are a special case.

Intrinsic to that is something that we need to understand across the public sector, which is that these prospective changes do not change accrued benefits: they are not retrospective. In the case of the Members' pension scheme, they cannot be retrospective by statute.

I must pick up one point made by the hon. Lady, which was echoed elsewhere in the Chamber. She said that Members have a relatively limited period of employment in the House, about 15 years, which is reflected in pension contributions. We should recognise that that is slightly longer than the average length of service in the civil service, which is 13.5 years, so our tenure is not below average across the working population. However precarious we might think our position is, there are precarious positions out there as well.

The main argument that we have had this evening is on the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope) and supported by the hon. Members for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) and for Blaydon (Mr Anderson) and partially by the hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Mr Field), who expressed some sympathy but felt he would support the motion.

The key point is that they do not wish us to express an opinion on the form in which the independent scheme will be worked out. They feel that that should be left alone entirely and that for the House to express an opinion on the matter pre-empts the decision. I do not think that it pre-empts the decision. I think that it is perfectly proper for the House to take a view. We are statutory consultees on the final schemes that will be independently worked out by IPSA if the motion is passed. Although I think that it is important that we have an opinion, that opinion, which must have some value, will not dictate the final result. I repeat that I do not believe that we should be in a different position from other people in the public sector. [Interruption.] The hon. Member for Blaydon nods in support of that contention.

Others fear that we are arguing for exceptionalism. The general secretary of Unite, Len McCluskey, today commented on the amendment:

"We're not all in this together... While they bay for cuts to public sector pensions, they act to feather their own nests. This will appal ordinary people".

I do not propose to base everything I say on the opinions of Len McCluskey, but I think that many people who do not take an extreme view would nevertheless be very concerned if it appeared that MPs, of their own volition, are to be treated differently from those in other public sector schemes. That is why I am particularly grateful for the support of the shadow Leader of the House for the basic contention.

Mr Chope: Does the Minister trust IPSA? If so, why does he find it necessary to add other words to the motion?

Mr Heath: I trust IPSA to carry out its statutory functions and give an independent assessment, but I think that there is no harm whatsoever in inviting the House to agree that we should not claim an exception for MPs. We claim no such thing and therefore expect IPSA to have regard to Lord Hutton's review and the policy consequences that flow from it.

Mr Anderson: Will the Minister make it very clear for the House, the public and, in particular, Len McCluskey that no Member has argued that MPs should be a special case? Everyone has argued that all public sector workers should be treated equally—that they should also be treated properly.

Mr Heath: I hope that no hon. Member believes that they are a special case and that, if the House divides this evening, they will bear that in mind when casting their votes. I am simply talking about the perceptions that those outside the Chamber might have. I am very clear about what the perceptions would be if Members supported the amendment, which is why I hope it will not be pressed to a Division. That would only divide the House on something on which we ought to be united.

Adam Afriyie (Windsor) (Con): The House seems pretty much united behind the principle of the motion, but a little concerned about the wording. That leads to the following question: if IPSA was significantly to improve the benefits to Members, would the Government step in to prevent that?

Mr Heath: We would have no power to do so. It is an independent process. If there was any notion that should be done, it would require changes to primary legislation, which would be a matter for the House, not the Government. We can be assured that that is the case.

I wish to put on the record my appreciation of the work that the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Mr Donohoe), who chairs the trustees of the parliamentary pension scheme, and his colleagues have done. We are particularly grateful to the hon. Members for Lewisham West and Penge (Jim Dowd) and for Watford (Richard Harrington) for stepping down in order to facilitate the transfer. I know that the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire takes an active interest and has been engaged in discussions throughout the process. I am particularly grateful for his letter, rather than his comments today, in which he stated: "Overall the trustees are of the view that the transfer of powers to IPSA will give the trustees the opportunity to contribute to the review of your pension scheme that we all know is inevitable in a constructive way." Hear, hear to that. Everyone needs to take account of the caveats he offered, but I do not

think that that obstructs the thrust of the motion. My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester (Bob Russell) will not agree with that point, because he does not like IPSA, he does not like all its works and he does not believe that he can trust it. I understand his position, but I invite him to look back at the legislation, which we passed, and accept it.

Mr Donohoe: One very important question has not been answered: when will the order be signed transferring to IPSA the powers to undertake the pension scheme?

Mr Heath: First, we have to accept the result of any vote this evening, but if the motion goes through the order will be made shortly, and the hon. Gentleman should know that that really does mean shortly; it will be not one of those that lasts several months.

I reconfirm for the hon. Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey) that the Government propose to increase contributions to the ministerial scheme, with staged increases being applied from 1 April 2012, and that we will consult on the proposal, as required by the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act. For the avoidance of doubt, I should point out that I do not receive a ministerial salary or pension, so I will not be affected—[*Interruption.*] As the hon. Member for Wallasey says, I do the job for nothing—for my love of the job. I am glad that that is appreciated—[*Interruption.*] She does, too.

On that note of happy consensus, I hope the House will agree the motion and pass the matter to the independent body with the very clear indication that, no, we do not expect to be treated differently simply because we are Members of this House and have the opportunity to express our opinions here in the Chamber.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Does Mr Chope wish to move his amendment?

Mr Chope: With the leave of the House, I will not seek to move my amendment, because the Government have said that they agree with everything that I and the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr Anderson) have said, so it seems sensible to move on to the next business as soon as possible.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): The question is as on the Order Paper. As many as are of that opinion say Aye—[HON. MEMBERS: "Aye"]—to the contrary No—

Bob Russell: Not content.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): The Ayes have it, the Ayes have it.

Resolved,

That this House reasserts its view that the salaries, pensions and expenses scheme for hon. Members ought to be determined independently of this House; accordingly invites the Leader of the House to make an order commencing those provisions of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 which transfer responsibility for the 5 pensions of hon. Members to the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA); supports the approach to public service pension reform set out in the Final Report of the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission chaired by Lord Hutton of Furness; believes that IPSA should introduce, by 2015, a new pension scheme for hon. Members which is informed by the Commission's findings and their 10 subsequent application

[*Mr Deputy Speaker*]

to other public service pension schemes; recognises the case for an increase in pension contributions made in Lord Hutton's interim report; and accordingly invites IPSA to increase contribution rates for hon. Members from 1 April 2012 in line with changes in pension contribution rates for other public service schemes.

Mr Deputy Speaker: We now come to the important Back-Bench business on the Hillsborough disaster.

Backbench Business

Hillsborough Disaster

5.42 pm

Steve Rotheram (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House calls for the full disclosure of all Government-related documents, including Cabinet minutes, relating to the 1989 Hillsborough disaster; requires that such documentation be uncensored and without redaction; and further calls for the families of the 96 and the Hillsborough Independent Panel to have unrestricted access to that information.

I thank the Backbench Business Committee for granting today's debate, following the incredible response to the Government online petition, which attracted 140,000 signatures in just a couple of weeks. It is because those people took the time to push the Government for the release of the Hillsborough documents that today we have the first ever parliamentary debate resulting from an e-petition—although, after a fight for justice which has lasted 22 years, even that minor concession was called into question following last week's shenanigans in the Chamber.

I also thank colleagues for their fantastic support and response: almost 100 MPs from nine separate political parties supported our application to the Backbench Business Committee. This is a victory for democracy and a victory for people power, but it remains to be seen whether it will be a victory for the families. They have been let down so many times that they will not be surprised if there are those who would prefer for this simply to go away. For those who foolishly believe that that might be the outcome of today's debate, let me make it absolutely clear: this issue will never just go away—not until there is justice for the 96.

During this debate, I will set out why I believe it is an important issue for this House to consider, albeit a bit late in the day, and outline why it is essential to press the Government on their commitment to release all papers relating to the Hillsborough disaster. All parts of the House should agree to the terms of the motion, but if they do not I intend to press the House to a vote. My hope is that common sense, and ultimately justice, will prevail.

I want to begin by setting out the context to the disaster, as there is a fundamental misunderstanding of what happened on 15 April 1989 and in the dark days, weeks, years and, ashamedly, decades that followed. There have been only a few occasions in my life when I have been completely overwhelmed by the emotion of the event that I was witnessing—the birth of my three wonderful children, the death of my beloved mum, and the loss of close friends and relatives. However, there is one other event that will live with me for the rest of my life, and that is the tragedy at Sheffield on that beautiful spring day 22 years, six months and two days ago.

Before 1989, Hillsborough was just the name of one of England's famous old football grounds, but for the past two decades the word "Hillsborough" has evoked memories of Britain's worst ever sporting disaster. It was a day when I helplessly watched frantic scenes as people who had travelled to see a football match, some mere children, lay injured and dying as they were pulled from the terraces. I was one of the lucky ones that day,

and all my close friends and members of my family returned home, although for one—our Lisa—it was touch and go whether she would survive. Thankfully, she did. This, unfortunately, was not the case for 96 men, women and children who were killed, and for hundreds of others injured and left permanently traumatised. The loss of 96 innocent lives was bad enough, but the tragic nature of their deaths was exacerbated by what happened next. Instead of those at fault taking responsibility for their actions, a co-ordinated campaign began to shift the blame and look for scapegoats. To this day, nobody has been held to account for Hillsborough.

A half-day debate, though welcomed, is not long enough to go into all the details of this gross 22-year injustice, so I will concentrate on the three main pillars of the accusations against Liverpool fans—namely, that thousands turned up late and ticketless, were drunk and aggressive, and broke down a gate, causing a catastrophic crush. Is it any wonder that some people have doubtful and distorted views as to the exact cause of the disaster when misinformation began almost immediately after the players were led off the pitch at 3.6 pm? The BBC and ITV news, that very afternoon, misreported what had occurred, and it is important to understand the effect that this had, as it formed the immediate public perception of Hillsborough. To fully understand what I mean, people will need to suspend their predisposition to believe the Hillsborough myths and listen to tonight's debate with an open mind before jumping to conclusions. However, the faux pas committed in the immediate aftermath, when there was much uncertainty and a degree of confusion, pales into insignificance when one considers the malicious manner in which some sections of the press reported things, which still clouds thinking today.

At 3.15 pm, Graham Kelly, the then chief executive of the Football Association, went to the police control box, where he was told by the now-discredited match commander that Liverpool fans had rushed the gate into the ground, creating the fatal crush in the central pens. This was cowardice and deceit of the highest order, as the fact was that no gate had been rushed and that Duckenfield, the match commander, himself had personally ordered the gate to be opened. But this disgraceful lie set the tone for all that came later. At 4.15 pm, Kelly was interviewed by the BBC, and he told them that the police had implied to him that the gate had been broken down by fans to gain access. Notwithstanding the fact that there was absolutely no basis to these lies, Kelly allowed himself to be embroiled in this treachery, although he may simply have wished this version of events to be true, as by then he probably realised that the dysfunctional organisation that he headed up would, quite rightly, be criticised for its part in the unfolding disaster. Why did the FA not listen? I suppose we will never know. Without any evidence to back them up, those lies were reported by some news organisations and the story was flashed across the world as fact, repeating the line that drunken Liverpool fans had forced the gate open.

Just a few days later, before people had even had time to arrange funerals for their loved ones, *The Sun* newspaper infamously printed the banner headline, "The Truth", on the personal instruction of its editor, Kelvin MacKenzie. It claimed that drunken fans had forced the gates open because they did not have match tickets, stolen from the

corpses lying around the pitch, assaulted police officers and the emergency services, robbed cameras and other equipment from press photographers, and urinated on police officers who were helping the victims. That was one of the cruellest blows.

It beggars belief that certain sections of the media still give air time to this most despicable man to vent his bile and mendacity. Given what he said about the Prime Minister the other day, even some Tories may now agree that this man is a pariah, as we on Merseyside know him to be. This is a man who preaches about free speech, but who dehumanised the deaths of 96 people for a cheap headline—what an absolute hypocrite!

Months later, the rag that that man edited admitted that the allegations it had made were totally false, but the damage had been done. To this day, the people of Merseyside do not buy that paper. It has taken the hackgate allegations about Murdoch's News International for people to at long last sit up and take notice of the claims that we made 22 years ago and to think that there may be some truth to our allegations of collusion between the press, certain politicians and the police.

The actual loss of life from Hillsborough will never be known. Yes, we know that 96 people died as a direct result of the injuries that they sustained at the stadium, but many have died subsequently. Some have died, tragically, by committing suicide and others have simply died of a broken heart at the loss of their loved ones. However, I have been careful not to base my account of events on emotion. I have ensured that I have clear and referenced evidence to support all my contentions.

It is claimed that truth is the first casualty of war; the same can be said of Hillsborough. Misdirection, obfuscation and damned lies were all used as smokescreens to deflect attention away from the guilty. Institutional complacency and gross negligence, coupled with an establishment cover-up, have added to the sense that there was an orchestrated campaign to shift blame from those who were really responsible on to the shoulders of Liverpool fans. Many myths have been perpetrated about the events of 15 April 1989. Perhaps those will be addressed only when the Hillsborough independent panel, set up by my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), concludes its deliberations and reports back next year. It is important to give the panel all the pieces of the jigsaw so that it can complete a full and accurate picture of events.

So what are the facts about the Hillsborough disaster? I say to those who believe that it was simply caused by fans turning up late, you are wrong. You are wrong. In spite of a misprint on tickets requesting that fans turn up at 2.45 and despite the fact that Liverpool fans had only 23 dilapidated turnstiles through which to enter the ground, while Forest fans had access through 60, half of the 10,100 supporters were already in the ground before 2.30. There was congestion outside and with 5,000 supporters still to enter the ground at 2.30, it was obvious that the kick-off needed to be delayed. Anyone who has ever been to a match knows that there is always a higher entry rate as kick-off time approaches. Two years previously, there had been a delayed kick-off to allow fans to get into the ground, but not this time.

Instead, the response to the build-up in congestion outside was to open a gate and allow fans on to the concourse. That had disastrous consequences as there were no stewards or police officers inside to direct

[*Steve Rotheram*]

supporters into the half-empty pens and away from the packed central pens. Signage was poor and the design of the Leppings Lane end meant that about 2,000 of that group made their way into the ground and headed straight for a tunnel marked “Standing”, which led directly to pens 3 and 4. That influx caused severe crushing and some fans began climbing over the lateral fences into the half-empty pens on either side to escape. It was later estimated that more than 3,000 supporters were admitted to the central pens—almost double the safe capacity. At five minutes past 3, a crash barrier gave way in pen 3, causing people to fall on top of each other. Cries to the police for help were audible, but they went unheard.

Another falsehood is the claim that these were ticketless fans. Even officers at the turnstiles rejected that. The Health and Safety Executive, which later analysed the evidence of everyone who entered at that end, concluded that the total number was between 9,373 and 10,124. The capacity was 10,100. The myth of ticketless fans can therefore also be dispelled. To confirm that and to leave no doubt, the Taylor report stated that there was no substance to the allegation that ticketless fans caused the disaster. Unfortunately, that smear still impairs and prejudices the thinking of some, because they have heard the apocryphal tale of ticketless fans so many times that they believe it to be true. Not only is it untrue; it is total rubbish. It is the sort of nonsense bandied around by those who are desperate to protect their own skins.

And how about the outrageous claims by Bernard Ingham, Mrs Thatcher’s press secretary? While the death toll was still rising, he stated that the cause was drunken fans and that Hillsborough would not have happened

“if a mob, clearly tanked up, had not tried to force their way in”.

I know that there are people, perhaps even some on the Government Benches, who actually believe that drivel because they have been fed it for two decades. I simply ask people to read the Taylor report. Alcohol was absolutely rejected as the cause of the disaster. Once again, it was a convenient excuse—an expedient opportunity to smear the fans and abrogate responsibility. The Liverpool supporters were no better or worse than any other football fans of the day. The fans of other teams should be saying, “There but for the grace of God go we;” because a similar tragedy could have befallen anyone at that time, particularly at that stadium, which did not even have a valid safety certificate. The Taylor report concluded that the great majority of fans

“were not drunk or even the worse for drink”.

However, Ingham’s view obviously influenced the Sheffield coroner, who inexplicably took blood alcohol levels from every victim, including Jon-Paul Gilhooley. Jon-Paul was 10 years of age—just a child. Drink was not the cause, but it was used to accuse and condemn, to impugn and reproach. It was, quite frankly, a con.

The cause of the Hillsborough disaster is there for all to see in the Taylor report, which concluded that the police fundamentally lost control of the situation and did not demonstrate the leadership expected of senior officers; that the failure to cut off access to pens 3 and 4 was a blunder of the first order; that safety procedures were inadequate and the ground was badly maintained

and dangerous; that the fans were routinely treated with contempt by football; and that Liverpool fans had been the victims rather than the guilty party.

Lord Taylor’s reports, published in August 1989 and January 1990, dismissed the allegations against Liverpool supporters in relation to the disaster. Twenty-two years on, it is difficult to comprehend the enormity of the complete and utter breakdown of communication, or the inaction, by those charged with our safety. It is impossible to understand at a human level why those in authority simply stood idly by while ordinary football fans, without any emergency or medical training, organised themselves into stretcher-bearing squads to ferry stricken fans on advertising hoardings ripped from around the pitch and tried to give CPR to the stricken.

This was not a war zone. No battle had been fought, but we would not have guessed it from the scenes on the pitch. It was due to the Herculean efforts of ordinary fans—these same fans later besmirched by scandalous tabloid headlines—that the death toll was not even higher.

On the 20th anniversary of the disaster, I put on record my thanks to the ordinary people of Sheffield who opened their doors, in the days before mobile phones, to let fans call home to tell loved ones that they were safe. Tonight, both the leader and chief executive of Liverpool city council send messages of support from the people of Liverpool to those in Sheffield who helped on that dreadful day.

I am proud to be a Liverpoolian. In the 22 years for which the families have fought their dignified campaign, I and the rest of Britain have watched as my great city has come together on this issue. Out of the darkness of the Hillsborough tragedy, an eternal flame of unity has emerged and means that Liverpool is now synonymous with a unique kind of solidarity. Whether red or blue, we are Scousers all. To those who attempt to perpetrate the myth that it was the fault of the fans, I say that I will never tire of reminding them that the ordinary fans were the real heroes on the day, not the villains. They reacted while those in authority froze.

My granddad used to regale me with vivid accounts of the two world wars that he fought in, and while he never glorified in war itself he would explain to us children his sense of loss for fallen comrades, nearly half a century later. I did not really understand that when I was growing up, but I do now. It does not matter how long it takes, we will never stop fighting for justice for the 96.

A botched inquest, a flawed inquiry, a farcical review of evidence and a system that worked against, instead of for, the families, have left a bitter taste. An unsympathetic Government, an unsatisfactory judicial process and an unforgiving press have led observers to believe that an organised conspiracy was acting against the best interests of natural justice. We need the Government to act, and we need this House to support the motion, to ensure that there is no further backsliding on this issue.

The Prime Minister quite rightly apologised for a previous Government’s mishandling of events when he responded to the findings of the Saville report. Today, I call on the Prime Minister to make a statement in this House and apologise for the mistakes that were made and the mishandling of this whole tragedy on behalf of a previous Government. I also ask him to join me in pushing for the full disclosure of the senior police officer and the Conservative MP who allegedly leaked

the story to the press, and in pressing for a front-page banner headline in *The Sun* newspaper admitting that it lied in April 1989, just as Kenny Dalglish demanded two decades ago.

We in Liverpool refer collectively to those lost at Hillsborough simply as “the 96”, but each of the 96 was an individual—a father, sister, brother, daughter, son; an irreplaceable person loved by others and with their own unique life story. “The 96” trips off the tongue far too easily. It is not until we read out each individual name on the Hillsborough memorial at Anfield that we realise just how long the list is. Parliament has never recorded their names in *Hansard* for posterity. Well, tonight, I can at least put one wrong right.

John Alfred Anderson, 62. Colin Mark Ashcroft, 19. James Gary Aspinall, 18. Kester Roger Marcus Ball, 16. Gerard Bernard Patrick Baron, 67. Simon Bell, 17. Barry Sidney Bennett, 26. David John Benson, 22. David William Birtle, 22. Tony Bland, 22. Paul David Brady, 21. Andrew Mark Brookes, 26. Carl Brown, 18. David Steven Brown, 25. Henry Thomas Burke, 47. Peter Andrew Burkett, 24. Paul William Carlile, 19. Raymond Thomas Chapman, 50. Gary Christopher Church, 19. Joseph Clark, 29. Paul Clark, 18. Gary Collins, 22. Stephen Paul Copoc, 20. Tracey Elizabeth Cox, 23. James Philip Delaney, 19. Christopher Barry Devonside, 18. Christopher Edwards, 29. Vincent Michael Fitzsimmons, 34. Thomas Steven Fox, 21. Jon-Paul Gilhooley, 10. Barry Glover, 27. Ian Thomas Glover, 20. Derrick George Godwin, 24. Roy Harry Hamilton, 34. Philip Hammond, 14. Eric Hankin, 33. Gary Harrison, 27. Stephen Francis Harrison, 31. Peter Andrew Harrison, 15. David Hawley, 39. James Robert Hennessy, 29. Paul Anthony Hewitson, 26. Carl Darren Hewitt, 17. Nicholas Michael Hewitt, 16. Sarah Louise Hicks, 19. Victoria Jane Hicks, 15. Gordon Rodney Horn, 20. Arthur Horrocks, 41. Thomas Howard, 39. Thomas Anthony Howard, 14. Eric George Hughes, 42. Alan Johnston, 29. Christine Anne Jones, 27. Gary Philip Jones, 18. Richard Jones, 25. Nicholas Peter Joynes, 27. Anthony Peter Kelly, 29. Michael David Kelly, 38. Carl David Lewis, 18. David William Mather, 19. Brian Christopher Mathews, 38. Francis Joseph McAllister, 27. John McBrien, 18. Marion Hazel McCabe, 21. Joseph Daniel McCarthy, 21. Peter McDonnell, 21. Alan McGlone, 28. Keith McGrath, 17. Paul Brian Murray, 14. Lee Nicol, 14. Stephen Francis O’Neill, 17. Jonathon Owens, 18. William Roy Pemberton, 23. Carl William Rimmer, 21. David George Rimmer, 38. Graham John Roberts, 24. Steven Joseph Robinson, 17. Henry Charles Rogers, 17. Colin Andrew Hugh William Sefton, 23. Inger Shah, 38. Paula Ann Smith, 26. Adam Edward Spearritt, 14. Philip John Steele, 15. David Leonard Thomas, 23. Patrik John Thompson, 35. Peter Reuben Thompson, 30. Stuart Paul William Thompson, 17. Peter Francis Tootle, 21. Christopher James Traynor, 26. Martin Kevin Traynor, 16. Kevin Tyrrell, 15. Colin Wafer, 19. Ian David Whelan, 19. Martin Kenneth Wild, 29. Kevin Daniel Williams, 15. Graham John Wright, 17.

Rest in peace. Justice for the 96. [*Applause.*]

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. May we have brevity from the Front Benches? A lot of Back Benchers want to contribute. This is a very important debate to people and we have a lot of people in the Gallery who wish to hear it.

6.10 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): May I first commend the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram), who movingly marked the memory of the 96 who lost their lives in the Hillsborough disaster? He has brought to this House not just the voice of the families of those who were lost on that fateful day, but his personal experience, which I am sure will have an impact on the whole House.

Going to watch a football match is something that brings great joy to hundreds of thousands of British people every weekend, but on that fateful April day in 1989, it brought not joy, but tragedy. Parents and children and brothers and sisters who left their homes that day to watch a football match were never to return.

I have met some of the families of the 96 and heard directly from them about the impact of that terrible day. They have shown nothing but dignity; they have asked for nothing but the truth.

I also want to pay tribute to the support that the whole of the Merseyside community has given in the campaign for the truth. No words from the Government can ever even begin to make up for the loss of 96 cherished lives, but I want to send my deepest condolences to all those affected by the national tragedy of Hillsborough.

Let me say here and now, in this House and on the record, that as Home Secretary, I will do everything in my power to ensure that the families and the public get the truth. As a Government, we fully support the Hillsborough independent panel and the process that the panel is leading to disclose the documents telling the whole story. No Government papers will be withheld from the panel. No attempts to suppress publication will be made. No stone will be left unturned.

The previous Government were right to establish a disclosure process overseen and driven not by the Government, but by an independent panel chaired by the Bishop of Liverpool. I pay tribute to the work of the right hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) and the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton for the work they did to secure the establishment of that panel.

Following my appointment as Home Secretary, I announced the coalition Government’s full support for the process. I met the Bishop of Liverpool soon after coming to office so that he could give me an update on progress and so that I could give him my assurance of our support. I have also met the bishop subsequently so that he could keep me informed about the panel’s work.

The Hillsborough independent panel has three principal tasks: to oversee the disclosure of the documents to the maximum possible degree, which will initially be to the families; to report on its work, outlining the ways in which the information disclosed adds to the public understanding of the tragedy; and to make recommendations as to a permanent Hillsborough archive.

The principle underlying the process is that of maximum possible disclosure, and of disclosure to the families first and then to the wider public. This is difficult, sensitive and lengthy work, and it cannot be rushed. However, the aims of the process are, I believe, aims we can all agree on, and we should continue to uphold them.

As the Bishop of Liverpool has said, the dignity of the families should be matched by the dignity of this process. The families deserve to be treated with dignity

[Mrs Theresa May]

and respect in the way they receive the information, which brings me on to the reason for this debate.

The reason for this debate and for the motion behind it concerns the Cabinet Office's decision not to disclose papers relating to the disaster in response to a freedom of information request from a BBC reporter. I want to state very clearly that the Government's position has absolutely nothing to do with attempting to suppress the release of those papers or to somehow hide the truth. I am sorry that the way the Government responded to the FOI request caused anxiety among the families and concern on Merseyside and beyond.

The Government firmly believe that the right way to release the papers is through the Hillsborough independent panel—to the families first and then to the public. The families should have the papers, and they should not have them filtered through politicians or the media. We therefore support the Hillsborough independent panel and today's motion. We want full disclosure to the panel of all documents relating to Hillsborough, including Cabinet minutes. Those documents should be uncensored and unredacted. Indeed, the full unredacted Cabinet Office papers on Hillsborough have already been made available to the panel. That includes minutes of the meetings of the Cabinet immediately following the disaster.

As the Prime Minister said in the letter that he sent to the right hon. Member for Leigh:

“Please let me reassure you that the Government is wholly committed to full disclosure of the Hillsborough information that it holds...As you will be aware, Cabinet papers, along with other relevant government papers, have been released to the Hillsborough independent panel. I am keen to ensure that the panel and indeed the families were treated with the utmost respect in this process. We have therefore proposed that the panel will ensure that disclosure takes place initially to the Hillsborough families, prior to wider publication.”

The Government are not seeking to avoid the publication of Cabinet minutes or any other Hillsborough papers. The Cabinet papers on Hillsborough can be published, and the Government will do nothing to prevent the panel from publishing them or indeed whatever it so decides. The panel will release the full picture of what happened at Hillsborough, but in a way that is respectful of the families.

The panel's terms of reference envisage minimal redaction to avoid junior officials' names and addresses being published; to avoid signatures being available for copying; and to ensure that the Data Protection Act is not breached. It might also be necessary to redact sensitively private and personal information specific to the victims. However, it will be the role of the panel to ensure that any redactions are kept to a minimum.

The principle is clear: full publication and minimal redaction, and the panel seeing all of the papers, uncensored and unredacted—as the families have rightly demanded: the whole loaf, not snippets. I stand ready to do anything I can to aid the independent panel in completing its task.

Hillsborough was a terrible tragedy—a tragedy that must never be repeated. As the Bishop of Liverpool has said, the disaster and its aftermath inflicted a deep wound in the body of the Merseyside community which remains to this day. The families of the 96 deserve the truth. That is why we fully support the Hillsborough

independent panel; why all Government papers, including Cabinet minutes, have been made available to the panel with no restrictions on access; and why the Government support this motion.

6.18 pm

Andy Burnham (Leigh) (Lab): We are here tonight because 139,815 people have asked this House to revisit events 22 years old. They are right, because those events concern one of the biggest injustices of the 20th century. For 22 years, the Hillsborough families faced insults and had obstacles placed in their way at every step as they pursued their dignified campaign for truth and justice.

Recognising that, a call for full disclosure was made on the 20th anniversary. That has gathered momentum ever since, and this summer it was supported by people from all over the country and supporters of all football clubs. That was an incredible statement of solidarity with those families, who have faced a hard and, at times, lonely struggle. However, it did something else: it sent the clearest of messages to everyone in a position of authority that the families have suffered far too much, and that the whole truth about Hillsborough must finally be told.

Tonight, the Home Secretary has made an unequivocal commitment to full disclosure, echoing the words of the Prime Minister in his letter to me. We thank her for that. The fact that there is now agreement between all parties across the House shows the watching world that this is not about party politics but about the fundamental rights of victims and their families. I should also like to thank the Home Secretary for leading the Government's response to the debate tonight. That sends an important signal to the families who have travelled to be here, and to the thousands of others watching closely at home who have been deeply affected by the tragedy. The right hon. Lady might have expected to see my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) opposite her tonight, but my right hon. Friend has graciously allowed me to respond for the Opposition, given my personal involvement in these matters. I thank her for that.

I want to begin by addressing this simple question: why are almost 140,000 people asking us to do more? There have certainly been other disasters in which concerns have remained long after the event. As with other disasters, there are things about Hillsborough that people will find shocking, such as the fact that the ground did not have a valid safety certificate, as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) mentioned. But something else makes Hillsborough stand apart. Has there ever been, and will there ever be, another tragedy at which, within minutes, an orchestrated campaign began to blame the victims, their families, friends and fellow supporters? That is precisely what happened there. It is unprecedented in the recent history of our country, and an unbelievable act of brutality against 96 families already suffering unbearable grief. As one bereaved mother said:

“We soon realised that we weren't only in a fight for justice for those who died but also to clear their names and the names of the fans who lived”.

Those are words that no mother in her position should ever have had to say.

The first damaging lie about Hillsborough came even as people lay dying, not long after 3.15, from a senior public servant, the officer in charge on that day. Chief Superintendent Duckenfield told the then chief executive of the Football Association that Liverpool fans had forced gate C, as my hon. Friend said. That was not true; he had given permission for the gate to be opened. Professor Phil Scraton wrote in his brilliant book, "Hillsborough—the Truth":

"Graham Kelly unwittingly...repeated Duckenfield's lie to the waiting media. Within minutes, it was broadcast to the world: an appalling disaster was happening, and Liverpool fans were to blame."

Sadly for the families, that set the level for what was to follow. Blood alcohol levels were taken from the victims, including children, as they lay dead in the gymnasium at Hillsborough. By today's standards, that is an unthinkable intrusion into the private grief of the families. As the families arrived at Hillsborough later that day to identify loved ones, they were subjected to police questioning as though they, and the deceased, were suspects. In the '80s, the authorities could get away with that type of behaviour—people just had to put up with it—but by today's standards, it is truly shocking.

There was much worse to come, however. Days later, the most sickening lies imaginable were briefed by public servants to newspapers throughout the land. It was a brutal campaign to set public opinion against the supporters and to pre-empt the public inquiry that was to be carried out by Lord Justice Taylor. Let me remind the House that Taylor found that hooliganism played no part in the Hillsborough disaster, and that the main reason for it was the "failure of police control". Yet even today, people talk about Hillsborough in the context of hooliganism. Casual allegations are still made about drunkenness and disorder. The fact that this still happens, 22 years on, is testimony to the power of the poison in those police briefings to the media. It is also clear that efforts were made not only to shape public opinion but to shape the way in which evidence was presented to the inquiries that would follow.

We hope that the House will tonight give the Hillsborough independent panel the full power and authority to tell the whole truth about Hillsborough, but there are already documents in the public domain that provide clear evidence of the efforts that went on to present events in a certain way. I want to share some of them with the House tonight, as they will help to explain to people who perhaps have not followed every detail down the years why so many people still feel so strongly about this, as we do.

In the House of Lords, there are files containing the original personal statements of police officers who witnessed these terrible events at first hand. They are hard to read, so distressing are the scenes they describe. One in particular stands out, and I have it with me this evening. It is the handwritten statement of police constable No. 227 from Woodseats police station. These are his recollections of the crucial moments just after 3 pm on 15 April 1989:

"I realised at that time that a great tragedy had occurred. I began to feel myself being overcome with emotion, but soon realised that I would be of no use to anyone if I felt sorry for myself. I was assisted out of the terracing and onto the pitch. I saw several officers wandering about in a dazed and confused state. Some were crying and some simply sat on the grass. Members of the public were running about with boarding ferrying people from the pitch to the far end of the ground."

PC 227's words evoke the haunting TV images that people were later to see replayed time and again. There can be little doubt of their sincerity, but they are not the only words on the page. Attached to the top right corner of the statement is a note from a senior officer. It reads:

"Last 2 pages require amending. These are his own feelings. He also states that PCs were sat down crying when the fans were carrying the dead and injured. This shows they were organised and we were not. Have the PC re-write the last 2 pages excluding the points mentioned."

In the cold light of 2011, those are truly shocking words. They go to the heart of the untold story of Hillsborough. The unforgettable words

"they were organised and we were not"

transport us straight back to a very different time: an era of "them and us", when football supporters were considered to be the "enemy within". It is as though the officer was describing a battle for supremacy between two sides rather than the immediate aftermath of a terrible tragedy.

I do not think that it is widely understood that the personal statements of police officers were collected and amended in that way, outside the normal procedures. That is why the panel's work and its report are so important. They will mean that the rest of the country will finally see what the Hillsborough families were up against, and what they have known for years. PC 227's statement was not the only one that was amended. Many more were, in order to portray events in a certain way, removing references to police failure on the day such as the lack of proper radio communications.

Hillsborough belonged to an entirely different era, predating the Freedom of Information Act, when public bodies held all the power. As a result, it is still not known who was responsible for the efforts to amend statements, the level at which that was endorsed in the South Yorkshire police, and the extent to which the then Government supported the police strategy of blaming the supporters. I say this not to make a political point. This is crucial to understanding how and why the police case against the supporters came to gather such potency, pre-empting the public inquiry.

Another area that I hope will be illuminated by the disclosure process is the 3.15 cut-off imposed by the coroner, and the way in which the inquests were subsequently organised. It is impossible to overstate the significance of this to the families, as the effect of it was to compound earlier injustices that they had faced. It means that they have never had the opportunity properly to test all the evidence and information about their loved ones, or to find out if any more could have been done for them. One of the individuals admitted to hospital recovered, challenging the theory that irreparable damage was done in all cases by 3.15. Indeed, there is medical evidence from one of the doctors who treated victims on that day which was never properly heard. The 3.15 cut-off was cruel. It was also crucial, because it denied the families the right properly to challenge the inaccurate claims that had been put around about their loved ones.

I am setting out these issues this evening because many of them will not be widely known around the country. They explain why the sense of injustice about Hillsborough and its aftermath on Merseyside has never diminished. They were the reason that, together with

[Andy Burnham]

my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) I made the first call for full public disclosure in April 2009, days before the memorial service on the 20th anniversary.

As the Home Secretary said, this led to the establishment of the Hillsborough independent panel, and I appreciate the continued support that she and her Government have provided to that panel's work. At the time it was established there was an unresolved debate within government about whether or not Cabinet minutes and other documents should be published. I have always been of the firm opinion that they should, but because there was no agreement, the terms of reference allow the panel only to view rather than publish the material.

I knew we would have to come back to this issue; that duly happened in the summer when the Information Commissioner ruled on the BBC's freedom of information request. I said then that I believed the commissioner's ruling should have been immediately accepted by the Government and proposals developed to fulfil it, working through the panel with disclosure to families first. I have no doubt that the Government were acting to protect the integrity of the panel and the interests of the families and not—the Home Secretary made this point—to prevent disclosure. As I said in my letter to the Prime Minister, however, the Government's handling of their response to the commissioner risked undermining public trust in the panel and the disclosure process.

The Home Secretary has this evening removed any lingering doubt and put the Government's commitment to full disclosure firmly on the record. We thank her for the clarity of her words, but for the avoidance of doubt, does she agree that there might be a case for issuing the Hillsborough independent panel with updated terms of reference, reflecting the clear will of this House tonight? That might also present an opportunity to set out the Government's position on any redactions to disclosed material. I believe that there should be a clear presumption of no redactions to any material. I am told, and the Home Secretary repeated it, that there might be highly personal medical information that it would be illegal to put in the public domain under the Data Protection Act. If that is the case, may I ask her to ensure that any redactions have the full support of the panel and may I suggest that they be made to any documents only with the agreement and support of the Hillsborough families?

I would like to assure the Home Secretary that the Opposition fully support the Government's policy of handling all disclosures through the panel and making them available to the families first. The Opposition urge both the Information Commissioner and the BBC to accept that as fulfilment of the ruling. Disclosure is important, but it is only part of the panel's crucial work. It has also been asked to make sense of it all, producing a report on how what is disclosed adds to public understanding of the tragedy and its aftermath. That is hugely important. It means that the whole story and its full impact will finally be told. That is why I support the Government's position not to release documents now in a haphazard and unco-ordinated way, but when the whole picture is put together and all the pieces are in place.

I wish to deal now with material held by private bodies and its potential disclosure. It is possible that there are documents and material held by private

organisations that will be highly relevant to the work of the Hillsborough independent panel. I understand that Sheffield Wednesday football club and the Football Association have both co-operated with the panel, and I thank them for that.

Clearly, however, there are other private organisations that will have material that might help the panel's work. The first is Hammond Suddards, the solicitors for the South Yorkshire police. It was involved in the preparation of police officers' statements, and, indeed, the amendment of them, and the handling of the inquest. The second is News International. In *The Guardian* today, Margaret Aspinall, chair of the Hillsborough family support group, has called on the company to reveal the sources of the deeply hurtful front page of Wednesday 19 April. It was claimed that Liverpool supporters—my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton mentioned this—pick-pocketed victims, urinated on police officers and attacked an officer giving the kiss of life.

It is important to say that *The Sun* was not the only newspaper to carry inaccurate and deeply hurtful lies. Allegations on the same theme were reported by the *Daily Star*, *Daily Express*, *Daily Mail* and *Yorkshire Post*, all using unattributed quotes from police and Police Federation sources. Lord Justice Taylor commented in his report on how they were not substantiated by a single witness. For people in public positions to disseminate such offensive untruths certainly breaks professional ethics and is possibly a criminal act. It might have happened 22 years ago, but the pain caused by those lies is still felt today.

Does the Home Secretary share my view that Margaret Aspinall is right to assert the families' right to know who gave those briefings and with what authorisation? I hope she will agree with me that media organisations, and particularly News International, should be approached by the panel and encouraged to hand over any material that might reveal who made these claims. It is my belief that the British public, following the revelations about phone hacking, will see Hillsborough in a new light. That, too, is a story of unacceptable collusion between police and the press, working against the wider public interest, and it, too, must be fully exposed, with those responsible held to account.

In conclusion, 140,000 voices have swept Hillsborough back to the Floor of this House tonight, but we would not be here if it were not for the courage and determination of the families. Soon, they will be able to rest, knowing that they could not possibly have done more for their loved ones. I pay tribute to the Hillsborough family support group—to Trevor Hicks, Phil Hammond and Margaret Aspinall; to Hope for Hillsborough, and to the Hillsborough justice campaign for keeping the flame alive for the 96.

I have not seen the files. I do not know what they will reveal, but I am already clear about one thing—that, after a tragedy on this scale, the denial of families' rights and the denigration of their friends and fellow supporters is a national scandal. When the panel reports, it will require an appropriate national response.

I can remember 15 April 1989 as if it were yesterday. I was at Villa Park for the other FA cup semi-final. Many of my friends were at Hillsborough. Twenty years later, I agonised about whether to attend the memorial service as a Government representative. No issue matters more to me, and I was worried that I would not be able to

keep my composure before the Kop, but I also had my own private disappointments that my own Government had not done enough to help those families. I look back on my decision to go as the best decision I have made in my life because the reaction of people on the Kop that day told the rest of the country that there was a deep and unresolved injustice.

That night, I met the families at Liverpool town hall. I promised them full disclosure, that the whole truth would be told. Tonight, to have the entire House united behind them in that call and behind those families is a huge moment. Part of the painful truth of Hillsborough is that none of us, no political party, did enough to help. This time, we must not let them down.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. I remind the House that we have an eight-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches. I want to ensure that everyone who wants to participate gets in, so any additional brevity during speeches will be welcome.

6.37 pm

Esther McVey (Wirral West) (Con): This debate has been a long time coming. The journey to get here has been a long, painful fight led by the families of the 96 victims, the people of Liverpool, the local papers—the *Liverpool Daily Post* and the *Liverpool Echo*—and football supporters. The support and the quest for answers have not diminished. Instead, they have gathered momentum over time. The family voices have stayed firm; the commitment to loved ones has been unshakeable. Finally, the families are here today to see this debate, so let us make sure that every politician of every party does right by them, allowing them complete access to all material—unedited and unredacted—so that they can understand what happened, and have answers and closure, perhaps a little peace, but most of all so that they can have some truth about what happened on 15 April 1989.

People say Liverpool is a close-knit community, but is so much more than that. It is an extended family, and it is the compassion and the passion of the people of Liverpool that have supported the families in striving for the truth. When people talk of Hillsborough, they speak as though everyone from the city knew somebody there that day, and in a way they did. My cousins were there—safe, yes, but when a call came to the crowd, asking whether any police, medical staff or officers could come and help, my cousin stepped forward. He was one of those people, one of the fans asked to help the injured and to identify people. It was that help that was so cruelly and inaccurately misrepresented in the tabloids.

The Prime Minister accepted that the Hillsborough tragedy and its aftermath has left a deep wound on Merseyside. He has given an unqualified commitment to full disclosure of files relating to what happened. He agreed to this before today's debate, but I still believe it is important that we are all here today, that this tragedy is given the importance it deserves and that voice is given to the 145,000 e-petitioners who voted in favour of today's debate in the House. They want full disclosure, and they want all the families to have the final, ultimate say in what happens to the information.

An independent panel of experts, academics and archivists, headed by the Right Reverend James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool, has been appointed to oversee and make sense of the volume of documents. The families—those who have suffered most—must now be supported by the panel and by Government.

The political journey has come full circle. In too many instances, questions have been ducked. It has taken 22 years, and I want to be part of a Parliament and a Government who do right by the families who have carried so much pain for so long.

Let me close my speech by saying that it is time for words to come to an end. It is time for action. It is time to release all those documents in their entirety.

6.40 pm

Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab): Let me first say a big thank you to my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham). I was at the 20th anniversary commemoration service at Anfield, and I know that that was a very emotional occasion for my right hon. Friend. I think that he felt the rawness tenfold—knowing how the families, Liverpool fans and others felt about an injustice that has continued for over 22 years—and I think that he did well to get through his speech and deliver his message on that day. I want to record my thanks for what he did, along with my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle). As I have said, it was an emotional occasion. There were 30,000 people in the stadium that day. I have been going to such commemoration services for many years, but that occasion demonstrated the depth of support for the families, and for the securing of the truth and justice that we all seek.

I was present at the Hillsborough disaster. I drove to the ground that day with three friends. As was recalled by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotherham), it was a beautiful sunny day, and we were looking forward to a good match—one of many good matches that we had seen as Liverpool supporters. One could never have imagined how the event would end. As we approached the stadium we sensed that something was wrong, and indeed the chaos had already started outside the Leppings Lane end. We witnessed mounting chaos around the turnstiles. When we eventually managed to pass through them, our tickets were not checked. There was no organisation and no policing. As I have said, it was complete chaos.

I watched the disaster. I was in the north stand, and my three friends were at the Leppings Lane end. I felt somewhat let down because I did not have a ticket for Leppings lane. I would normally stand up in the Liverpool Kop, but for some reason I had ended up with a stand ticket, which meant sitting down, and I felt that I had lost out. Of course I did not know what was about to happen, and I did not know what had happened to my three friends in Leppings lane until some time later.

As I have said, I watched the whole horror of the disaster unfold in front of me. It was obvious well before 3 pm that pens 3 and 4, the middle pens, were full, but on either side of them the stand was empty. I will not go into the details, because we have been through them back in 1998 and since, but it beggars belief that the police and those responsible could not see what was happening. It had to be seen to be believed. Then, of course, we saw the disaster unfold.

[Derek Twigg]

The horror of that day will always live with me, but I did not lose my life, and nor did anyone personally known to me. The families, however, are in a completely different position. I recognise the dignified and determined way in which they have pursued their fight for justice, in spite of the terrible slur perpetrated by the police, with the help of certain sections of the press, in blaming Liverpool supporters for the disaster. Those families have my deepest respect. It is their love for their loved ones, and their burning desire to put a wrong right, that have kept them going for 22 years. Imagine 22 years of fighting this! It is quite unbelievable—but they still have the energy and drive to see this through. One person could not be here tonight. He said that he was tired and would not be here: he wanted to save his energy, so that he could see the conclusion of the campaign and see that justice was done.

Imagine finding out that your loved one had died in that terrible disaster, or been badly injured, and reading or hearing shortly afterwards that that person and his fellow supporters were being blamed for it. It is almost unimaginable that, notwithstanding the grief and trauma that those families were going through, those reports should unfold in the next few days. As has been said, several newspapers were involved, but I think that a headline in *The Sun* caused the most distress and upset. It is difficult for those who were not personally affected to appreciate the impact of that headline. The fact that police officers were involved as well was disgraceful. The distress caused by all that cannot be overstated.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh said, the 3.15 pm cut-off point is crucial, because nothing that happened after that time was taken into consideration. We know that people were alive then, and, as my right hon. Friend made clear, that is an issue for some of the families. It was an unbelievable decision. Dozens of ambulances were not allowed into the stadium, and it was also unbelievable that that was allowed to happen. As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton pointed out, it was Liverpool supporters who led the rescue mission, if I can call it that, carrying bodies and injured people away from Leppings lane outside the ground.

I welcomed the Home Secretary's statement about the independent panel. There was some discussion about the establishment of the panel, and there was a good deal of mistrust among the families because of all that had happened previously, but they went along with the process and became involved in detailed negotiations with the Government. I was asked by Liverpool and Merseyside Members of Parliament to represent them in those negotiations, which required considerable hard work. The panel's primary aim is to ensure the recording and orderly release of the documents, which—this is crucial—must be shown to the families first. However, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh knows, we managed to ensure that the production of a report was included in the agreement. That report will be crucial to the process of putting the truth in the public domain, and enhancing our understanding of the events and information relating to the disaster.

I welcome the Prime Minister's unequivocal commitment to full disclosure, but will the Minister confirm that it will include the advice on which the Director of Public Prosecutions based his decision not to prosecute any senior police officers? Will it also include the reasons

for moving an experienced match commander, Chief Superintendent Mole, a few weeks before the semi-final and replacing him with Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield, who was relatively inexperienced in the policing of football matches?

I think it important for Ministers, and the Government generally, to tread carefully, because there have been some problems. I know that what the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport said about hooliganism was taken out of context, but the fact remains that it caused a great deal of distress to the families. Moreover, last week's debacle involving the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope) almost scuppered tonight's debate. We need careful planning and thinking about how this matter should be dealt with from now on.

The Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport (Mr Jeremy Hunt): As the hon. Gentleman has referred to comments that I made, may I take this opportunity to apologise to the House—as I have to the families—for those comments? What I said was sloppily worded, it caused great offence, and I hugely regret it. The families were incredibly generous in accepting the apology that I made to them.

Derek Twigg: I know that the Secretary of State did not mean his remarks in the sense in which they were portrayed. I gave that example, along with last week's, to emphasise that all this must be dealt with sensitively. The families have been through so much, and sometimes things have been wrongly said, have not been done or have been glibly avoided.

I want to put on record my thanks to the people of Sheffield. What lives with me is the memory of queues of supporters outside residents' houses—and I mean queues: not two or three people, but 10, 20 or 30—who were allowed to use those residents' telephones to let their families know that they were OK, and were given cups of tea. That was tremendous. The contribution and support of the people of Sheffield should be on record, and is one of the images that live with me to this day as I recall walking back from the ground. We want justice for the 96, and we want to make sure that all this information is released and that the families can see it first; that is crucial. We also want the Government to consider very carefully the report that will be produced, and to respond in a positive way that ensures that the families know both that everything possible has been done to get the information out and that their fight has not been in vain.

6.50 pm

John Pugh (Southport) (LD): I begin by congratulating, on behalf of, I think, all of us here today, the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram). None of us can hope to match his eloquence, passion, persistence and, frankly, the raw emotion he has displayed today. I first knew him as a very effective mayor of Liverpool city council, and he has today proved to be a very effective champion of his area and of Merseyside as a whole. I want to thank him for associating me with his efforts in making the all-party applications; this has been an all-party endeavour. I also want to mention the hon. Gentleman's predecessor, Peter Kilfoyle. Even though he was a lifelong Evertonian, he did a lot of work for this cause in the House.

I should declare an interest. I am a Liverpool FC supporter. My entire family came from Liverpool, and I grew up there, although I had the misfortune originally, as a child in a city that was oozing football success, to be taken every Saturday to Knotty Ash to watch our one and only rugby league team get beaten repeatedly week after week—thereby amply preparing me for life as a Liberal.

I think I understand the Liverpool character as well as most. A history that has often been quite brutal has endowed that character with two marked traits. The first is a profound emphasis on social solidarity. People have learned to depend on each other—on family and neighbourhood. That was beautifully summed up by Bill Shankly in the following quote, of which I have a copy in my office:

“the only way to live and to be truly successful is by collective effort, with everyone working for each other, everyone helping each other, and everyone having a share of the rewards at the end of the day.”

The second major trait has also been forged by a hard history. It is a lack of reverence—a suspicion and questioning of authority and all the pomposity and cant that often underpins it. That is the reason why Liverpool produces so many comedians. It is a feeling that the world is not necessarily on our side—and, indeed, often it is not, especially for those who spend their time questioning authority, and the pomposity and the cant underpinning it.

Hillsborough was a terrible tragedy for Liverpool. At the time I was a councillor in Sefton, and we outside the immediate Liverpool area lost many people. Afterwards, there was an opportunity to show that things could be different, but what happened? As expected, there was a massive, deeply impressive show of solidarity, and it continues, confirming that this is the city where the way forward is not “walking alone” and where social solidarity is important. The people were, however, let down by the powers that be: the national media, including *The Sun*, about which much has been said today; those in the legal system, about which we have not said as much as we ought to have done; and the police—we have mentioned Duckenfield—who tried to shift blame. Some—but not all—of them perpetuated, relied on or were diverted by prejudices, not just about football supporters but specifically about Liverpool football supporters. That was the case both knowingly and, sometimes, unknowingly, and explicitly and implicitly. Unsurprisingly therefore, there has been no closure. The narrative not only of what happened but of how different people told—or tried to tell in order to fix—that narrative has never been fully before us.

I genuinely believe that we get better inquiries and inquests if the people running them are prepared to look at their limitations and flaws. We get better reporting if the media at least acknowledge their failings. We also get better policing if the police openly account for their wrongdoing and the error in their own ranks. Truthfulness at all levels is the path to improvement.

Mr Dave Watts (St Helens North) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman may be aware that I lost a close friend, David Hawley, in the Hillsborough tragedy. I have something to say about the fact that someone in the media, Kelvin MacKenzie, said what he said and then repeated it. The general public have severe doubts about whether the

press should allow such people to continue to follow their profession. Does the hon. Gentleman feel that special attention should be given to dealing with journalists who do these sorts of things?

John Pugh: I am aware from books written on this topic that certain people in the offices of *The Sun* questioned Kelvin MacKenzie about his decision on that day.

Liverpool people are not stupid; they know there are good and, sometimes, not so good men in all uniforms. They know that judges are likely to spend more time at Twickenham than on the football terraces so do not necessarily have adequate knowledge of the latter. They know that lawyers can be, and have been, both cynical and noble in addressing this issue. They know that football supporters also come in all shapes and sizes, and that everyone has their prejudices. The antidote to all that, however, is not reports and procedures; rather, it is a single-minded pursuit of the truth. The antidote is not a narrative that suits one or another group or institution, or even one that allows all interests to make peace.

Liverpudlian John Lennon’s song “Gimme some Truth” puts this point most simply. One verse—I am unsure whether it applies to any Member who is present—states:

“I’m sick and tired of hearing things

From uptight, short-sighted, narrow-minded hypocrites

All I want is the truth

Just gimme some truth”.

The full truth will not necessarily make everything right again. The horror that was Hillsborough will recede in time, even though for some it is, of course, relived every day. However, we owe it to them and the victims to ensure that what passes into history is not a myth or a convenient narrative, but is, so far as is humanly possible, the true and full account of the events.

6.56 pm

Mrs Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) on securing, along with others, this debate and on the manner in which he opened it. It is an important part of the long and determined campaign to secure truth and justice for the 96, and it is a crucial step in the effort to secure the release of further important information. From the beginning, when this horrendous tragedy occurred, truth has been withheld. Tonight, we have heard that there was a police briefing to mislead the public by deliberately distorting the facts, and to do so by promulgating the grotesque untruth that Liverpool fans were responsible for the tragedy on that dreadful day.

Lord Taylor’s report was a full judicial inquiry into what happened and it made it clear that the major cause was police failure on the day and that that should be considered against the backdrop of the failure to deal with public safety—there was the astonishing discovery that no safety certificate had been issued at Hillsborough—and the failure to have and implement an emergency plan to deal with any public disaster. As we have heard from my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), evidence has also come to light—from documents revealed as a consequence of the scrutiny undertaken by Lord Justice Stuart-Smith—that the original police eyewitness statements describing what they saw at the time were later changed by their seniors.

[Mrs Louise Ellman]

There have been further disclosures showing further withholding of essential information. The coroner's decision to have a 3.15 pm cut-off on the assumption that all deaths would have occurred by then resulted in vital information being withheld, and major concerns were raised about the conduct of the inquest and mini-inquests.

When discussing this issue, it should always be remembered that nobody has been brought to account. The Director of Public Prosecutions in 1990 decided that the tragedies arose from "accidental" deaths and he stated that there was no evidence to prosecute any corporate body and insufficient evidence to prosecute individuals. Two police officers were named as culpable, but they both retired before any disciplinary action could be taken.

Recognition of the need for urgent disclosure lay behind the important decision of December 2009 to set up the independent panel chaired by the highly respected and trusted Bishop of Liverpool, the Right Reverend James Jones. The fundamental principle of that panel was the

"full disclosure of documentation and no redaction of content, except in the limited legal and other circumstances outlined in"

a full terms of reference and

"disclosure protocol."

Today's debate goes a little further than that. It seeks full disclosure, including of what specific briefing might have been given to the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, when she visited Hillsborough the day after the disaster. The motion also calls for the release of Cabinet papers that discussed the tragedy. I fully support the primacy of the panel and the families, which has been mentioned by the Home Secretary tonight. However, I would like to know how she views the importance of that primacy in relation to the terms of reference already stated and to her commitment that there would be full disclosure and that the Government would not attempt to prevent the publication of anything that the panel and the families wanted to be disclosed.

The Hillsborough tragedy killed 96 people and has had a profound effect on families and on the community. Lost lives cannot be regained, but the bereaved families have waited too long for the full truth. They deserve no less than the truth, and the correct decision today, together with the Home Secretary's statement, can take us all a lot nearer to achieving that.

7.1 pm

Stephen Mosley (City of Chester) (Con): For the families of all those who tragically lost their lives on 15 April 1989 and all those still traumatised by the events that unfolded before them that day, today is another milestone in their arduous pursuit of justice. I commend the solidarity shown by all who have enabled this debate to take place. Their quest for truth must not be hindered any longer.

As the Member of Parliament for the City of Chester, a city with close ties to our neighbours on Merseyside, I am grateful to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of the residents of my constituency whose lives were irreversibly changed by the tragic events in Sheffield 22 years ago. Many people from Chester were at Hillsborough that day and there are many heartbreaking stories and memories. One of the stories is that of the

Rogers family. Seventeen-year-old Henry Rogers and his 19-year-old brother Adam were both at Hillsborough. Henry died in the disaster and Adam, who survived the crush, died just six months later after falling into a hyperglycaemic coma as a result of diabetes. Their parents, Steve and Ronnie, whom I have known for about 10 years due to their tireless involvement in the local community in Chester, recall how Adam was unable to talk about what happened in the months following his brother's death. Although it was diabetes that took their eldest son from them, Steve and Ronnie maintain that Adam died of a broken heart. For the Rogers family, who are members of the Hillsborough family support group, and the hundreds more affected by Hillsborough, questions surrounding the deaths of their loved ones have remained unanswered for 22 years.

A second constituent, Mrs Ann Williams, who is watching this debate from the Gallery, lost her 15-year-old son, Kevin. Mrs Williams has campaigned tirelessly to discover the truth surrounding her son's death and is patron of the Hope For Hillsborough charity and campaign group. Like those of many others, Mrs Williams' campaigns have centred on the decision taken by the coroner, Dr Stefan Popper, to pronounce that all the victims of the disaster had died by 3.15 pm from compressive asphyxia. However, witness statements at the time highlighted the fact that Kevin was still showing signs of life at 3.55 pm, calling out for his mother. Many families of the victims are still angry at the 3.15 pm cut-off point, which meant that the inquest was unable to consider the response of the police and the other emergency services after that time. Having had three requests to the Attorney-General for a new inquest into Kevin's death refused, Mrs Williams submitted her case to the European Court of Human Rights, but in 2009 that attempt was scuppered by the Court, which declared that her application should have been lodged within six months of Lord Justice Stuart-Smith's scrutiny in 1997. Like so many others, Mrs Williams hopes that the release of the papers will cast new light on the events that truly occurred before, during, and after Kevin's death.

This is not the first time Kevin Williams has been mentioned in the House; an Adjournment debate entitled simply "Kevin Williams" was held on 26 October 1994, in which the former Member for Crosby, Sir Malcolm Thornton, said:

"It was inevitable that judgments would be made on the spot which perhaps, with the benefit of hindsight and of considering the matter after some years had passed, should not and certainly would not have been made. But what is there to hide?"—[*Official Report*, 26 October 1994; Vol. 248, c. 978.]

Seventeen years after Sir Malcolm asked that question, and 22 years after Kevin's death, we still do not know the answer. What is there to hide? It is now time for that question to be answered.

We are united in this House in recognising that all the papers must be released, but the manner in which they are released is of equal importance. A drip-drip release of information is dreaded by many of the victims' families, who fear that snippets of selected information will hit the headlines, creating a feeding frenzy in the press and potentially distorting the overall picture that the release of papers is intended to piece together. The Hillsborough independent panel, chaired by the Bishop of Liverpool, James Jones, is the only legitimate vehicle

through which this information should be initially released. A large quantity of the information will be extremely sensitive, as it details the deaths of many families' loved ones, so the families must be allowed to make sense of the information before it is released to the general public. Furthermore, a conscious effort must be made by the independent panel to include all the families in the process. With a number of different groups supporting the families of those affected, including the Hillsborough family support group, the Hillsborough justice campaign, and Hope for Hillsborough, I would like to stress the importance of ensuring that all the families are kept informed of the progress of the independent panel and of the disclosure of the panel's findings. We must not allow the families to experience any more unnecessary anguish, and we must grant them the dignity that they so rightly deserve.

To that end, I support the Government's position on the BBC's freedom of information request, which could lead to the Cabinet papers bypassing the independent panel and being released immediately. The BBC submitted the FOI request with the best of intentions, but now that the Cabinet Office has recognised the overriding public interest in releasing all the papers to the panel, the BBC should recognise that its FOI request has achieved its objective and that the documents should be released only through the independent panel.

As I have said, the events of that fateful day in the spring of 1989 have lived long in the memories of those who so sadly lost their loved ones—they will never be forgotten. Although the release of the information contained among the mountain of unpublished papers is undoubtedly in the public interest, the interests of the families and survivors of Hillsborough are now the most pressing concern. For their sake alone, clarity is of the utmost importance. I believe that that can be achieved only by allowing the Hillsborough independent panel to conduct its investigation. Once the families have been given the opportunity to digest the panel's final report, and only then, the documents must be widely and publicly disclosed.

7.8 pm

Maria Eagle (Garston and Halewood) (Lab): I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) on his superb effort in securing this debate and on his incredibly powerful opening speech. I also wish to thank the 140,000 people who signed the e-petition, which so strengthened my hon. Friend's hand when he attended the Backbench Business Committee to argue for time to have this debate on the Floor of the House.

This subject is of massive importance to my constituents, to Liverpool football fans, to football fans generally, to the city of Liverpool and to Merseyside as a whole, as shown by the fact that all the Merseyside MPs supported my hon. Friend's proposal that time be found, on a votable motion on the Floor of the House, to consider the full disclosure to Hillsborough families, unredacted and uncensored, of all Government-related documents, including Cabinet minutes. The release is a matter of enormous importance to the bereaved families of the 96 people whose deaths were caused on that day and to the survivors of the disaster.

I was one of two Ministers who called for full disclosure and publication of all existing documentation relating to the Hillsborough disaster on the 20th anniversary of

the tragedy in 2009, along with my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham). The incredible show of solidarity and dignity at the Anfield memorial, which I also attended that year, as well as the chants for justice that interrupted my right hon. Friend's speech on that occasion, led to the establishment of the Hillsborough independent panel. To achieve that, my right hon. Friend and I were able to push behind the scenes in government to overcome some obstacles in Whitehall, although in my view the terms of reference leave a little to be desired. I hope the process, ably led by the Bishop of Liverpool, who knows what a dark shadow the tragedy still casts across the city, will finally bring everything that can now be known and every document that now exists, 22 years after the event, into the public domain, unredacted by officialdom.

I thank the Home Secretary for her positive and clear commitment to full disclosure this evening. The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister have agreed to the release of all documents and it is of enormous importance that Parliament should vote to call for unredacted and uncensored release and publication of all Government papers, including Cabinet minutes and papers.

I believe that the Hillsborough disaster and the circumstances surrounding it are a unique case that justifies unique action. Let me briefly set out why. The Hillsborough disaster was not an accident. It could and should have been avoided. It was caused by a failure of police control: that was the finding of Lord Justice Taylor in his interim report just four months after the disaster. Why, then, do so many people still talk of hooliganism?

South Yorkshire police failed spectacularly in their duty on 15 April 1989, but rather than admit it they spent years trying to blame the Liverpool fans who attended the match and the victims for what had happened. That was an orchestrated, sustained and deliberate campaign to blacken the names of the victims and of Liverpool supporters who attended on that day to enable South Yorkshire police to evade their responsibility. As a consequence, the Hillsborough families have had to endure one of the most disgraceful campaigns of official skulduggery, hostility and lies of any victims' families whom I know. It began on the day of the tragedy and continued for years and even now it has left families feeling understandably distrustful and suspicious of officialdom.

South Yorkshire police's failure to accept responsibility and their ongoing efforts to deflect blame, which lasted for years after Taylor's verdict, mean that there are huge amounts of misinformation, which the families keep having to correct. Twenty-two years after the event, the families should not still be having to defend their relatives who died from the lies and innuendo that appear every time the disaster is discussed in the public arena. It is as well to remember that one of the first things that senior officers in charge on that day did was lie about why the gates at Leppings Lane were opened, in order to cover up their culpability.

Inexcusable police behaviour continued on that day. Police refused to allow ambulances that might have saved lives into the ground because they were treating it like a riot, not a disaster. They treated families who arrived on the scene to look for missing relatives as if they were criminals. They blood-tested the dead for alcohol—even children—but there was worse to come. South Yorkshire police briefed *The Sun* that the victims had caused the crush and that fans who merely sought

[*Maria Eagle*]

to assist the injured and dying were stealing from them and urinating on them—vile and untrue smears that heaped appalling distress on top of unbearable sudden bereavement. It is about time we knew who gave those stories to *The Sun* and I join the families today in calling on News International to tell us.

As if that were not enough, South Yorkshire police quickly established what I referred to in a debate in this House in 1998 as a “black propaganda” unit, which systematically set about altering police statements in an attempt to influence Lord Justice Taylor’s inquiry into the causes of the disaster. My right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh read from one of them; I have read them all. This was no less than a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. One cannot read all the statements, amended, unamended and annotated by police lawyers and police, and come to any other conclusion. It failed mainly—and really only—because they did not have time to complete the job and unamended statements were sent to Taylor. Taylor then gave his finding, but instead of taking notice of Lord Justice Taylor’s clear finding and his equally clear rebuke, South Yorkshire police kept the black propaganda unit in place and simply set about persuading the South Yorkshire coroner of their story, preferring to try to engineer historical revisionism rather than to face up to the fact that they were at fault and found to be at fault by the Taylor inquiry.

Despite all that disgraceful behaviour, the chief constable did not resign. The two senior officers in charge on that day were retired on medical grounds and with large pensions to avoid their having to face disciplinary action. No one responsible has ever had to account for the loss of control on that day or for the extended quite despicable behaviour that followed for years thereafter. Indeed, one member of that black propaganda unit, responsible for the smears, is a serving chief constable to this day: Sir Norman Bettison. No wonder the families are suspicious of officialdom, no wonder they do not ever quite believe that what they are told will happen will happen and no wonder they want Parliament to support them by voting for them to see all documents unredacted and uncensored. I believe that a vote in this House for full publication will strengthen the hand of the Hillsborough independent panel in any discussions that it might need to hold with the Government about ultimate publication of all the material produced to it.

Although prompted by the Government’s reaction to the Information Commissioner’s ruling that Cabinet minutes should be produced, this important debate will allow Parliament to make its views clear, on a votable motion, about what it expects to be disclosed. Parliamentarians should take the chance to say clearly: we are with the families, who must see everything, and there must be no more suspicions of sinister official manoeuvring to prevent the full truth of the disaster from coming out, as there has been too much of that. That is all the families want and we must help them to get it by voting in favour of this motion.

7.16 pm

Graham Evans (Weaver Vale) (Con): I congratulate those who have campaigned so effectively to secure this debate. Specifically, I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram), who has been

a feisty campaigner on this issue. I know that many of my constituents are grateful for his efforts, as am I. I also pay tribute to the families of the 96 who have made the journey down today.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate and I am particularly anxious to do so for several reasons. First, I am a passionate football fan. I am a lifelong Manchester United supporter and a former season ticket holder, and I have gone to watch a huge number of games in my lifetime. I have stood on windswept terraces, inside the so-called “cages”, and I have seen at first hand some of the appalling crowd management by both police and ground staff at stadiums. To my mind, this really was the definition of a disaster waiting to happen. As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton said, there but for the grace of God go I.

Since the tragedy at Hillsborough, we have come a long way, with all-seater stadiums, greater police planning and much smarter ground management and layout. Clubs have also taken on much more responsibility and have recognised their duty to improve safety. It is vital, however, that we learn all the lessons and get all the facts so that we avoid such appalling tragedies happening again. I still go to watch Manchester United as often as I can and now my children are starting to get old enough to come with me. I want to ensure that we have learned the lessons of Hillsborough so that my children will be able to enjoy the unique magic of match day in the safest possible environment.

The second reason I am so keen to speak is that I have been contacted by a large number of constituents who have urged me to support the campaign to release all documents. I am the only Member of either coalition party to represent a seat on the Mersey estuary. A substantial proportion of my constituents, especially those living in Runcorn, are originally from Liverpool, or, at the very least, their parents are from Liverpool. Many are die-hard Liverpool fans. Many have friends or family who were affected by the tragedy and they want to make certain that the full facts are made available so that bereaved families get the full picture and we can fully understand what happened.

I share the wishes of my constituents and I want to see the papers released. I am pleased that the Government have restated their commitment to full transparency and are happy for the papers to be released as soon as the Hillsborough independent panel decides to do so in consultation with the bereaved families. Given that Cabinet records are normally withheld for 30 years, I think that shows the Government’s real dedication to openness in this case and their willingness to help resolve any unanswered questions. I also agree with Margaret Aspinall, chairman of the Hillsborough family support group, that it is right that the papers are shared first with the families before being released to the wider public.

Although it is important that the documents are released, they are only a small part of the truth about Hillsborough. It is essential that the Hillsborough independent panel, which is expected to examine up to 2 million documents as part of its extremely important work, considers all the facts. We must recognise that that is no easy task and we should be patient, but we need to have the truth. I look forward to the panel’s eventual report and to the release of the Cabinet papers. I remember that fateful day in April 1989 as though it were yesterday and I hope that I never see such a tragedy again.

7.20 pm

Mr George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab): Every weekend, hundreds of thousands of people attend public events, including many sporting events. They leave their homes in the not-unreasonable expectation that those who are responsible for the management and safety of those events will do their jobs professionally, thoroughly and properly, and that all the experience available will be brought to bear in those situations. What they do not expect is that if something does go wrong, as things do occasionally at events, any victims will be turned into villains. At the heart of the continuing problem that the families, I and many Members have about what happened at Hillsborough is that that is exactly what happened—there was an attempt to turn the people who were victims, in the ways described by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram), into villains.

My hon. Friend spoke movingly and eloquently, and I think that he spoke for the whole House. His speech was thorough and covered all the events, problems and things that have gone wrong since, but what he did by reading out the names of the victims was to bring things back to the human scale. I want to do that now by mentioning two people who were constituents of mine at the time—they have since moved—Mr and Mrs Joynes. They lost a son, Nicholas, who has been named by my hon. Friend, and I had a lot to do with them in the early years after the tragedy occurred. They would not want to be seen as being any different from any of the other families concerned, but I single them out because they typify the dignity with which people have responded to the loss of loved ones.

I mention Mr and Mrs Joynes because it was at their request that I attended a day of the inquest hearings, at which I was appalled. It was clear from the way those mini inquests were handled that the whole event seemed to be geared up to proving how much or little alcohol was in the blood of those who had been killed in that tragic and awful disaster. I note that there is a whole debate to be had about mini inquests, but it might be best to have that debate on another occasion. Is it any surprise that those people who had lost loved members of their families at Hillsborough were offended when, on top of the attempts to turn the victims into villains, they found that the inquest, which was supposed to be about establishing cause of death—nothing more than that—seemed to be a perpetuation of that calumny?

Maria Eagle: It was.

Mr Howarth: Indeed—it was.

I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) and my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) for the role they have played in bringing about the release of all these documents, and I welcome, I think, the statement that the Home Secretary made today. As I understand it, she has said that all documents, including Cabinet minutes, will be made available and that nothing will be withheld from the glare of public scrutiny. If that is what she was saying, I very much welcome that. I followed her comments carefully and that appears to be what she said.

I want to make a slight qualification about the process of redaction. The Home Secretary will be aware that, wearing another hat, I sit on the Intelligence and Security

Committee. When we produce annual reports or any other kind of report we use the process of redaction, which is necessary because issues of national security are sometimes involved. However, I am aware that redaction causes suspicion. What is left out gives the media vent to speculate about what might have been in there. In this particular case, the families who want to know everything, and rightly so, might feel that something has been excluded. The point I want to make to the Home Secretary is that more thought needs to be given to how that process is to be conducted, who is to be involved in it and who will have the final veto. The default position should be to have no use of redaction unless there are issues of personal medical evidence or of data protection to consider. Data protection should not be used to protect those who may have been culpable of failing in their duties, but other issues of data protection, including in relation to the families themselves, might be relevant. There should be redaction only in those circumstances, and even then each decision should be open to question by the families and the independent panel.

Mrs May: It might be helpful if I clarify these issues and respond to the points that the right hon. Gentleman has made. As far as Government papers are concerned, there will be no redaction by Government. Those papers will be available to the independent panel and it will be up to the panel to decide whether there should be any redaction. Having spoken to the panel I know that its view is that redaction should be minimal, but it will wish to discuss with the families the possible redaction of some personal information relating to the victims. I hope that everybody making papers available to the panel will follow the Government's lead in ensuring that there is no redaction in those papers.

Mr Howarth: I am very grateful to the Home Secretary for that clarification, but I still make the point on redaction that there needs to be some thought about how those three different groups, including the Government, will handle that process. I welcome the fact that she said, I think, that the default position should be to publish rather than redact and I hope that that process prevails.

I shall conclude now because I know that many others want to speak. The most important thing for those who have lost loved ones is that light should be shone into all the dark corners that so far have not been revealed, and I hope that the process will do that. I know that nothing can bring comfort in bereavement, particularly given that so many of those who died were so young, but I hope that families will at least feel vindicated in having defended the reputation of their family members and of those who were, collectively, so badly smeared at the time.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo): Order. Given the time we have for this debate and the number of Members who have indicated that they wish to speak, I am going to change the time limit on Back-Bench contributions to 12 minutes, starting with the next speaker. I think that will balance the debate for us.

7.29 pm

Dr Thérèse Coffey (Suffolk Coastal) (Con): I rise to speak in this debate with a heavy heart but delighted that the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) was able to secure it. I was proud to put my name to support the Backbench Business Committee and to the motion today.

The hon. Gentleman's was a very moving and powerful speech. I am sure that I am not the only one who felt myself go, and I commend him for his composure when he bravely delivered the names of the 96 people who died either on that day or later. He voiced the anger, the frustration and perhaps the hope as well of many Liverpool fans and families, not just the fans from Liverpool and Merseyside, but those from across the country and, indeed, from around the world.

We all know that warm words will never bring back those 96 people. However, I hope that warm words and the clear actions that will result from the motion today will bring some comfort to those people who agonised on 15 April 1989. It was not one of those things where someone had to be there to understand how it affected people, particularly in Liverpool. We have heard compelling eye-witness commentaries today from the hon. Members for Halton (Derek Twigg) and, indeed, for Liverpool, Walton. I remember that it hit home at the school assembly on the Monday morning, when we were asked to pray for someone who had died who was a pupil at our school. That, again, twisted the knife ever further, and I did not even particularly know that person.

I intend to try to keep my comments short, so I will not mention all the contributions that have been made, but I thank the right hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), who spoke so eloquently as well. I am unusual perhaps in being a red in the Coffey family—the rest of them are blues—but we are nevertheless united in our determination to see that justice is done today and in the future.

The right hon. Gentleman was eloquent in referring to the fact that there were deficiencies in the terms of reference set out in the 2009 report. I am delighted that he was gracious to have mentioned that, great achievement though it was, it is good to bring this back to the House today. Indeed, I am sure that there might have been nervousness when the motion was tabled. Officials and Cabinet Ministers, as perhaps happened back in 2009, may have fed one another's anxiety that releasing Cabinet minutes and documents before the end of the time limit under the 30-year rule might not allow free discussion in future.

Perhaps that nervousness was triggered by the advice given and discussions that took place on the Iraq war—indeed, there is perhaps anxiety about information yet to be fully disclosed—but I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I was pleased to hear her words today that no stone will be left unturned and that full, unredacted papers will be provided to the panel. That is really important because, as has been eloquently described today, there is still a feeling of cover-up—the feeling that people are willing to make smears to cover up their own failings at the time. I am reassured by the determination of the House and the Government to ensure that the Hillsborough independent panel and the families have access to the information that they deserve.

I have a question that I appreciate my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary cannot answer now. I encourage her to ensure that the panel has the full time to be able to do its work. The Bishop of Liverpool has recently recovered from illness, but he is also leading another panel that is due to report to Parliament within the next six months, so I should like to encourage my right hon. Friend to make certain that the secretariat is appropriately staffed to make sure that there is no delay in ensuring that the more than 2 million documents are gone through at a good pace, so that people hear the truth as quickly as possible.

I support what my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Stephen Mosley) said earlier about the BBC. It was kind of someone from the BBC to phone me to talk about why the BBC is continuing to press the Government on the appeal. I agree with my hon. Friend, and I say to them now that they should ensure that the process can go ahead unhindered, but it should wait its turn until the families have seen what information is held.

I have a final plea to football fans everywhere. It is not often that I support Sir Alex Ferguson, especially as people will realise the rivalry between Liverpool and Manchester United, but I really do support what he said the other day: the time has come to end the vile chants about Hillsborough and—dare I say it the other way?—about Munich. I call upon premier league clubs to ensure that they do everything that they can to show that those vile chants should be treated as though they were racist chants. The clubs should hunt down the people doing these vile things—they might not realise how much it turns the knife again and again in the families and fans of our club—and ensure that those people are kicked out of football for good.

Madam Deputy Speaker, 15 April 1989 will never be forgotten in Liverpool. It will never be forgotten in people's hearts. That will continue, as the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton said—so it should—but with the disclosure of information and the publication that will finally come, I hope that we can at least show people that the truth will be outed and that there is nothing to hide from the truth. We must ensure that those people who walked along the Leppings Lane will never be forgotten, and they never will be in the House.

7.34 pm

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): First, I apologise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) for being late to the debate. I am sorry that I did not hear his introductory speech. I was chairing a Select Committee meeting, which I could not get out of. I came in for the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Derek Twigg). I thank him for what he said about the people of Sheffield and how they responded to people who were leaving the ground on that day. We have to remember that it was an era before mobile phones. People were desperate to make contact with families and friends. Houses were opened up; people were welcomed in; phones were used and cups of tea were made. That was felt by the people, and my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton has expressed similar feelings to me in the past about that.

I was at the game on that day. I was leader of Sheffield city council. Normally, when I went to matches at Hillsborough, I was on the Kop. That day, I was in

the directors' box, at the invitation of the club to go to a semi-final; I had been to a number over the years. I remember when things started to happen that, initially, there was a feeling that there might be a bit of disturbance in the crowd. We could see people start some movement. People were trying to clamber over the fences. Eventually, it became apparent that something more serious had happened—an accident of some kind. The thought was that people had been crushed and perhaps fainted. It took an awful, long time for even people sitting there watching the events to realise the horror of what had actually happened. Initially, we were told that 60-odd people had died. Then it became more, of course, as the events unfolded.

I remember simply going back to the directors' box, being kept abreast of events and just simply sitting with the directors and one or two friends who were there and crying. What else could we do? This was in our city, in my football ground: 96 people had died before our eyes. What else could we do? Next morning, I went back to the ground, after the Prime Minister had been there, with representatives of the three councils—Liverpool, Nottingham and Sheffield—and the clubs to look at the scene where things had happened, and people simply stood and cried again.

This was a tragedy, of course, above all else for the people who died, for their families, for the people who were injured, for Liverpool as a football club and for Liverpool as a city, but it was also a tragedy for Sheffield and Sheffield Wednesday as well. We went a few days later outside the ground to see the scarves, the flowers and the messages from football fans all over the country. This was a tragedy for football and football fans, and it could have happened to any club and many grounds up and down the country, but it happened there on that day. Therefore, although the tragedy is with Liverpool, there is also a desire in Sheffield to have all this information come out in the open. We want to see it out in the open. We want to see as much information as possible out there, so that people can really believe that the cover-ups are at an end and they can reach their own decisions about that information. There are real concerns about the coroner's inquiry and the artificial cut-off point. In my view, that should never have happened. I hope that this might let some light fall on that.

I was a member of the police authority as well. I will not go into all the details about the police's actions. That has been covered already. All that I have to say is that, the previous year, I went round when the same two clubs were to play a semi-final at Hillsborough with a senior police officer and looked at the arrangements. My understanding is that they were somewhat different on the day of the disaster than they had been in the previous year.

So, in the end, it is incumbent on us all to make sure that this information is available, particularly for the families and friends and those who were injured to get the certainty that they have lacked all this long time—certainty, when they have not known whether something is there, hidden away, that has not been brought out into the light of day that might better explain exactly what happened, why it happened and whether it could have been avoided and their loved ones could still be alive today if other action had been taken.

I am doing my small part. I have already been approached by the panel. I have papers in the Sheffield archives that I understand are classified as my personal papers, but

they relate to my responsibilities as leader of the council. Some of them relate to Hillsborough, and I have indicated that I am quite prepared to have all that information in the public domain. It is incumbent on us all to do our small bit to make sure that the information gets out into the open.

7.40 pm

Chris Heaton-Harris (Daventry) (Con): May I say how humbling the address by the hon. Member for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts) was? I know that he is a football fan to his very core, and the emotion with which he spoke touched Members on both sides of the House. I congratulate the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) on a job well done so far; he has represented his constituency fantastically well, and the people of Liverpool brilliantly, and he deserves great commendation for that.

Like many other Members, I would like to thank the 140,000 people who signed the petition. I very much like this new type of democracy that we are bringing to this place. Democracy evolves, and the fact that this debate is taking place is possibly the best testament to the new process. Obviously, I pay tribute to the families of the 96.

I also want to pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham). The passion in his words spoke volumes, and all the work that he, with other colleagues, has put into instigating the Hillsborough independent panel is very much appreciated. I hope that he is satisfied with the words that he heard from the Home Secretary, and with the tone in which they were uttered.

Like everyone in this debate, I can remember exactly what I was doing on 15 April 1989. I was starting a business, and I was in the John Lewis store in Oxford Circus, trying to foist some of my new business's produce on to the customers going by. I knew that some fantastic games of football were about to start, and I kept trying to steal away from what I was hoping to be my new career to catch a few tiny moments of each game. The match should have been, as most other FA cup semi-finals are, a fantastic game of football, with controversy and memorable incidents on the football pitch, but they should have had to do with football, not what we now remember that date and game for. Twenty-two years later, people really should not still be unable to get the complete truth. How can one learn from the lessons of the past if one is not presented with all the information?

I read the Taylor report, and it is obvious from what many Members have said that there was a complete breakdown in communication in the police. Liverpool fans were magnificent in the way they helped each other on that day, after the tragedy. It is unbelievable that the emergency services were so slow in responding, and that ambulances were kept outside the stadium. Hooliganism played no part whatever; police failure was the cause. Police practice was to blame.

I do not want to reiterate everything that has been said; I want to give a slightly different perspective. The first is from someone I do not know: the Liverpool goal-keeper at the time, Bruce Grobbelaar. I remember reading an interview with him in which he said:

“Two minutes into the game, I was aware of a surge behind me. I saw the movement out of the corner of my eye, and I heard a lot of shouting, a lot of noise.

[Chris Heaton-Harris]

The ball went into that section soon after, and as it was returned, there were voices coming from below me.

As I looked down into the front of those pens, I could see people pressed up against the mesh. The wire was digging into their faces, and people were shouting: 'Bruce, can you help us, please? We can't breathe.'

What was I to do? I'm about to take a goalkick in this massive game, but all I could think of was those contorted faces and people crying for help. After clearing the ball, I remember shouting to a steward to do something.

The ball went out and I started bellowing at a policeman standing by a gate to open it. He said he couldn't and would have to liaise with his colleagues. There was a sense of panic.

When the ball sailed into the crowd for a third time, I could see people being lifted out of those terraces. There were screams and cries all around which I'll never forget, and I shouted to the policeman: 'Please open that gate, before it's too late. Please.'

When the ball went out again I made a bee-line for the ref. I pointed to the scenes behind my goal, and he only needed to look once.

The gate had been opened, and people were beginning to pour onto the pitch. We were six minutes into the game, and he turned to all the players, and said: 'Right, we've got to get off.'

Members of the House probably do not know that I have been a qualified, active football referee since the age of 12. I was signed up to do that by my dad's best friend, a football referee of the highest quality. His name was Ray Lewis, and he was the referee at Hillsborough on that day. He is very much on the record about what, in his view, happened behind the scenes. He said that when he attended the police briefing 90 minutes before the game, there was nothing to suggest that there would be problems at the game. There was no reason to believe that there was a problem leading up to the kick-off. When the game got under way, he could see the beginnings of problems at the Leppings Lane end, but there had been problems at that end in previous games—lessons that had not been learned.

When Mr Lewis was eventually told by South Yorkshire police at 3.6 pm to stop the game, the full gravity of the situation simply was not clear, as the hon. Member for Sheffield South East has said. Minute by minute, hour by hour, the horror of what had happened in front of Mr Lewis began to unfold. He was told of the first fatality at 3.40 pm. He said:

"To a certain extent you are shocked and numbed."

He had gone to referee one of the biggest games of football in his life, and he came away having experienced one of the worst possible situations that can be put before anybody. The corridors and the referee's office were used for first aid, and the majority of people who came into that area were suffering from shock, rather than life-threatening injuries. People simply were not aware, until 3.40 pm, of the extent of the problem outside.

Like many in the House who were present, Mr Lewis called it the blackest day of his life. Twenty years on, like many in this place, he went to the memorial service at Anfield, Liverpool's home ground, and experienced the unbelievably magnificent show of support that probably only the city of Liverpool can generate for its football fans. He completely understands the continuing passion of the families of the 96, and what they have been fighting for.

Like many in this House, I love the city of Liverpool. It brings so much to our wonderful country. When one tries to put oneself in the position of the parents and relatives of the people who passed away on that day, it can only lead to demanding the full disclosure of every document, in the method described by Members on both sides of the House. Allow the families of the 96 finally to come to terms with these tragic events.

7.49 pm

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): May I add my tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) and commend the families of the 96 for their dignified fight for justice and truth? The families that I have spoken to simply want to know the truth behind what happened that day. I want to tell the story of one family in their own words and raise some of the questions that need to be answered.

My constituent Barry Devonside was at the match. His son Chris was 18 and he died that day. I shall continue in Barry's own words:

"Having left the ground at around 3.45 I made my way to the Halifax road and hopefully on to the point where we had arranged to meet following the game. I was halfway up the Halifax road when I met up with Chris's friend and two others who had travelled with us, asking where Chris was. Jason, Chris's friend, told me I should expect the worst. He said Chris had been killed. I turned around and made my way towards the ground. As I passed a telephone box, there were about 100 people wanting to use the phone. I suppose they were wanting to ring home to let their family know that they were safe or to give bad news.

I spoke with a female constable and said to her that I had just been told that our son had been killed in the ground, and she said I should go to the gym which was being used as a temporary mortuary. I made my way there in total fear that what Jason had said to me was true. Arriving at the gym, I asked a lady where is the temporary mortuary. She pointed me in the direction, which was a few yards away. I knocked on the door and it seemed a lifetime for someone to answer.

It was a policeman who answered. He must have been the biggest policeman that I have ever seen. I realised why he was there: the police must have been expecting trouble. I gave him my name and that of our son Christopher and our address. He said, 'Stand there.' He went in. He must have been away 10 or 12 minutes. On his return he told me that there was nobody of Christopher's description, which I could not understand as Jason had told me that he had gone into the temporary mortuary and given Chris's full details to the police, his name, address and the name of his father, and stated that I was at the game.

I also gave the police officer a description of Chris. He was wearing a Welsh international rugby shirt but I was told no, he was not there. I wanted to call my wife but I could not remember our telephone number. A police sergeant offered to help. He spoke on my behalf but was told that we were ex-directory."

Mr Devonside said that his number had never been ex-directory, but he was refused the opportunity to be put through to his wife. He went on:

"It was at this point that a lady a resident of Sheffield, Betty Thorp, kindly offered me help. She offered to drive me around a number of hospitals, looking in hope that Jason was wrong and Chris might be in one of the hospitals. I think we visited three hospitals, including a mortuary where we saw a number of police officers sitting on the floor looking shocked, and in the middle of the floor was a pile of clothes about 3 ft high.

Having been looking for Chris for about 5 or more hours, I was told to go a police station where they may have some information. This I did and waited for my brother and brother-in-law to arrive. Following this, around 11pm, we were told to go to the temporary mortuary, where Chris was all the time. Having identified Chris, the police wanted certain information from me. Apart from the

relevant information, the only interest they had was about alcohol and had we consumed any. I can only think the police needed time to get their story right, though why they would need that time to keep a father away from his dead son I don't know.

On leaving the gym with Betty Thorp and leaving the ground to look for Chris, there were a large number of press. They were shouting over to me, 'Do you have any comment to make about Liverpool supporters urinating on the dead and stealing from the dead?'"

Those are Barry's own words.

Let us hope that tonight we are a step closer to the full disclosure of the documents that the families need. I have been asked to raise some questions. The families need to be satisfied that they have all the information, otherwise many will wonder whether they know the truth or not. Why did certain things happen? Who took the decisions? What was discussed by police officers? Why were changes made to the notes of junior officers? What discussions took place between politicians? What influence did the culture of the time have? Why were the ambulances not allowed on the pitch? Why were fans pushed back into the enclosure as they tried to escape?

Some of these questions were answered in Lord Justice Taylor's inquiry, but other answers are still needed, and the truth may be different from what was said at the time, and the truth may be different from what is in the Cabinet papers. Did police officers agree a line? Why did the press say that Liverpool fans stole from the dead and urinated on the bodies? Why did *The Sun* vilify the dead and show them and their families such disrespect?

Why was the most experienced senior police officer in South Yorkshire removed from his duties, yet not replaced with someone who understood how to balance safety with control? That person who knew in 1987 to delay the start of the same game was not there in 1989. I attended that game in 1987 and I remember how dangerous it could have been on that occasion. The same thing could have happened that year, but the police preparation was different.

The culture at football matches in the 1970s and 1980s was a disgrace. There was no balance between dealing with football-related violence and antisocial behaviour on the one hand, and public safety on the other. Anyone who watched football at that time experienced the ill-treatment of fans. The vast majority of us who watched football went to watch football, not to engage in violence, but the culture was such that safety was of no interest to those in charge of policing football, so people were pushed back into the central pen as they tried to escape, ambulances were prevented from coming on to the pitch, and the worst of the media lied about the dead and their grieving families.

The families of the 96 need the truth. They need to believe that they have all the facts. If the Government release their papers, they need to release all the papers once and for all. I heard the explanation from the Home Secretary about why the Government will withhold some personal details, but I caution her. The families and the wider community have faced countless obstacles, insults and setbacks—

Mrs May: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and enabling me to clarify the point. The Government will not withhold any details. Any decision about redaction—and it should be minimal redaction—will be taken by the panel. The hon. Gentleman referred to

personal details. It will be for the panel to discuss with the families whether personal details should be redacted, and that decision will be taken jointly. The Government will not redact anything in the papers that they release.

Bill Esterson: I am grateful to the Home Secretary for that clarification. She has made that point three times now, and it is extremely important that she is firm about it. It is the families' perception that matters. They need to have total confidence. That is the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley (Mr Howarth). The families need to have every confidence that the information released is all the information. That is what I am trying to achieve by pushing that point with the Home Secretary.

The families have faced countless obstacles, insults and setbacks as they have pursued their campaign for justice and for the truth, so we need to be very sure that all the information is released and nothing is hidden. Full disclosure must mean full disclosure.

7.58 pm

Mr Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Lab): I have been a Member of Parliament since 1979 and I do not think I have witnessed another debate of the quality of tonight's. That says something to the families that were partially destroyed by the events we are recalling, and to the wider community that has kept a constant interest in the issue.

This event has affected my constituency, the town of Birkenhead, more than any other single event that I can recall, so the thanks that Members have registered tonight to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) come not only from the families—obviously from the families—but from practically the whole of the Birkenhead constituency which, as I said, has been affected by these events and continues to be affected as by no other events that I can recall.

Back in 1963 I was sitting with my grandmother as she died. She was grieving the loss of two of her children 70 years previously. She was of course looking back to a time when it was more common for children to die, and yet she said that she could not bear people trying to cheer her up by saying that she would get over it. She did not want to get over it. It seemed that getting over it would be a denial of the existence and celebration of her children's lives. However, she did know what had happened to her children and so was able quickly to put closure on their deaths.

The families I represent in Birkenhead, and those represented by other Members who have spoken today, have been denied that closure by two indescribable acts of horror that have been inflicted upon them. The first act was the press campaign. To have to cope with members of one's family going off to a football match and coming back from the undertakers is an event that most of us—thank God—will never have to deal with. Trying to grapple with the immensity of what has happened to one's family while constantly having to read attacks in the press almost on them, and certainly on their mates and more widely on their mates in the football club, is an unspeakable horror.

Although the House has at long last come to a mind on what we and the Government should be doing, we do not have the power to compel one of the other big

[*Mr Frank Field*]

players in the event similarly to make a public apology for what has happened. I hope that one of the messages we send out tonight will be a clear one to News International that it too has a part to play if we are to draw a line in the sand for those families. That seems to me to be the first indescribable horror that was inflicted upon those families.

The second horror has been referred to by other Members. It is 22 years since the events, but only now are we in the position, I hope, to bring closure through complete revelation about what actually happened, if that is what the panel decides. I have attended only one other debate in which those on the Front Benches have stayed for the duration, and that was the Falklands debate. Those who are unfamiliar with our procedures might not understand the significance of that, but it is remarkable not only that the Home Secretary is here but that the Culture Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), to whom people have rightly given credit, and my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle), are also present. I thank my right hon. and hon. Friends for the role they have played in reaching the stage we are at tonight.

I thank the Home Secretary, as many have done, for the diligence she has shown and is showing tonight. My plea to her is that she will keep up that diligence to ensure that all the evidence is made available and that no piece of paper is withheld from the inquiry panel so that no one can whip up any debates in future and claim that we do not know what actually took place. That must include the papers and briefing that were given to Margaret Thatcher when she was Prime Minister, before she made the trip to which my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts) referred.

None of us can undo those events. None of us can undo the injustice that the families in Birkenhead, in Merseyside and beyond have suffered, but News International can help to draw a line under these events and we, in support of the Home Secretary, can ensure that this is the last inquiry, the last panel and the last effort to put into the public domain all the information so that the families can, like my grandmother, know what happened and can, even if it is 22 years late, begin to grow the scar tissue that will allow them better to face the world, while obviously never forgetting what they have lost.

8.4 pm

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab): May I begin by paying tribute to the dignity of the families of the 96 and to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotherham) for securing today's debate? May I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) and many other colleagues for their tenacious pursuit of the release of these files over many years? I know that the people of Liverpool and also the people of south Yorkshire and Nottingham, where I grew up, are proud of the work they have done to secure today's debate. I think I speak on behalf of hon. and right hon. Members on both sides of the House when I say that, having heard their passionate and moving speeches, even more people across the country will be just as proud tonight.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the Government on the introduction of the e-petitions scheme over the summer. I believe that this debate is evidence that we should see petitions not as a gimmick, but as a tool for informing debate on what the public want us to think and talk about. I commend the Backbench Business Committee, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for North East Derbyshire (Natascha Engel), for its determination that the debate should take place.

I would like to say clearly from the outset that no one in this place should be in any doubt whatever that today's debate is about reconciling a major injustice. What happened at Hillsborough was a tragedy first and foremost for the families, but also for the great city of Liverpool, a city that has come together and shown a unique solidarity over the past two decades that we should all recognise. It was also a tragedy for our police, our politicians and our media, because the myths that my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton has described were allowed to surface, fester and, for many, become ingrained as the truth. Today, in this House, we have a chance to put that right. In order for that to happen, we need to know beyond a shadow of a doubt what the Government documents say. Cabinet minutes to briefing papers, speeches and drafts—all need to be given to the independent panel and all must be uncensored and without redactions. Only then can the panel make a full assessment of what happened, who knew what and why they chose to do what they did. I very much welcome the statement that the Home Secretary made tonight.

Fifteen years in the British Army means that if I am, sadly, no stranger to the loss of close friends and colleagues. If I learned anything from those difficult times, it is that part of the grieving process for the families involves getting to the truth and knowing all the facts that surround the deaths of loved ones. Although I support the release of any uncensored Government documentation from 1989 to the present day, I wish to make it clear that I believe that it is right, as the Home Secretary and other Members have said, to allow the families to see that information first. It should be the job of the independent panel, in conjunction with the families, to use its discretion over what files should be released into the public domain. I am of the opinion that the release of distressing images of those who tragically died and personal information, such as contact details and medical records, is clearly not in the public interest and would serve only to inflict greater distress on the families.

Sadly, for over two decades we have allowed the families' questions to go unanswered. For over two decades we have allowed them to suffer. I believe that that is unacceptable and falls short of the standards that we in Britain should expect from the police, our media and, yes, our politicians. I was delighted that nearly 100 MPs from nine political parties signed the petition requesting a debate on this issue. It showed the public that we understood the depth of feeling, and my hope is that it shows the families that we as a Parliament are finally serious about securing justice and clearing the names of those who tragically died.

Back in April 1989, I was a Nottingham Forest Junior Red, a devoted supporter of Brian Clough and a great admirer of Kenny Dalglish. I tried my best to get a ticket for the semi-final but I was not able to, so my

family and I were spared the ordeal of being present on that fateful day, but the horrors that the fans who were there felt, and the anguish that their families have suffered since, have resonated with people throughout the country.

I believe now that the people have spoken: in just three short weeks over the summer, 140,000 mobilised and signed the petition. The depth of feeling is overwhelmingly clear, and now we have not only the chance but, more important, the responsibility to act. The time has come for the families to have their most agonising questions answered. The time has come for full disclosure. Put simply, the time has come for justice for the 96. I very much hope that the whole House will support this motion.

8.11 pm

Angela Smith (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Lab): I contribute to this debate today as a season ticket holder at Hillsborough stadium. Every time I attend a match, I walk in through the Leppings Lane entrance to the stadium, to the South stand, and, every time I walk under the shadow of what is now known as the West stand, the Leppings Lane stand, I remember and think about the 96 who died. It is impossible not to. Every time one visits that ground, one finds it impossible not to think of what happened there that fateful day.

I also live in Hillsborough so the stadium is very much a part of every day life, and anybody who knows the area knows that the stadium is at the heart of Hillsborough and impossible to avoid. Every time I drive past the stadium into town, I pass the memorial to the 96, and every time one passes the memorial, even to this day one finds it covered with red and white scarves and flowers, as a tribute to those who died. I, as a citizen of Hillsborough, am therefore constantly reminded of the pain and suffering that must be felt by the families and loved ones of those who died.

Sheffield Wednesday fans and the people of Hillsborough will never, ever escape the memory of what happened that day, or the events and their consequences. Nor would they want to, and I want to put on the record tonight the fact that the people of Sheffield and, in particular, Hillsborough stand in solidarity with the people of Liverpool over what happened that day.

My old constituency office was the next to the walled garden in Hillsborough park which stands as a further memorial to the 96. It is a lovely, tranquil place, and walking through the entrance one is told, "You'll Never Walk Alone". That, more than anything else, stands as a tribute to the dignity and enduring determination of the families of the 96 to secure justice and accountability for what happened that awful day.

Although I, like many right hon. and hon. Members, was not at the stadium that day, I can still vividly remember watching the television and witnessing the unfolding of a tragedy, the like of which had not been seen before at an English football stadium. At the time it seemed unbelievable that it could be happening at not only one of the most important matches of the season, an FA cup semi-final, but importantly at what was seen at the time as one of the best stadiums in the country.

The stadium was also at the time one of the largest in the country and could at that point hold about 55,000 fans. It had been used on numerous occasions by the FA to

host major matches, including many previous semi-finals, and reference has already been made to the previous semi-final, involving Liverpool and Nottingham Forest, at Hillsborough, when Liverpool emerged 2-1 winners.

The ground had also been used during the World cup of 1966, when a number of group matches as well as a quarter-final were held there, and it was for that tournament that much of the ground was redeveloped, with the Leppings Lane end, where the Liverpool fans were located on that fateful day in 1989, gaining a new stand and terrace, with a capacity of about 14,000.

To the north end, the revolutionary 10,000-seat cantilever stand had been erected, and a further development in the mid-1980s was a roof on the massive Spion Kop, on the east side of the ground, which at the time could house up to 21,000 fans standing. The importance of that point is that Liverpool FC, given that it had a far greater proportion of fans wanting to attend the match that day, had objected quite vociferously to their not being allocated the Spion Kop at the match.

In nature, the stadium was typical of many major English football grounds at the time, and indeed its layout was similar to that of Aston Villa's Villa Park and Manchester United's Old Trafford. My point is that, given that the stadium was one of those with the highest standards in the country, it is absolutely unbelievable that Sheffield Wednesday did not have a safety certificate for it. That alone tells us a great deal about the standards in football at the time, and we should never forget that.

In this contribution, I do not want to go into the detail of the events that day, because my hon. Friends the Members for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) and for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts) told us what happened that day in incredibly moving and, in fact, heartbreaking detail. We do not therefore need to go over that ground again, but, as many other hon. Members have said, after 22 years the families of the 96 who died that day need to know the full story.

Now it is right that all the papers relating to the events before, during and after the tragedy are released, and I welcome the Home Secretary's statement to that effect. Tonight, my hon. Friend—both inside and outside the Chamber—the Member for Sheffield South East has set a very good example by stating that he will release any documents in which he was involved as leader of the city council at the time, and I hope that the other individuals and agencies involved will do the same.

Within days of the disaster, Lord Justice Taylor was appointed to conduct an inquiry, which sat for 31 days and published two reports: an interim report, which laid out the events of the day and offered immediate conclusions; and a final report, which made general recommendations on football-ground safety.

Taylor's immediate conclusions laid the blame on two main things, and I make no apology for going over this again because we need to nail once and for all the lies that have been told about what happened that day. The report noted that, although Hillsborough was considered one of the best grounds in the country, the small number of turnstiles at the Leppings Lane end—anybody who knows the area will know that access to the ground is fairly restricted—and the poor quality of the crush barriers on the terraces were a contributing factor to the tragedy, but Taylor also stated clearly that the official cause of the disaster was a failure of police control.

[Angela Smith]

Owing to the small number of turnstiles, it has been estimated that it would have taken until 3.40 pm to get all ticket holders—that is the key point: all ticket holders—on to the Leppings Lane terrace, so a decision was taken to open an exit gate. It is important to recall, too, the report's conclusion that the total number of fans entering the terrace was no more than the total capacity of the standing area, but because fans entering the terraces headed for the central pens, 3 and 4, as directed by the large notice pointing them that way above the tunnel underneath the Leppings Lane stand, those pens became seriously overcrowded.

Normally, a police officer or steward would have directed fans away from stands 3 and 4 because they were full, but on that day this did not happen; there were no stewards in the area. The official capacity of pens 3 and 4 was about 2,000, but the report estimated that over 3,000 people were in these pens shortly after kick-off at 3 pm. It was this overcrowding that caused the fatal crush.

However, it was the process of the inquests into the deaths of those who died that has proved most controversial to the families of the bereaved. For some reason that we have yet to discover, the coroner, Dr Stefan Popper, decided to limit the main inquest to events up until 3.15 pm on the day of the disaster, his rationale being that all the victims were dead by that time. This decision has, quite rightly, angered the families of the victims, many of whom felt that this meant the inquest was not able to consider the response of the police and the other emergency services after that time. The inquest returned the well-known verdicts of accidental death on the victims.

The lack of rigour at the original inquest, coupled with the appalling attack on Liverpool fans by *The Sun*, means that the appalling loss suffered that day has been made immeasurably more difficult to deal with for the families of those who died. It is little to be wondered at that so many members of the families affected are here today, for they feel that justice has not been done, in the sense that those responsible for what happened that day have still not been held to account. That is why we must have full and unredacted disclosure of all the documents held by the Government relating to the tragedy. We must know what briefings were prepared and delivered to Margaret Thatcher and her Government at that time, and we must know precisely who briefed *The Sun* with information that was not only grossly inaccurate and untrue but deeply damaging and offensive to the families of the 96 who died.

Mr Jamie Reed (Copeland) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making an incredibly powerful case. I rise to ask this question precisely because she is not a Liverpool MP. Throughout the 1980s, the city of Liverpool and the people of Liverpool were demonised and mischaracterised with an almost McCarthyist fervour, not only by News International but by the media across the board. Does she think, as I do, that that deliberate, ugly, grotesque mischaracterisation led to the attitudes that informed not only the media coverage but a lot of the other actions surrounding these events?

Angela Smith: I absolutely concur with my hon. Friend. Indeed, as my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton said, the Liverpool fans were no

better and no worse than any other fans up and down the English football league. There was no reason to single out Liverpool fans as being particularly prone to hooliganism or violence of any kind; they are the same as any other fans in the country.

I finish by referring to the one positive legacy of the Hillsborough tragedy: the implementation of the Taylor recommendations relating to all-seated stadiums at the top levels of English football. This development has benefited the game enormously, making it much more attractive for spectators, as far as women and children are concerned. It has made the experience of watching football much safer all round. There are some out there who would bring back so-called limited standing. To that suggestion, we need to deliver a resounding no. We must never forget the 96 who died, and we must deliver accountability for the actions of those who were primarily responsible for the disaster, but we must also respect the memory of what happened, and one of the best ways of doing that is to ensure that it never happens again.

8.23 pm

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): We have already heard, in the eloquent speeches made by many hon. Friends, moving tributes to the families of the 96 victims. I want to recognise the tireless work that so many have done to get us to where we are today. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) for the work that he did as Culture Secretary to secure the release of documents and to establish the independent panel; to my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) for her role in calling for the release of the documents; and to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram), who, since being elected to this House, as he did before, has relentlessly pressed and campaigned for the publication of all documents. To the 140,000 people who signed the petition, I say thank you for ensuring that we are having this debate today—but it should not have taken so long.

None of us needs reminding of the events of that dark, dark day 22 years ago. Those dreadful scenes from Hillsborough will never be forgotten in Liverpool; they cast a permanent scar across the city and on Merseyside. What happened on that fateful afternoon was a tragedy not just for the people of Liverpool but for our whole country.

Growing up in Wembley, north-west London, I commemorated the disaster every year. Two of the 96 people who lost their lives were Sarah and Victoria Hicks, sisters aged just 15 and 19, Sarah studying chemistry at Liverpool university, Victoria still at school—the same school I went to. I and many others spent hours on a bench dedicated to their memory in the rose garden at our school. I met Jenny Hicks, Sarah and Victoria's mother, at the 21st anniversary memorial service at Anfield. She is so brave. Jenny Hicks, her family, and all the families are so brave, and they have suffered enough. Their dignified and unwavering campaign for justice is an inspiration to us all.

I want to read a few words from a moving letter sent to me by one of my constituents:

“Everyone in the House of Commons has known private grief and experienced the same patterns of raw emotion. It is incumbent on all of you to recover from your memories those feelings which possessed you at the time of your grief and loss, and project

yourselves into the unimaginable torment of living, in that condition, not for twenty-two days, or twenty-two weeks, or twenty-two months, but for twenty-two years; in an unrelieved cloud of unknowing, tormented by the sure and certain knowledge that the facts, which alone, can end their private agony, have been sealed up against them, locked away by an indifferent and heedless power, that refuses to discuss the motives and purposes which drives its actions.

For twenty-two years, the immediate and extended families of the ninety-six victims of the Hillsborough disaster have endured the unendurable. With no comfort but their inmost resources and the solidarity of their friends, who, as the petition has shown, are no longer counted in handfuls but in Legions.”

For too long, these families have suffered without the truth. The actions taken by a few during and after that day have made their burdens even more difficult to bear. From the attempts at a cover-up to the desire to depict fans as the authors of their own disaster, so many scandals have been perpetrated against them. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh wrote, an orchestrated campaign was conducted to place the blame for what happened on the victims rather than the authorities. Senior police officers lied about why the gates at the Leppings Lane terrace were opened, blaming Liverpool fans for forcing through them when in fact it was the authorities who had opened them. Ambulances which could have saved lives were refused entry into the ground. Police officers were ordered to change their accounts of what had occurred to cover up mistakes. A national newspaper printed lies about fans who were trying to save lives, disgracefully accusing them of stealing from victims and attacking police. Despite the Taylor inquiry finding that the police were at fault, not a single officer responsible for the conduct of the police that day has been disciplined. It simply is not right.

Twenty-two years later, it is hard to believe that so many questions remain unanswered. That is why it is imperative that all documentation is released, first to the independent panel and the families, and then what is appropriate to the public. I am grateful that the Home Secretary has clarified that the Government will not hold back any documents, because the independent panel and the families need everything—including all the Cabinet minutes, documents and papers relating to the Hillsborough disaster, right through to the present day. There is much speculation about what may have been said, done or written, including in correspondence between Douglas Hurd and Margaret Thatcher. The families will continue to be haunted by the speculation until everything is released. I echo the request of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh that the release of all information from private companies, specifically from News International, be included.

Today, all of us in this place owe it to every family who are suffering to put right what was done wrong and to ensure that the unredacted truth is unequivocally released, so that we can finally see what has taken far too long: justice for the 96.

8.29 pm

Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow my constituency neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger), who has made one of a number of extremely powerful speeches in tonight’s debate. May I apologise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to the House that I had to leave the Chamber for about half an hour

earlier in the debate, as a result of which I missed the closing parts of the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotherham), including the citation of the names of the 96, and the opening of the Home Secretary’s speech?

I join this debate with humility, because so many colleagues from both sides who have spoken were present at Hillsborough in 1989, lost friends who died and were among the 96, or have been involved in campaigning on this injustice for all or most of the past 22 years. My qualification is none of those things, but I speak on behalf of constituents in my Liverpool, West Derby constituency, some of whom are here in the Gallery. I welcome them to the House and pay tribute to all the campaigners and family members in the Gallery who have waited a very long time for this debate.

May I join those who have remarked upon how this debate came about? More than 100,000 ordinary people up and down the country asserted people power. I agree with the hon. Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris) that this is a good way for this House to practise democracy. It gives citizens a greater opportunity to have a direct input into the issues. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) said, it is an indictment of all of us from all parts of the House that it has taken such a long time for this important debate to happen, but happening it is.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh, as everyone else has done, for the crucial role he played in the Cabinet and now in opposition. In his powerful speech, he made a profound point about the different way in which victims are seen today, compared with 22 years ago, when victims were scapegoated by large sections of the media and in public discourse. As others have said more eloquently and powerfully than I can, people who were living with bereavement and had lost loved ones in recent hours and days had not only to grieve, but to face ludicrous and vile suggestions that their loved ones were somehow responsible for what had happened.

I know that those who are here today from Merseyside will really appreciate the speeches that were made by my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts) and for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith) and the profound sense of solidarity that they expressed on behalf of the people of Sheffield. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield South East in particular made an incredibly powerful speech reflecting on his presence on the day and the role that he had at the time. He gave an important commitment at the end about his own papers from his time as leader of Sheffield city council. On behalf of my constituents and, I am sure, of other people who signed the petition that secured this debate, we are very grateful that he has given that important commitment.

This has been a highly dignified, persistent and long 22-year campaign for truth and justice. Like everyone else in this debate, I pay particular tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton, who has been dogged in his persistence, ever since he was elected to this place less than 18 months ago, in seeking this important debate and in giving voice to the feelings of the people of Liverpool in general and of his constituency in particular. He took us to the Backbench Business Committee and mobilised 100 MPs from nine different parties, and it is down to him that we have secured the debate. I pay tribute to him for achieving that.

[Stephen Twigg]

I also join in the tributes to my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) who, alongside my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh, secured in government the setting up of the independent panel.

I do not wish simply to repeat what others have said, but I want to reaffirm some key points that have been made. As others have said, we know that the Taylor report made it clear that the major cause of what happened on that day was a failure on the part of the police, and that hooliganism played no part. I echo what my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr Field) said in issuing a challenge to News International, *The Sun* and Kelvin MacKenzie, which I hope will come from all parties. We want to see a real, credible apology for what they and other newspapers said and did at the time. Having to endure truly appalling and vile coverage in *The Sun* and some other newspapers made the tragedy so much worse for the bereaved and the people who were suffering.

As has been said, in 2009 the Labour Government established the independent panel. I join others in thanking the Bishop of Liverpool, the Right Rev. James Jones. I know that Bishop Jones and other members of the panel have served diligently in pursuing justice for the 96 and their families.

Right hon. and hon. Members have referred to the many questions that remain unanswered. The 3.15 pm cut-off, ambulances not being allowed in, the decision to change the match commander, the farce of the inquests, police accounts being changed after the event—those are just some of the unanswered questions, to which the families rightly expect to have answers.

As everyone else has said, we warmly welcome what the Home Secretary has said today, particularly her reassurances about redactions. It is only right that full disclosure is made. She gave us the assurance that my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh sought that such decisions are not for the Government but for the panel and the families. I know that the families and campaigners will also be very pleased that that assurance has been given. As others have said, it is vital that we have that full disclosure, and that we are sensitive to the needs and wishes of the families. As well as the panel having all the documents, it is therefore vital that the families see them before they become available to the wider general public.

Ian Lavery (Wansbeck) (Lab): A number of Members who have spoken tonight have insisted that documentation from the time of the Hillsborough incident should be released. Does my hon. Friend agree that there is also documentation from before then that should be available? I was personally involved in an incident in exactly the place where the Liverpool supporters were on that day, at a game between Newcastle United and Sheffield Wednesday. I was traumatised by the event. A lot of Newcastle supporters were evicted. They were supposed to have been protesting, but they were fighting for their lives. I lost my shoes and got pushed to the back of the stand—I was lifted off my feet.

It is very important that the police learn from their mistakes, and that they come forward with information that they had previous to the Hillsborough disaster, because it could have been prevented.

Stephen Twigg: I thank my hon. Friend for that, and I am very happy to concur with what he says. He has made his case very powerfully, and there may be an opportunity for others to respond to his points later in the debate.

I hope that tonight's debate will mark an important milestone in the 22-year struggle for truth and justice. Many people have contributed to that progress, but like Members on both sides of the House, I want to finish by paying tribute to the families and those who have campaigned. It has taken a long time to get to this stage, but their diligence and persistence is now paying off. From the debate, let us see the progress that enables that campaigning to bear fruit, so that people get the answers to the questions for which they have been waiting for a very long time.

8.40 pm

Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire) (Lab): I thank and congratulate my fellow former lord mayor of Liverpool, my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotherham), on such a powerful and emotional speech. I also thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) and the 139,000 who signed the petition, who all helped to secure this debate.

The Hillsborough Family Support Group—the families of the 96—along with Liverpool fans and players, and everyone associated with the football club, deserve recognition for never giving up in their search for the truth of what happened on 15 April 1989. They have shown such solidarity and dignity in their fight for only one thing: the truth.

As a Liverpudlian who proudly represented my city for 27 years, I now have the great privilege to represent West Lancashire. The Hillsborough disaster is just one of many bonds between my home town and my constituency. Too many people and their families and friends—entire communities—have had to live every single day with the terrible pain of the devastating events of that day. We remember the 96 who lost their lives at Hillsborough and we remember their families, but we also remember those who later took their lives because of what happened, and we remember the survivors, who are grateful to be back with their families, but who live with the emotional and physical scars. Their stories—truly heart-rending accounts—of the day's events are told with such lucidity, emotion and vivid imagery. It is as if it were yesterday rather than 22 years ago. That is probably the most important reason why I support the motion.

Many in the House and in the wider public debate will talk of the failure to heed warnings, of the ground's inadequacies in previous years, of the disgusting and disrespectful media coverage, and of the failure of the police operation on match day. Not just people in Liverpool will closely watch this debate and the Government's subsequent action, and nor is it just a national issue. As Damian Kavanagh reminds us,

“there are many people in far-off places around the world who know the name of Liverpool because of our team.”

The sense of injustice is felt around the world.

I very much welcome the commitment the Prime Minister made in his letter to my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh, and the commitment given by the

Home Secretary today, that the families will see the unredacted papers. That is an appropriate and welcome response. I reiterate the call of my right hon. and hon. Friends for full public disclosure, and I look forward to the House supporting the motion later tonight. A wider community was deeply affected by the Hillsborough disaster. Only through full public disclosure of Government-related papers can we begin to address their sense of injustice.

Many people have contacted me about Hillsborough, and I wanted to give the House just a few examples of the stories that have been told to me. Kevin Wilkie, a constituent, was at the time a 15-year-old boy. He went off to the game with his father and his best friend, like so many others that day. Echoing the story from Bruce Grobbelaar, Kevin recalls that

“a man...was squashed against the crash barrier behind me. He was grabbing me, begging me to help him. I still see his face. The colour in it changes. There was nothing I could do for him.”

Kevin also lost sight of his best friend in the melee. He had become unconscious in the crush but, fortunately, he had been passed over the crowd and out over the fence to safety. He was one of the lucky ones.

Damian Kavanagh, who has written his story for the Hillsborough justice campaign, tells of how he was able to escape from the Leppings Lane end. He tells of how he had cuts on his hands from ripping down the advertising hoardings to create makeshift stretchers. His only other physical injury was a bruise on his back in the shape of a hand—the result of the pressure building up in the Liverpool end of the ground.

Families had a sense of guilt that their loved ones had returned from the game while their neighbours grieved for a husband, father, brother, sister or daughter. In an e-mail sent to me, one constituent said:

“I didn’t lose any relatives or friends on that day but I did lose 96 close friends that I didn’t realise I had.”

What happened in Sheffield on that day in April had implications that went well beyond Yorkshire. To quote a fan who was present:

“Everybody was affected, everybody knew somebody who had been to the match. This disaster struck at the very heart of our community.”

Let us remember that those people did not go off to war. They did not go out with the intention of rioting or fighting, and what happened was not an unforeseen natural disaster. They went as fathers, sons, brothers, sisters and mates to watch a football match—an afternoon of escapism and entertainment at the end of a working week. They were met by an absolutely disastrous failure on the part of officials and the police, followed by malicious stories and lies promulgated by the press. No one has yet been held to account, and no charges have been brought.

I cannot begin to imagine what anyone affected by Hillsborough has felt or experienced in the years since 1989. Loss and grief suffered privately are tough enough, but in this case, the events and the lies have been played out publicly. Their sense of grief and loss has been compounded by a deep and strong feeling of injustice. By any measure of fairness, humanity, justice and truth, the full disclosure of these documents would be demanded. We can never do anything to take away the pain of the families’ loss, but, with the publication of all the documents, the Government can begin to heal the pain of injustice. It is long overdue, but it is time for the truth.

8.48 pm

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): Let me begin my contribution today by thanking all those Members of Parliament who supported the call for this debate. The Hillsborough disaster occurred when I was eight, but few other events have had such an impact on my life, or that of my community. It is a true honour to represent my home town, and I am thinking today especially of all those who have been affected. I pay tribute to those who have travelled here today to listen to us. My only hope is that we can do justice to their commitment, and live up to their example.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotherham) on leading the debate today. On the 20th anniversary of Hillsborough, I sat with my family in the Lower Centenary stand at a packed Anfield, and I listened to him lead our mourning as the lord mayor of Liverpool. I was taken aback then at his bravery in describing the impact of Hillsborough on his life, and I was deeply proud of him, although I did not know him. Little did I know that, just over a year later, we would both join this place and become friends—and I am really glad we have.

I also place on record the thanks that many of my constituents have asked me to bring to my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham). Their leadership in government led the way to the Hillsborough independent panel being brought into existence, and their support has meant a great deal. I thank the Home Secretary for her words today, which have demonstrated her encouragement of today’s motion and full transparency, which is what we want. I thank Members, particularly those from Sheffield, for their contributions today and for their solidarity.

The motion we are debating today is essentially about the truth. That is what we want. For all those affected by events on 15 April 1989, we want to get to the truth—the truth uncensored, the truth without redaction, the truth with no questions left to answer. I want to say on behalf of my constituents why the truth matters so very much. To answer that question, I need to go back to the day itself.

As I said earlier, I was an eight-year-old girl at the time. It was about then that I started to go to football matches and, like many young children, I learned about the wonder of football—the atmosphere, the beauty, the skill on display—and I learned to stay close to my family and not get lost. On the occasion of the FA cup semi-final at Sheffield Wednesday that April, I was at home. Luckily, I was sat in our front room in our house in Bromborough with my dad—and I can still see the look on his face now, because he knew what was happening. Football fans all over Britain knew. They were watching on TV, listening on radios from other football grounds. Thousands and thousands were gripped with horror as bodies were pulled out of the pens in the Leppings Lane end of the Hillsborough ground, and thousands prayed for the safety of those being carried across the pitch on cheap advertising hoardings for stretchers.

The awfulness of that day sunk in over the weeks and months afterwards. It was the worst possible shock. As Alan Hansen, on the pitch playing for Liverpool that day, has said of the disaster,

“the number of broken hearts is incalculable”.

[Alison McGovern]

Sadly, for many I have spoken to over the years, there has been a grim recognition of how this could have happened. In the 1980s, football fans were broadly deemed by some to be scum. The relationship between supporters and the police was frequently poisonous. There was a culture of disrespect for fans.

As the interim Taylor report itself pointed out:

“Over the last few years, hooliganism at and associated with football matches has strongly influenced the strategy of the police. In their plans and management they have concentrated on averting or containing threats to public order...it has led to an imbalance between the need to quell a minority of troublemakers and the need to secure the safety and comfort of the majority.”

Yet this was something new in the scale of the horror. In the weeks that followed, people poured into Anfield to show their respects, and everyone wanted answers. Everyone wanted to know how on earth this could have happened.

Well, from a practical perspective, we do know why 96 people died and hundreds and hundreds suffered. We know it because Members have said it, but I want to say it again for clarity. The interim report of the Taylor inquiry, immediately after the disaster, found that police error allowed too many fans into too small an area of the ground, and an absence of effective leadership exacerbated the suffering caused. Despite problems of ground safety, different decisions could have been taken on that day.

As my neighbour and right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr Field) commented, because of two terrible processes that happened straight away, both in the immediate aftermath and in the years that followed, we are still frozen in those early stages of grief in the awful horror of it all, unable to come to terms with it. That is why we need the truth now. The first awful process was the appearance of stories in newspapers which took the good names of fans who were at Hillsborough on that day and threw them in the mud. One newspaper in particular made untrue allegations of specific behaviour by fans that had simply never happened. Those newspapers took people who were suffering in a manner that few of us here can imagine, let alone have experienced, and ripped apart their dignity. Not only did those affected have to suffer physical and mental injury; they had to witness their honour being attacked as though they were the lowest of the low.

People may recall the pictures of newspapers being burnt in Liverpool at the time, but what they may not know is how those lies have echoed down through the years, and how they continue to be spread. I moved to London in 1999, fully 10 years after the disaster, and I was shocked then by how many people still believed the lies told about Hillsborough. They did not believe those lies out of malice, but no one had ever corrected them before. On many occasions I have had to explain what actually happened at Hillsborough, why the calls for justice still ring out, and why people will not “just let go”. Even today, we still see horrible claims repeated online, on websites. Those awful lies, which have been corrected any number of times, are still perpetuated. Often the people whom we correct are quite shocked, having simply assumed that football supporters were to blame.

I join those who support Sir Alex Ferguson’s call for the Hillsborough chants to end, which was highlighted by the hon. Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey). It

is hugely important, and has emphasised the fact that the lies told about Hillsborough still have traction. However, given that not one person has ever paid a significant price for their dereliction of duty on that day—only the fans and the victims have paid that price—why would people think that anyone else was to blame?

That brings me to the second awful process that has brought us here today. Our justice system did not deliver, and has not been seen to provide a just account, for the families of those who died at or because of the disaster. No prosecutions have been brought against those who were responsible, despite the conclusions of the Taylor inquiry. The inquest process was flawed by the provision of insubstantial representation for families, and by a large number of other factors that undermine the authority of the verdict. Most seriously, as others have said, no evidence was considered about events after 3.15 pm on the day, so the actions of the police in the rescue operation, and numerous other crucial details that should have featured in a proper account, were not examined. The scrutiny of the evidence which took place in 1998 was likewise flawed, and private prosecutions did not provide conclusive verdicts.

The truth about Hillsborough has never been fully acknowledged. The truth about the causes of those deaths has not been put fully on the record in the way for which our legal system should allow. That is why, for 22 years, we have stood at Anfield and shouted for justice. It is why this campaign is supported by football fans from all teams, from all parts of Britain—as has been clear from what Members have said today—and indeed across the world. It is why I am trying to explain today why the full truth is so important to so many.

One of the most moving sights at the memorial service is the people who come wearing the colours of teams from far and wide to show their support. In every year that has gone by, our voices calling for justice have become louder. Each year, the numbers attending Anfield on the anniversary are larger. If there is anyone left in the country who thinks that the campaign for justice will just fade away over time, let me tell them that they are very wrong.

In my constituency, the Unilever companies in Merseyside installed a permanent memorial to all victims of the disaster. It sits in a beautiful and peaceful part of Port Sunlight Village, providing another space for reflection and a marker of the indelible effects of 15 April 1989 on our community. The strength of our community, and our commitment to justice, will not fade.

The motion calls for full access to Government papers, unredacted and uncensored. Release of the Cabinet papers—which, thankfully, we have heard the Government support today—is an important step on the road towards a full account, bearing witness to a heartbreaking disaster. No evidence should be kept hidden, even that from the highest levels of Government. What we have asked for today—and, thankfully, succeeded in gaining—is the support of parliamentarians for a full and unrestricted account. Parliament should back this motion because general Government policy has already been changed in that Cabinet papers are kept private for 20, rather than 30, years. We have already waited 22 years for the truth about Hillsborough, and we cannot wait any longer. This is a straightforward matter of letting those affected know precisely what happened—of telling in respect of every locus where decisions were taken, what happened

and why. Only then, when we know the truth, can we have justice, and can we hold up an account and say, "This is the truth. This is how our loved ones died. May such a thing never happen again. Their memory will never leave our hearts."

9 pm

Mr David Anderson (Blaydon) (Lab): Members often have the privilege of visiting schools, and we are always asked why we wanted to become an MP. I wanted to become one because of nights like tonight, when we have the chance to bring justice and right a real wrong. Another question we are asked is why MPs are called "honourable". After tonight, I shall always refer people to the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram)—who has been in the Chamber for the past five hours but has just now disappeared. He gave a tremendous speech on a very important subject. One of the points he made was that this could have happened at any football ground in the country. He is right, and I want to refer to some of the things I have seen—my hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Ian Lavery) mentioned many such things in his speech earlier.

On Boxing day, it will be 49 years since I first walked into a football ground. Boxing day 1962 was when I saw my first game, and, sadly, it was the last game that Brian Clough played. About 30 minutes into the game, he was injured very badly. Even though that happened 49 years ago, the memory is still burned into my mind, because football has that effect on us; it hooks us in a way no other game in the world does. It becomes an obsession.

For football supporters, things were very different back in those days. We stood in a huge concrete stand that took 21,000 people. It was uncovered, and the day was freezing cold. The pitch had been covered in straw, and the straw had been pulled back. That was probably one reason why Clough's injury was so severe. There were at least 50,000 people in the ground for what was a second division match. They were united in wanting to see their team do well. Sadly, as has happened far too often, we got beaten 1-0. I have been a Sunderland fan for many years, and that is a common theme.

Such results do not dampen the passion people feel, however. Regardless of whether they support Liverpool, Everton or any other team in the league, it is their team and their town, and they want to support and get behind them. That passion was there no matter how badly we were treated—and some of the grounds were unsanitary or unsafe, and no other sport would have taken place in them.

If that was the situation back in the early '60s, how did 96 people get killed so much later on, in one of the grounds that was improved for the 1966 World cup? There is absolutely no doubt that the hooliganism of the '70s and '80s influenced the mindset of the people in authority in this country. Their attitude towards the fans was much harder back then. The police in particular believed that their job was to control crowds by getting the retaliation in first. In saying that, I do not in any way excuse the crass and disgraceful behaviour of some people—they besmirched the names of good football clubs—but football was not immune to what was happening outside in those days.

The police were strongly politicised in the 1980s. We had seen riots on the streets of Brixton, Toxteth and Tottenham. We had also seen the dispute at Wapping

and the miners' strike, when ordinary working men, many of them football fans, were declared to be "the enemy within"—a phrase that was mentioned earlier in our debate in relation to the people of Liverpool. Crucially, just four years earlier, we had seen the disaster at the Heysel stadium, as a result of which we ended up with fans literally penned in cages. Was that seen as an overreaction at the time? It was not. People said, "Its all they deserve. If they are going to behave like animals, let's treat them like animals."

Graham Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): I do not want to move away from the issue of the day, but I wish to make a point about what led to that penning in. What was done by people such as Ken Bates, who put up electrified fences at Stamford Bridge, led to disasters such as this and it is why every football fan in this country sympathises with this issue today.

Mr Anderson: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend, because he raises exactly the point I am trying to make. Sadly, it was the Liverpool fans who suffered that day but it could have been any of us, because the authorities took an attitude that said, "These people are out of control. We will treat them like animals." How did they do that? It was okay to herd people into a clearly overcrowded area. It was okay to keep forcing more and more people into confined spaces, despite their objections. My hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck mentioned what happened to him and I experienced a similar event at the Leppings Lane end in Sheffield in 1968. We could not even get near the turnstiles, but the design of the ground funnelled people into an area. So we were pushed up against police horses and they could not move, let alone the crowd. What stays in my mind from that day was a policeman on horseback flailing with his baton, but he could not move—none of us could move. That took place 21 years before Hillsborough, so a catalogue of events led up to what happened on that day in 1989.

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): Sadly, I was at the Heysel stadium. Very few people misbehaved and the resulting problem occurred mainly because most of the Liverpool fans had been crushed together; there were far too many in a small pen. It is a tragedy that the lessons were not learnt.

Mr Anderson: Again, the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. This was about how we treated football fans, which was different from how any other sports fans were treated in this country or across Europe. That was shown by the fact that when people were trying to escape from these cages, they were penned in—they were actually forced back. They were knocked back by the police, because the police thought that they were trying to invade the pitch for some reason other than to try to save their lives. That would not have happened in any other scenario.

As we have heard so often today, although all of that was a real scandal, just as bad, after the devastation to so many lives, is the way in which this issue has been covered up for two decades and more. It was covered up by the authorities and it was disgracefully covered up by some of the media in this country. The behaviour of *The Sun* has been highlighted today. As a former coal miner, I am not surprised that *The Sun* turns against

[Mr Anderson]

working people—it has done that for decades and I do not see how it will ever stop doing it. But that does not stop us, and others in this House and this country, from saying that that was out of order, particularly as there was an attempt to sway the conscience and belief of people in this country against ordinary people who were just having a day out supporting their football team.

As far back as 1999, I was working in Liverpool with some social workers, and in the days leading up to the 10th anniversary they were saying to me, “We’ve got to get justice for these people.” I was working with the trade union movement and we tried to move that forward. We had discussions with the then Government but, sadly, despite all our best efforts, nothing happened. We have heard about how the courageous attempts of my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) and my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) started to bring some pressure to bear and we did then see movement from the Government some 10 years later.

We are still discussing this issue here today, 22 years down the line, and we hope that we are going to see justice done. We need everything out in the open and we need it now. We do not need some more vague promises of, “Somewhere down the line.” We need to act when the information comes out. It is no good just saying, “This was wrong. That was wrong.” We need to bring people to justice in this country. If it was wrong for them to have done this in 1989, it is right for them to face punishment in 2011, or whenever we can bring them to book. We need to make sure that we do so because we owe it to the 96. We owe it to the families who lost loved ones and we owe it to all the folks who will go to football games this weekend, because it is about them as well as about the people who went before them. As has been rightly said, this is about every football fan in this country, because the truth is that football is still the beautiful game. It is a hugely emotive event, a game that does away with any sense of rationality. A person can believe that their team is the best team in the world when, quite frankly, it is not and probably never will be—[HON. MEMBERS: “Speak for yourself.”] Look, I have to get votes in Newcastle. Football is a game that sometimes brings out the best and the worst in all of us who are obsessed by it. The feeling is never less than great and I hope that it never loses that feeling, that passion and that bond between people from all walks of life.

Football brings people together and one of the great experiences of my life is when Liverpool fans come to Sunderland and then come to the village in which I have spent most of my adult life to go to the memorial for Bob Paisley, the most successful Liverpool manager of all time, who was born and bred in the village that I am proud to come from. Bob Paisley’s brother worked with my dad. There is a bond between people who can say that for the next 90 minutes they will shout at each other, saying that they hate one another—that they hate the very life of one another—but can come out and be the best of friends. There is nothing wrong with that and we should be proud of the culture that this country brought to the sporting world 150 years ago. That is something about which we should all be passionate and proud.

That is the real joy of football. It is miles away from the world of Sky, from the superstars who cannot even be bothered to come on to the pitch when some of us would give our left arm to play once for our team and from the agents who will destroy football if they can get away with it. We owe it to the 96 to ensure that justice is done today. We need to see justice. Failure to do so diminishes our game and our nation and it will diminish this House. We need to get on with it.

9.11 pm

John Woodcock (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op): It is great to follow such an impassioned account of football fans’ experience and the beautiful game from my hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon (Mr Anderson). May I also say what an honour it is to sit next to my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral South (Alison McGovern), who made a truly extraordinary speech? I know that we are resolutely not to pay any attention or refer to anything that happens in the Gallery, Mr Speaker—I do not know whether you will strike me down or whether this will merely be struck from the record—but seeing the families and friends of the 96 break into spontaneous applause was quite something. She is a true red and a credit to Merseyside and her team.

It is an honour to be in the House for this debate. It feels like the House of Commons truly has risen to the occasion, bearing in mind the gravity of the responsibility placed on us by the amazing, tenacious and indefatigable campaign from so many seeking justice for the 96 and the truth about what happened on that awful day. I did not intend to speak in this debate, but my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral South suggested that I did. Like many football fans who are Members of Parliament, I look at the tragedy and the way in which the people of Liverpool and the families affected have struggled with this day after day for 22 years and think that it is not my place to speak. My hon. Friend said, and I hope she is right, that football fans across the country should say how solidly we stand behind the people of Liverpool and Liverpool fans in demanding justice and full disclosure after so long.

This is not just about football fans. What happened is an injustice and anybody who wants to see serious injustices exposed, whether they are football fans or not, is behind the call for full disclosure. I know how welcome that is. As has been made clear in the many extraordinary contributions today, the fact that the Home Secretary has come to the House to confirm that she will make the Government documents available to the panel in their entirety and unredacted is very welcome.

Mark Durkan (Foyle) (SDLP): My hon. Friend has rightly said that this campaign touches everyone who seeks justice. A group of my constituents have a particular sense of empathy and solidarity with the families of the 96—the Bloody Sunday families, who have developed a very strong bond with those families. In a different way, they can empathise with exactly what families suffer whenever they have to struggle against indifference, injustice and insult and whenever survivors have to endure calumny and are asked by the powers that be, in the media and elsewhere, to carry some of the blame of that day. This issue touches many people, and the families of the 96 have all our hearts.

John Woodcock: My hon. Friend speaks eloquently and his words will resonate with the families and the many thousands who are watching the debate. The kind of resolution that came after so long in the Bloody Sunday inquiry is what everyone here in the House and the many people watching want to see. They want similar closure through access to the full documentation about what happened on the day of the Hillsborough tragedy.

As has been heard today, every football fan knows where they were on that fateful day. I think I am the third Sheffield Wednesday fan among Members to speak today, and I am delighted to follow such excellent and moving contributions from my hon. Friends the Members for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith) and for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts). I was a 10-year-old boy at the time of that semi-final, and I note that my dad was serving on Sheffield city council with my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield South East. On that day I was playing football in the garden of my friend who was a Liverpool fan, and I remember the opening reports talking of a riot having occurred. Quite quickly, we got a different picture, but it was striking and it has stayed with me all this time that there was talk about a riot because that was the assumption—that that was what must have happened and caused the disturbance and the spilling over of people.

One of the most powerful speeches I have heard in this place or elsewhere was that of my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram), who put so well how that initial misunderstanding was immediately followed by a campaign of mistruths and lies. Even now, we are still seeking the full truth and the documents that will set out why ambulances were refused entry to the ground. We want to find out what happened with the failings in safety procedures and why Hillsborough did not have a safety certificate. It is good to hear that my club, Sheffield Wednesday, is co-operating fully and I hope that it operates a policy of full disclosure—as should all relevant organisations, whether or not they are covered by the Freedom of Information Act. I hope that all concerned will make available absolutely everything that is required to allow the panel and the families to see exactly what happened.

As 10-year-olds, we are mad about our teams. We are proud of anything that our teams do; it does not matter whether they are any good, which, increasingly, with the fate of Sheffield Wednesday, is probably a good thing. A generation of Wednesday fans and I have grown up with the ground that they love being infamous around the world as a symbol of tragedy. That is a strange thing for any football fan to come to terms with. As young boys, we tried to understand and assimilate the grief that we saw from the football fans around us.

I grew up as a season-ticket holder on the south stand for most of the time and, latterly, on the Kop, sitting next to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield South East. I hope that the annual visit of Liverpool FC, which, obviously, does not happen any more, will return one day. Annual tributes were paid at the Leppings Lane end. The fact that part of the ground will always be synonymous with tragedy is absolutely right, given the gravity of what happened there, which profoundly affected a generation of fans.

It is worth briefly reflecting on the change that has happened in football, largely as a result of the tragedy. Let us remember that the Football Spectators Act 1989

would have required compulsory identity cards and was only repealed as a result of Hillsborough. There have been so many vivid recollections of the horror of that day, which people who were there experienced and others saw on their TV screens. We remember the spikes at Hillsborough in the Leppings Lane end and across the country. It is worth reflecting on just how different the game is now, the improvements that have been made and the change in attitude, which so many hon. Members have talked about today and which was abhorrent at the time. It is absolutely right that we have been able to move on from those days.

Liverpool FC is important in Barrow and Furness, the constituency that I represent. In Barrow, everyone is a Barrow soccer fan. We are in the conference. People tend to have a second team as well, and there are loads of scousers who go down to Anfield nearly every other week—nearly as many reds as go down to Old Trafford, but that is the case wherever we go. One of Liverpool's greatest captains, Emlyn Hughes, was a Barrow lad. He was eventually signed in 1964 by Blackpool, Barrow having passed up the chance to sign him. There is a statue of him in pride of place in Barrow, and he was, of course, at the game in 1989, so I want to end with a simple tribute that was left, along with red roses, at the Emlyn Hughes statue in Barrow on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the tragedy. Two people who did not give their names wrote a simple note saying:

“In memory of the 96 who lost their lives at Hillsborough on 15 April 1989 from two who were spared that day in the Leppings Lane End. You'll never walk alone.”

9.24 pm

Tom Greatrex (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): I am grateful for the opportunity to take part in the debate, and I start with a confession: I was one of those—there were close to 140,000 of us—who signed the e-petition. I was not sure whether we were supposed to be able to petition ourselves, but I did it, and I hope that it does not get me into too much trouble.

I want to place on record my appreciation, which I know is shared by many others—everyone in the Chamber and, I am sure, all those listening and watching at home and in the Gallery—for the unstinting dedication and commitment to the issue displayed by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram). He spoke with great feeling and passion in opening the debate, having over the past 22 years been involved in a long campaign for justice for the 96 victims of the events of April 1989.

Many others have expressed their views as fans of Liverpool, as people present at the game on that day, or as people who represent communities and individuals personally affected by the disaster, and we have heard the power of their testimony this evening. We have heard of the impact not only on Liverpool and the surrounding area, but on Sheffield, and one particular part of it that will, as my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock) said, for ever be associated with the most senseless, tragic and unforgivable loss of life, when people left their home that afternoon to watch a football match and never returned.

As others have said, in debating this issue we should not forget the context of the time. Football had been scarred by trouble in and around grounds for close to 20 years. Facilities were often poor, owners were often

[Tom Greatrex]

disinterested in their clubs and, I have to say, Government at the time saw football as some sort of national disease, rather than a sport. It is sometimes easy to be nostalgic for football in the pre-premiership era, especially when that coincides with one's formative years, but football in the 1980s was alien to many people. It was often unloved, unappreciated and unwelcome.

Thousands of people in this country watch football matches at weekends. They did in the 1980s, too. On 15 April 1989, I was among those who did. Like those at Hillsborough, that afternoon I stood on a concrete terrace, largely unchanged since it was opened decades earlier, with metal crash barriers and high, angled fences between the pitch and the crowd. It was my good fortune that, unlike those people at Hillsborough, I was standing on a terrace that was largely empty. There were 4,949 other people on that day in grounds that were licensed to hold 30,000-odd. All 4,950 people who arrived at Craven Cottage that day left for home alive; that is how it should be at every football match, but that afternoon for 96 people it was not.

Many of us who were at the football on that day left knowing that something had gone terribly, badly wrong in south Yorkshire that afternoon. We were soon to find that football was about to change for ever. I will never forget the sense of emptiness, and of the irrelevance of the spectacle of the match that I was watching, as we stood on the terrace and heard—in those days, it was from people with radios—first that there was a pitch invasion at the FA cup semi-final; then that the game had been held up; then that people were spilling on to the pitch; then that there was a riot; then that people were injured; and then that advertising hoardings were being used as stretchers. It was only over the course of the evening and the next day that the scale of what had happened in Sheffield became apparent. Even then, reports—media reports, briefings from the police, statements from football authorities—all to a greater or lesser extent suggested that the deaths were precipitated by drunken fans, supporters arriving late, or spectators without tickets, or with the wrong tickets.

The undercurrent was obvious: it was the fault of fans—violent thugs who knew no better. The most infamous manifestation of that was the disgraceful reporting in *The Sun* that week, which we have heard about. As others have said, there were made-up quotes, invented incidents and fictional accounts designed to blacken the name of people who were in Sheffield to watch a football match. That is absolutely disgraceful.

Given that background, it is little wonder that the terminology of injustice is used because it is unjust for people to be condemned without evidence. It is unjust to be publicly blamed as culpable of the deaths of those one stood with watching a sporting fixture. It is unjust to be written off by authorities seeking to avoid responsibility. That sense of injustice needs to be addressed today.

As we all know, although Lord Justice Taylor dismissed many of these stories out of hand as baseless, and firmly established the culpability of South Yorkshire police in his report, that sense of injustice remains today. It remains because of the claim by the match commander David Duckenfield that fans forced open the exit gate that led to the crush in the central pen,

when that was his own terrible decision. It remains because of the disappearance of CCTV tapes from the control room—tapes showing what happened in the Leppings Lane end of the ground. It remains because of the verdict of accidental death rather than unlawful killing.

Many others have spoken of various inadequacies and the fact that the police fixation with alcohol seemed to have the upper hand. A sense of injustice remains because of the statement by the then Prime Minister's press spokesman that he had "learned on the day" that the cause was "a tanked-up mob" of Liverpool fans. It remains because of the records of police officers' statements having been doctored by senior officers of South Yorkshire police. It remains because the documents placed in this House seem incomplete—there are no memos between senior police officers, or the police and their solicitors, for example. It remains because of the Government's discussions during those days still not having been released.

That sense of injustice can be righted only by the full and complete disclosure of documents held by the Government, South Yorkshire police and the other relevant authorities. Where doubt remains, that disclosure can help to bring clarity. Where suspicion lingers, that disclosure can help to bring confirmation. Where there is still grief—I know there is still grief—that disclosure can help people to move towards resolution.

One of the great privileges of being a Member of this House is the opportunity to stand in the Chamber and speak up for what is right. There are countless examples of Members of this Chamber doing that in our history and helping to right historic wrongs. This evening, it is important that the House speaks with one clear and consistent voice. Those who should have been given answers 22 years ago, who feel the pain every day of their lives, who are here today and watching the debate in such numbers deserve the truth. They deserve the full truth and they deserve it now.

9.32 pm

John Mann (Bassetlaw) (Lab): I have been listening in appropriate awe to the brilliance of the speeches, particularly from the Members from Sheffield, Liverpool and around Merseyside, which is highly appropriate to the subject. They have delivered in terms of the quality of the argument and the eloquence with which they have put it. I trust that those who edit and those who own *The Sun* will be listening in to the debate and will be preparing their front pages in anticipation.

I am one of those who, for the past 25 years and more, has never allowed a copy of *The Sun* into my house. Whether I will or not I do not know, so perhaps I will not see the apology that is due, but it is due because the evil committed by that newspaper shocked any decent person in this country.

I was asked to speak in this debate by one of my constituents, who pressed me repeatedly. One could hear the trauma in the e-mails that she sent me, repeatedly demanding, first, that I sign in support. I told her that I already had done so and had done in the previous Parliament. Then she said, "I need you to be there. I need you to be representing me at the debate." I said I would be there. Then she said, "I need you to speak in the debate." I represent the nearest Nottinghamshire

constituency to Hillsborough and have many Sheffield Wednesday and Nottingham Forest supporters and a handful of Liverpool supporters in it. I have no idea which team she went to support that day.

I remember listening on my little radio to what was going on that day and recalling the only time I had stood in the Leppings Lane end for a semi-final, which had been a few years before. When I listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotherham), I remembered going through that tunnel. I cannot remember whether we were in section 3 or 4, but I remember more and more people coming in until we could scarcely move or breathe. Then, all the little kids, including my brother, who was tiny at the time—I was not much bigger—had to be lifted up, passed on hundreds of people's hands and put down to the front because there were no crash barriers then. Probably thousands of people had to be moved on to the side of the pitch that day. That was some years before, so the lessons had not been learned.

I can think of other stadiums, not only in Sheffield, where I have been in similar situations. As a kid I used to be put on a stool; I started on a stool that was bigger than I was and then moved to one that was a bit smaller. I have been in stadiums where I stood on my stool, lost it in the first few minutes and did not get it back until after full time, but I went backwards and forwards and my feet never touched the ground.

I recall going to places like Chelsea in the '80s and seeing the venom directed against ordinary football supporters, particularly visiting supporters, as though they were some sort of scum who should not be there. That was the climate that existed at the time and that was how football fans on all sides would have been seen there. There are many members and supporters of Nottingham Forest in my constituency, and every one of them stands alongside the supporters of Liverpool football club, as do all other supporters across the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton said, "There but for the grace of God go we." Was it the toss of a coin that decided who went in one end and who went in the other, because it will have been no more scientific than that? Every time I have been to semi-finals at the same ground I have ended up in different ends each time. There is no science to it; it is luck. It is only a matter of luck that it was not Nottingham Forest supporters in the Leppings Lane end that day. That is the point.

Vernon Coaker (Gedling) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

John Mann: My hon. Friend wants to join me in making this point on behalf of football supporters across Nottinghamshire. It could have been our supporters who were there.

Vernon Coaker: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is really important that the people of Sheffield and, above all, the people of Liverpool, the families of the 96, the supporters of Liverpool football club and all decent people across the country know that the people of Nottinghamshire and Nottingham and the fans of Nottingham Forest stand absolutely with them today in their horror at what happened on that awful day and in their support for the motion before the House?

John Mann: There is not a supporter of any football club anywhere in the country, and certainly not a supporter of Nottingham Forest, who does not stand shoulder to shoulder with the fans and the people of Liverpool in demanding the truth and demanding justice, because it could easily have been on the toss of a coin that Nottingham Forest supporters were in the Leppings Lane end on that fateful day, and exactly the same thing would have happened. That tragedy was nothing whatever to do with the fans and supporters of Liverpool football club—nothing whatever. They just happened to be the unlucky ones—the ones in the wrong place at the wrong time, when the wrong decisions were made by people in authority. Any of us who went to football matches could have been there.

I have seen a vast amount of football. I have seen Liverpool football club, up at Anfield and elsewhere, and I have never once wanted them to win a game when I have been there, and to be honest I never will, but there is no finer set of football fans—football supporters—in this country or anywhere else in the world. That is the quality of the people of Liverpool, that is the quality of the people who support Liverpool football club, and that is why all the football world, not least the supporters of Nottingham Forest, stands alongside them.

We have had progress. We want to see full justice. These people deserve justice, and it is about time it happened.

9.40 pm

Mr Dave Watts (St Helens North) (Lab): I did not intend to take part in the debate, but I am very grateful for the opportunity to do so.

I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotherham) on, and acknowledge his role in, securing this debate. He has been a Member for only a short period, but he has already proved himself a champion not only of this issue but of the whole city of Liverpool.

I also thank and am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), who has demonstrated that principles still stand in politics. He was prepared to put his neck on the line to make sure that the 96 received justice, so he should be praised for his actions when he was a member of the previous Government.

I acknowledge the role of my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle), who has been an active campaigner on the issue, and my hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Derek Twigg), who has not been named so far but who played an important role in negotiations between the families and the then Government to set up the original inquiry.

It is important that we do not just pat ourselves on the back, however, and I know that this debate would not have happened without the active campaigning of the families of the 96 or, indeed, the Liverpool fans themselves. Liverpool fans not just in the UK but throughout the world have taken part in the campaign, and the families would also like us to put on record their thanks to the club and to the manager, who have steadfastly supported the campaign from day one. The club has given them great assistance over a long period.

I have a personal interest, which I spoke about earlier in the debate, because unfortunately I lost one of my good pals, David Hawley, in the tragedy. We grew up

[Mr Dave Watts]

together. We went to pubs, clubs and regularly to the match, but I lost contact with Davey for many years, and I did not make contact with him until a couple of weeks before the Hillsborough tragedy. I had not seen him for some years, but he walked up to me, we recognised each other—surprisingly!—and we arranged to meet.

Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to meet David Hawley, have a social drink with him and remember the old days, because the next time I had any contact with him was when his funeral was held, and I know from that funeral the devastating effect of the tragedy on his direct family and his friends, who were all in the church. I remember seeing a packed church and representatives of Liverpool football club, all there paying tribute to a man for whom I had a great deal of admiration, and I was sorry that I did not have a chance to have that last drink with him.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral South (Alison McGovern). Her speech was both passionate and from the heart, and I am not surprised that the families identified with it. It demonstrates that there are still people in the House who do things with a passion and from the heart, and I congratulate her on an outstanding speech.

This debate has already achieved something. It has proved that there was responsibility for the problems that arose. The mistakes were made by a range of different groups of people—the police, the emergency services, the football authorities, and many others—but no one can identify that it was the fault of football fans or the result of Liverpool fans' actions. If the debate does nothing else, it will give wide media coverage to the fact that this had nothing to do with Liverpool fans.

A number of people are responsible for the view that Liverpool fans were responsible for the disaster, and that issue would be covered by the release of information from the Government. However, we also need all the media outlets to reveal the source of the information that they used in the days after the tragedy. It is crucial that the information is put on the public record so that we know why they wrote such terrible stories about Liverpool fans and about the disaster. Nearly all the media outlets now accept that their stories were irresponsible and untrue, but there is one man who still has not made that apology: Kelvin MacKenzie. Quite frankly, he should make that apology tomorrow, publicly, and if he does not every media outlet in this country should ban him completely and never give him time again.

I congratulate everyone in the House on the debate. I also congratulate the Government. They came under a great deal of pressure from this House and beyond to publish the full details, and I am very pleased that they are now going to do that. The whole House is united about getting all the information and all the documents out as quickly as possible so that we can draw a line under this issue.

9.46 pm

Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): I will be very brief because I want to leave time for my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Steve Rotheram) to wind up, but there are a few things that I would like to put on record. First, the whole House will congratulate my hon. Friend on an amazingly powerful

and emotional speech. I do not think there have been many speeches in my 19 years here when there were so many damp eyes in the Chamber, and that is understandable given the circumstances.

When I moved to the north-west from Portsmouth in 1977, Liverpool supporters told me, "You'll now learn about football", and to a certain extent that was very true. However, it was my late neighbour, the late Cliff Lloyd, a one-time secretary of the Professional Footballers Association who was on Liverpool's books as a schoolboy before the second world war, who told me about the stools that my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann) mentioned. That is intriguing. In both the houses I have lived in during that time, a little stool was there, and it was for Dad to take along with him for his lad so that he could see the match. Those stools were used on the terraces in Liverpool by families who went for a family occasion and enjoyed their game.

I want to contrast that—the truth of the sport of football and the passion there is on the terraces—with what was said by the police, by *The Sun*, and by several other commentators. The contrast is so stark that we need to sit back, reflect and ask ourselves what drove the police leadership to get things so wrong—to encourage people to amend their statements. These are very serious issues. I am delighted that the Home Secretary has given such a positive response and that, I hope, we are going to get to the bottom of those issues.

We should contrast that with the way in which newspapers such as *The Sun* got it so wrong. What gave them the right to publish such disgusting filth when people had died? That is no way for responsible media to operate. Whatever happens at the end of Bishop James Jones inquiry, we have to reflect on this matter as a House. How can we ensure that the media take a more responsible view when they report on tragedies?

As has been said, we have given Bishop James Jones rather a lot to do given the responsibilities of the inquiries he is chairing. I hope that the Home Secretary will confirm that the Government want him to give this task the highest priority among the inquiries he is conducting into forestry and other issues. This matter is of such importance that we should encourage him to give it the highest possible priority.

I want to put on record my thanks to my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), who has been unstinting in raising this issue before public audiences. He spoke in my constituency a couple of months ago. In very emotional terms, he described what he saw as the roles of Parliament and Government in addressing this terrible tragedy and injustice. I hope that his role will not be forgotten, nor that of my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle). The two of them have been extraordinary.

I also want to comment on my hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Derek Twigg) who, as has been said, was at the tragic game. He is always an unassuming individual. He has taught me a lot about the events of the day. I congratulate him in being persistent in pressing this case.

We face a set of circumstances that require total openness. Today we have discussed the issues of data protection and redaction. The Home Secretary has been very positive. Many Members will know that I was quite heavily involved in bringing the Data Protection Act 1998 together from the Data Protection Act 1984

and the European directive. Unless, as the Home Secretary said, family members have specific reasons to request that the bishop does not publish certain things, there is no reason under the 1998 Act why anything other than minor details, such as signatures, should be withheld from the public gaze. We need to ensure that if anything is done beyond those reasons, it is annotated to record why it has been done. I would ask the bishop to think about how he could do that, so that anyone who has the slightest suspicion about any redaction can be comfortable about why it has occurred.

The list read out by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton was powerful and emotional. On that point, I think it is appropriate for the House to give the last few minutes to him, because he has done the House a tremendous service by raising this case today.

Hon. Members: Hear! Hear!

9.54 pm

Steve Rotheram: I thank all colleagues who have taken part in tonight's debate. I said at the start of my speech, three and a bit hours ago, that the issue of Hillsborough would not go away, and Members can see for themselves what it means to the families who have joined us in the House tonight. Members from across the country have most eloquently articulated their constituents' thoughts on the disaster.

Today has been the most emotional and most rewarding day of my short parliamentary career. You, Mr Speaker, said on the day you were elected Speaker of this great House that you believed Members were, by and large, "upright, decent, honourable people", looking to improve the lives and change the lot of their fellow citizens in this country. Tonight, I hope I speak on behalf of all the family members present, and the millions of people across Merseyside and much further afield who support them, when I say that Members in all parts of the House—those who signed the petition, those who will support the motion and those who have spoken in the debate—have made a difference to those families' lives. For that, I will be for ever grateful.

I am grateful also to my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham), an Evertonian who has pursued the cause of justice over the past few years with the tenacity that only he could have brought to the job.

I spoke earlier of the eternal flame of solidarity among the people of Liverpool, but tonight I was moved by the contributions of my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts) and for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Angela Smith). It is clear that they are Sheffield through and through, and that, like ours, their city continues to live under the dark cloud of the events of April 1989.

I am grateful to Members who have contributed. I have already received texts from many people, including Jamie Carragher and Kenny Dalglish, praising the House. I was also pleased to see Joey Barton, who did so much to promote the e-petition, join us in the Public Gallery tonight, as well as Andy Gray and Richard Keys of talkSPORT, who have promoted the issues that we have raised in the House tonight on their radio show in the

build-up to the debate. I would also like to thank successive managers of Liverpool and Everton football clubs, who have so effectively used their profiles over the years to support and promote the cause, especially David Moyes, who attended the 20th anniversary service. The players who played on that fateful day also felt the effect of the tragedy, none more so than John Aldridge, who has been unstinting in his support for the families.

I want to give special thanks, of course, to the families and to all the Merseyside MPs—my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle), the hon. Member for Wirral West (Esther McVey), my hon. Friend the Member for Sefton Central (Bill Esterson), my right hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr Field), my hon. Friends the Members for Halton (Derek Twigg), for Liverpool, Wavertree (Luciana Berger), for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs Ellman), and for Liverpool, West Derby (Stephen Twigg), my right hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley (Mr Howarth), my hon. Friend the Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper), the hon. Member for Southport (John Pugh) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral South (Alison McGovern), whose contribution was brilliantly moving. They know more than most the depth of feeling in our region about the fateful day, and they will be grateful for the giant strides that the fight for justice has taken tonight. I thank the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for North East Derbyshire (Natascha Engel), for her indulgence and advice throughout the process.

Some 100 MPs signed the petition that triggered tonight's debate. Successive Governments made terrible mistakes. Tonight, this Parliament, when given the chance, got it right. When I began the fight for this debate, the families told me that all they had ever wanted was the truth. Tonight we moved a step closer to fulfilling their wish, and I hope that 96 souls will be resting a little easier.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House calls for the full disclosure of all government-related documents, including Cabinet minutes, relating to the 1989 Hillsborough disaster; requires that such documentation be uncensored and without redaction; and further calls for the families of the 96 and the Hillsborough Independent Panel to have unrestricted access to that information.

Andrew Bingham (High Peak) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. We have heard a lot tonight about the conduct of News International in 1989. In the light of its recent conduct and its coming in front of a Select Committee, would it be in order for that Select Committee to ask News International to come before it to answer questions about its activities back in 1989?

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. The short answer is that Select Committees are at liberty to ask witnesses to appear before them in relation to inquiries upon which they have decided. I hope that that answer is instructive to him and to the House. They can do as they wish, and people are morally obliged and expected to co-operate with parliamentary Committees that are going about public business as they see fit.

Business without Debate

ADJOURNMENT (NOVEMBER 2011, CHRISTMAS AND FEBRUARY 2012)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 25),

That this House, at its rising on Tuesday 15 November 2011, do adjourn till Monday 21 November 2011; at its rising on Tuesday 20 December 2011, do adjourn till Tuesday 10 January 2012; and at its rising on Thursday 9 February 2012, do adjourn till Monday 20 February 2012.—(*Stephen Crabb.*)

The Speaker's opinion as to the decision of the Question being challenged, the Division was deferred until Wednesday 19 October (Standing Order No. 41A).

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Ordered,

That the Motion in the name of Sir George Young relating to the Electoral Commission shall be treated as if it related to an instrument subject to the provisions of Standing Order No. 118 (Delegated Legislation Committees) in respect of which notice has been given that the instrument be approved.—(*Stephen Crabb.*)

Tower Hamlets (City Status)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Stephen Crabb.)

10.1 pm

Jim Fitzpatrick (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the Tower Hamlets city status bid, and I welcome the Minister. I know that his reaction must be neutral, so in reality, this will not be much of a debate. It is none the less good to see him—he is highly regarded on both sides of the House.

It is also good to see the hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Mr Field) in the Chamber. He represents London's existing two cities. My hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Rushanara Ali) and I—she cannot be with us tonight—would be very happy were Her Majesty to allow us to represent just one city between us. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman can offer us some advice and assistance on how to get there.

The east end has always been special in many ways. Today, however, Tower Hamlets is a reflection of Britain and the Commonwealth—a centre for global business and multiculturalism. The borough has come a long way since the blitz. Tower Hamlets has been transformed during the decades of Her Majesty's reign, adapting from the industry of the docks and the merchant navy to become an internationally recognised world centre for trading, business and banking, and a celebrated tourism hub.

We have over two millennia of history and share more than a thousand years with royalty. Now as before, but in a different way, we are a powerhouse for the United Kingdom's well-being. We are the third central business district for the heart of London, alongside London's west end and the Corporation of London, both of which cities are represented by the hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster, as I have said.

Our new economy creates an economic surplus that contributes through Government tax distribution to many of the poorer parts of Britain. We are proud to be able to make that contribution, having experienced hard times ourselves in the past—we still have deprived areas today.

On the history of our part of east London, the iconic Tower of London symbolises our strong and enduring links with the monarchy. Founded by William the Conqueror, it is the country's oldest royal palace. The constable of the tower has the right of direct access to the sovereign, and of course it is home to the Crown jewels.

Tower Hamlets locations feature in royal and maritime chronology. The first ships to establish English-speaking settlements in north America left Blackwall stairs in 1606, 13 years before the pilgrim fathers left the south-west. Four hundred years later, almost symmetrically, the major US banks, with others, now occupy Canary Wharf. Famous navigators and explorers such as Sir Martin Frobisher sailed from Blackwall and the Ratcliff highway—now the King Edward VII memorial park—to advance British trade and fight on behalf of the Crown. The Royal Naval Reserve's "stone frigate", HMS President, was commissioned in November 1903, and is now at St Katharine's way, close to Tower bridge. The Isle of Dogs was home to the royal stables for King Charles II's Greenwich palace. Victoria park was established as

London's first public park in 1850, and named after Queen Victoria. A petition signed by 30,000 residents requested a royal park in the area because of the lack of green space in the east end.

In world war two, east-enders endured the terrible onslaught of Hitler's blitz. The bombing was more painful as it followed the poverty of the economic depressions in the 1920s and 1930s. The people were fortified by the royal family's visits, and by the shared experience of their suffering. Her Majesty's mother, Queen Elizabeth, almost perversely, commented positively after Buckingham palace itself was bombed, saying:

"I am glad...now we can look the East End in the eye".

In 1945, during two days of joy following VE day, the royal family celebrated with Poplar and Limehouse.

The royal family has maintained its links with the east end, and family members have taken an active interest in the area's regeneration. The Prince's Trust has been an assiduous partner in local initiatives, and Her Majesty herself opened the first stage of the Docklands light railway in 1987, and Poplar marina a decade later. She and His Royal Highness Prince Philip have also visited on other occasions. The ecumenical priorities of the royal family are a basis of staunch support from Tower Hamlets, as a multi-faith community. This was demonstrated at the recent royal wedding celebrations, which were organised and attended by people from all religions and backgrounds.

Our prosperity as London's engine room has always been linked with London's priorities as the nation's primary trading centre, and now as a world city. We have moved from physical trade to international banking, creative industries, media, pharmaceuticals and company headquarters, and Tower Hamlets is now a leading world centre, with the City Fringe and Canary Wharf. Our economic turnover is now over £6 billion annually. Small and medium-sized enterprises on, and servicing, Canary Wharf, as well as traditional businesses, provide employment for thousands of people. Our inward-commuting population is more than 120,000 daily, and will rise to more than 200,000 by 2020. There will be 300,000 jobs in Tower Hamlets by then. Already, Tower Hamlets offers the largest number of jobs in the United Kingdom outside the cities of Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester and Sheffield, and London's two other cities.

The Thames and Lea rivers, and the legacy of the Roman roads, were our early business arteries and our communities' *raison d'être*. We still have the largest "blue network" of any London borough. The upper docks were a vital part of Britain's maritime trade from the 1800s to the 1970s. London's first canal—the Regent's canal or Prince Regent's canal—and early railways such as the London and Blackwall were built to serve the docks and carry national, imperial and international trade. Our markets, including Spitalfields, were the centrepiece of the capital's provisioning. In 1982, Billingsgate fish market relocated to Tower Hamlets.

For international air and rail connections, we are neighbours to London City airport and Stratford International, and we will be only 40 minutes from Heathrow airport when Crossrail opens. All built-up areas in Tower Hamlets are within walking distance of a railway, a Docklands light railway, a tube or an overground station, and the Mayor of London's cycle scheme is following. We can therefore support major

growth environmentally in the decades to follow, and 170 million passenger journeys start or finish at our 30 stations yearly.

Tower Hamlets has a fascinating social, cultural and political history. A core test of strong community leadership is an enduring concern for the well-being of its citizens of all ages. Trade and social cohesion do not always rub shoulders comfortably in a major urban area. Poverty, slum housing, poor health and crime have all been present locally and, sadly, some aspects are still evident. Tower Hamlets council and its predecessors have a distinguished and continuing tradition of increasing democracy and rights for working people, including the Poplar rebels of the 1920s. The roll call locally is packed with social reform, equality, emancipation and self-improvement of communities, transforming them into our 21st century society.

In the middle ages, Wat Tyler met King Richard II at Mile End during the peasants' revolt, where the king acceded to a petition for better payments and social conditions. In Victorian times, the Chartists and local dockers, campaigning to improve industrial and social conditions, met at Victoria park. The Toynbee Hall organisation has worked on social and welfare reform since the end of the 19th century. Clement Attlee MP, one of my predecessors, was MP for Limehouse and became Prime Minister, championing welfare reform. In early 2011, the current Prime Minister announced the coalition Government's plans for welfare reform at Toynbee Hall.

The Boundary estate in Bethnal Green opened in 1900 and was the world's first council housing, built on the site of one of the capital's most notorious slums, the Old Nichol. The Peabody estate in Commercial street was the first social housing, while the Lansbury estate in Poplar was a post-war prototype and is still going strong.

Sylvia Pankhurst settled in Bow at the beginning of world war one. With suffragette colleagues, she set up a cut-price restaurant, a milk centre, a toy factory and a nursery school. This provided local women and children with what they needed; the women worked in the munitions factories and on public transport, as their husbands and men-folk went to war. In other examples, the first women to form a trade union did so at Bryant and May's match factory in Bow; the Salvation Army was founded by Charles Booth in the east end; and Mahatma Gandhi stayed in Kingsley hall in Bow in 1930s—a place that now houses the Gandhi Foundation.

New communities have always shaped Tower Hamlets. The east end has had a wide impact on British national identity through the archetypal cheeky Cockney and the resourceful, never-give-up, east-ender attitude. However, this is just its starting point. At the trading crossroads for the oceans, we have led the proud tradition of integrating migrants. Spitalfields' origins were the migrants during Roman times, and I mentioned the Normans and William the Conqueror's Tower of London. Through the centuries, our arrivals have included many thousands from across the British empire and the Commonwealth. The original London Chinatown was in Limehouse. Religious persecutions caused others to seek refuge with us: French Huguenots at the end of the 17th century and east European Jews in the 19th century. Economic needs and famine stimulated the arrival of many Catholics from Ireland and, more recently, we have seen the

[*Jim Fitzpatrick*]

arrival of Bangladeshi Muslims. These new communities, defined by their faith and ethnicity, have created strong infrastructures around family and work—firm foundations for our city. The diverse population, cultures and identities reflect those of the wider 21st-century Britain. We now have the youngest population of any London local authority.

That rich background has stimulated a shining example of Tower Hamlets' distinctiveness. One building that best tells the diverse religious history of Tower Hamlets, is the "Brick Lane mosque", which was originally founded as a church for the Huguenots, but later used by Methodists. In the late 19th century, it was converted into the Machzikei Adass, also known as the Spitalfields Great synagogue, but as the Jewish community moved out to be replaced by Bengali immigrants, it became the Jamme Masjid or the Great London mosque in 1976. We also have the east London mosque in Whitechapel and no less than three Hawksmoor churches in the borough. Royal ensigns have permission to fly—the white ensign at St Anne's in Limehouse, the red ensign at St Dunstan's in Stepney, as well as the blue ensign at the floating church of St Peter's in the docks.

Most recently, the regeneration of the area, overseen by the London Docklands Development Corporation, has caused the riverside populations to be reborn, with renovations and adaptation of older buildings and the construction of new homes, bringing many thousands of new residents to the area. That stimulation and new investment has extended inland to centres such as Spitalfields, Whitechapel, Bow and Victoria park—and, of course, Tower Hamlets is one of London's Olympic boroughs.

Tower Hamlets' experiences with community activism in past times are paying dividends as we look to the future. At the 1936 battle of Cable street, 300,000 people blocked Oswald Mosley's fascists from marching on the local Jewish community. Today there are some 2,500 community groups working within Tower Hamlets, delivering a vast range of services to local people, ranging from small self-help groups run by volunteers, to larger organisations delivering public sector contracts. Our thriving third sector is a reflection of our vitality and community spirit, which is inspired by our origins. There was stability in Tower Hamlets during the riots that took place elsewhere in the United Kingdom during the 1980s and 1990s, and most recently we were pretty much spared the violence seen in so many parts of the UK.

The sustaining core of the east end's future will be our young people, and ensuring that they are educated, skilled, experienced and adaptable. Our secondary schools are benefiting from a £290 million investment to create world-class learning environments for our children. Our schools have moved in the last 15 years, and are now among the highest-performing in Britain. Education and training-related courses can be taken in the borough's idea stores—formerly libraries—and higher educational opportunities are available in Tower Hamlets at Queen Mary and Westfield college, part of the University of London, at London Metropolitan university, and at Tower Hamlets college.

We are profoundly keen for our new generations to be politically articulate, and the council has organised and held annual elections for a "Young Mayor" since 2008. The most recent election, in January 2011, saw a record

turnout of 52.4% of young people, a higher turnout than those in some recent mainstream elections. We have a directly elected executive mayoral system of local government.

Tower Hamlets has always had a high-profile artistic identity. Among our residents are Dame Helen Mirren, Sir Ian McKellen, Tracey Emin and Gilbert and George, and 3 Mills Studios in Bromley-by-Bow are London's largest film and television studios. The Old Truman Brewery is now host to many creative businesses, and we have a number of artists' colonies including Trinity Buoy Wharf, where Faraday experimented with electricity. For over a century the Whitechapel gallery has showcased the work of world-renowned artists such as Picasso, Jackson Pollock and Lucian Freud. The Museum of London Docklands is considered to be one of London's hidden treasures, and addresses the history of the capital as a port. Children locally are encouraged to visit the V&A Museum of Childhood, which was opened by the Prince of Wales in 1872, to see its collection of childhood-related objects dating back to the 1600s. Wilton's Music Hall, which opened in 1858 in Wapping, is the oldest surviving Grand Music Hall in the world, and is Grade II listed. However, the jewel of all our buildings is the one that I mentioned at the start, which is home to the Crown Jewels.

One of Britain's most striking and famous historical landmarks, the Tower of London, is now a world heritage site attracting more than 2 million visitors a year. Other high-profile buildings include the Canary Wharf skyscrapers, the Old Truman Brewery, the old and new parts of the Royal London hospital, the northern half of Tower Bridge—I would not want to claim Southwark's southern half—and the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, which cast the Big Ben bell, as well as the bells of many cathedrals and parish churches and others further afield. I am told that it also cast the Liberty Bell, which, as we know, is famously cracked. During the American quadricentennial celebrations, a stunt was organised by Americans who handed out leaflets outside the foundry asking for their money back. The foundry showed its sense of humour: they were told that they could certainly have their money back provided that the goods were returned in the original packaging.

Some of our street markets are known worldwide and are major destinations for residents, Londoners and tourists alike, such as the Columbia Road flower market and the Whitechapel, Petticoat Lane, Spitalfields and Billingsgate markets. The Roman Road, Watney and Crisp Street markets are well known throughout the east end. Food is a symbol of Tower Hamlets' many cultures, whether it is sold in the local pie and mash shops, at Tubby Isaac's jellied eel stall, in the bagel bakeries or in the curry houses. The Olympic organisers have just named Brick lane as Curry Capital 2012.

Events take place in Tower Hamlets throughout the year. The Baishakhi Mela, a festival to celebrate the Bengali new year, is the largest carnival in the UK after the Notting Hill carnival, and more than 100,000 people turned up in 2010. Lovebox, a music festival held in Victoria park, attracts star performers and plays to over 100,000 people, and Canary Wharf sponsors a year-round arts and events programme encompassing music, sport, visual art, food, fashion and dance.

Many excellent towns and boroughs are seeking Her Majesty's pleasure and approval to be named a city in 2012, her diamond jubilee year. As the Minister knows,

Tower Hamlets is in very good company, and whichever area Her Majesty chooses will be worthy of the title. My speech is intended to draw attention to some of the stronger reasons for the view held by many of us that Tower Hamlets has an excellent case to make. Our bid has the support of all our major political parties.

A city is defined through its deeds, its concern for citizens and its central roles. We have a powerful track record of managing and behaving as a city, with national and world impacts in business, and a profound and strong cultural and social record at a human level.

We hope that Her Majesty will choose Tower Hamlets because we foresee more investment and economic growth coming from city status with its new united identity. These gains will be re-invested back into our communities and our people, and towards the wider London and national well-being. Our vision is built on our multicultural, multi-faith approach to social development, and our aim to be the leading example of how Britain can best influence the dynamics of the world in the 21st century, and I am grateful to have had the chance to make these remarks.

10.20 pm

Mr Mark Field (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) on introducing this important debate. As he pointed out, I, rather greedily, have two cities in my constituency just to the west of his own. They are also rich in history, and I suspect I could bore Members for some hours by going into the details of that history. It was a great pleasure to listen to the hon. Gentleman's speech, in which he described, with understandable pride, the great achievements of Tower Hamlets. Although he spoke about its great history, he also had a firm eye on the future.

In light of the previous debate, it might be relevant to mention that one thing Tower Hamlets lacks is a league football club. We might, perhaps, hope that returns to its historical roots at some point by crossing the river again—although I suspect the local constabulary might not be too keen on that idea, particularly on derby days when Millwall plays West Ham United.

However, although the hon. Gentleman made relevant points about Tower Hamlets, I hope we will consider granting city status to other candidates too, so that we do not give the nod to just one new city next year. Reading is my home town, and that is one of the other places in the running, and I also think there is a strong case for Croydon. If it were a self-standing entity rather than a London borough, it would be the ninth largest settlement in the UK.

The case for Tower Hamlets is strong. As the hon. Gentleman pointed out, the financial district that has grown up from nothing over the past 20 years makes a great case for its having city status, and so does its great history. For those purists who want there to be a cathedral, there are the three Hawksmoor churches. St George-in-the-East and the others would all happily fit the bill.

However, the hon. Gentleman's most important statement in promoting Tower Hamlets was that we should look to the future. The great multicultural, multi-ethnic and multi-racial mix that is Tower Hamlets, with the great change we are seeing in that part of our capital city, deserves to be recognised as an example of how our cities should be.

The hon. Gentleman referred to some of the political controversies and difficulties of the 1920s and 1930s, when Poplar was one of the constituent borough councils of Tower Hamlets. Tower Hamlets has also had more recent political problems, and I hope that the prospect of city status will unite all political people in Tower Hamlets over the next year or so. I hope they will focus on that, rather than on some of the high profile difficulties of the recent past.

I wish the hon. Gentleman Godspeed with his campaign and look forward to hearing the Minister's response to what has been an excellent short debate.

10.23 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Mr Mark Harper): As well as the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick), whom I congratulate on securing this debate, and my hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Mr Field), two other Members are present, both of whom have an interest in that their own areas are bidding for city status. They will have listened with great interest to the hon. Gentleman's case.

The hon. Gentleman follows my hon. Friends the Members for Croydon Central (Gavin Barwell), for Reading West (Alok Sharma), for Southend West (Mr Amess) and for Gillingham and Rainham (Rehman Chishti) in securing a debate on his area's hopes for winning city status in the diamond jubilee competition for civic honours. I have learned many new things in the course of this debate, as I did in those previous debates. I think I am right in saying that this is the first such debate for which you, Mr Speaker, have been in the Chair. You will be pleased to know that there are 25 entries seeking city status. This is the fifth debate, so there are a further 20 debates to go if Members are as assiduous as those whom I have mentioned in seeking to make the case for their areas. The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to learn that I can confirm that Tower Hamlets' entry into the diamond jubilee competition for civic honours has been safely received. As I said, it is one of 25 entries seeking city status and there are 12 entries seeking lord mayoralty status for existing cities. That shows a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and interest in the competition, and demonstrates how attractive such civic honours are to local communities.

The hon. Gentleman recognised at the beginning of his remarks that I can no more endorse the aspirations of Tower Hamlets than I could those of any of the other entrants in the competition. Ministers must remain impartial, as we must ensure that bestowing city status remains a real honour, fairly bestowed and that this remains a real competition. The reason why fairness is so important is that there are no hard and fast criteria for becoming a city. It is an honour granted by the sovereign, nowadays following a competition, as a rare mark of distinction. So reasons for success or failure in these competitions are never given, and city status is not something that towns can achieve just by ticking off a list of hard and fast criteria.

We see why that is when we consider the list of existing cities. Any attempt to draw up a list of hard and fast criteria would run into problems. Some cities in the UK are large and some are small. Some have conspicuously attractive and well-laid-out city centres, whereas that is less true of others. Some have wonderful cathedrals,

[Mr Mark Harper]

universities, airports, underground systems or trams, whereas some may lack those physical features but boast a vibrant cultural life.

The Government have, however, set out some of the qualities that we would expect a new city to have, and the assessment will be made in the round, looking at those qualities. We would expect a new city to have a vibrant, welcoming community with an interesting history and a distinct identity. The hon. Gentleman eloquently set out Tower Hamlets' claim in those and other respects, and I can assure him and his constituents that their

entry will receive a thorough and impartial appraisal of its merits, alongside the other entries in the competition. The assessment process is under way and the plan is to announce the results early in 2012, at the beginning of the diamond jubilee year. With that, this short debate—it was not much of a “debate”, in the sense that there was not a huge difference of opinion—comes to an end. I again congratulate the hon. Gentleman for setting out very forcefully the case for his constituency.

Question put and agreed to.

10.27 pm

House adjourned.

Written Ministerial Statements

Monday 17 October 2011

TREASURY

ECOFIN 4 October 2011

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr George Osborne): The Economic and Financial Affairs Council was held in Luxembourg on 4 October 2011. The Financial Secretary and I represented the UK. The following items were discussed:

Regulation on over-the-counter derivatives, central counterparties and trade repositories (EMIR)

Prior to the meeting, the Government were clear that the regulation as it stood was unacceptable. In line with concerns raised previously by the European Union Committee, I therefore made it clear that a number of changes to the text were needed, including:

in order for the college to block an authorisation of a central counterparty (CCP), all members of the college, excluding the relevant National Competent Authority (NCA), must vote against it;

wording in an article that would forbid any decisions on CCPs being made on a basis that would discriminate against any member state as a venue for clearing services in any currency;

in order to foster competition, provisions requiring open access to CCPs and trading venues for over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives, as well as a public statement from the Commission that full fair and open access would be dealt with properly in forthcoming legislation;

a public declaration that the issue of scope and adequate coverage to meet the G20 agreement would be dealt with in upcoming legislation; and

a clear statement that the drafting of third country provisions required further work, which will be completed in the context of negotiations with the European Parliament.

With these conditions met, the Council agreed a general approach. The presidency, on behalf of the Council, will now start negotiations with the European Parliament, with a view to reaching agreement at First Reading.

Legislative proposals on economic governance

The Council agreed to a compromise text on the package of six legislative proposals. The Government are content with the package, which will strengthen economic governance in the EU, while respecting the UK's fiscal sovereignty. The Council will formally adopt the proposals without further discussion once the texts have been finalised in all official languages.

European Central Bank (ECB): nomination of an executive board member

The Council adopted a recommendation on the nomination of Jörg Asmussen to the executive board of the ECB, to succeed Jürgen Stark, who announced his resignation on 9 September. The Government are content with this recommendation; matters related to the ECB

are for euro area member states to decide. The Council's recommendation will be submitted for a decision to the European Council, after consulting the European Parliament and the ECB's governing council.

Information on the informal ECOFIN meeting

The presidency gave a de-brief of the September informal ECOFIN, and presented a proposal for the ECOFIN Council to assess the impact of new EU legislation on growth and jobs. This was then discussed over lunch, with the Government offering support. Officials will now produce a formal proposal, which will be discussed at a future ECOFIN.

Review of the fiscal exit strategy

Finance Ministers agreed Council conclusions on the implications of lower growth on excessive deficit procedure and stability and growth pact targets. The Government support these conclusions, which are in line with domestic fiscal policy and the emerging international debate on differentiating fiscal strategies between countries. The conclusions will feed into the European Council debate on EU growth on 23 October.

Implementation of the Excessive Deficit Procedure (EDP)

ECOFIN held an exchange of views on implementation of the EDP following recent developments. The Government welcome the emphasis on ensuring that all member states fully implement budgetary strategies for timely meeting of fiscal targets. The Commission will provide a more comprehensive analysis in their autumn forecast.

Follow-up to the IMF Annual Meetings on 24 September 2011, and the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' meeting on 22 September 2011

The Council was informed by the presidency and the French delegation, in its capacity as G20 presidency, of the outcome of the meetings.

Preparation of G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' meeting on 14-15 October

The Council endorsed the EU terms of reference, which will form the basis of the EU's contribution to the meeting of G20 Finance Ministers on 14-15 October. The Government are content with the terms of reference, which emphasise the need for determined action to maintain financial stability, restore confidence, and support growth. The G20 meeting is expected to cover the following issues: responding effectively to the current challenges in the global economy through the G20 framework for growth; financial regulation; commodities; reform of the international monetary system; and climate change financing and development.

Preparation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Durban

Finance Ministers adopted conclusions on climate finance ahead of the Durban conference of the parties to be held 28 November to 9 December, 2011. The Government support these conclusions which reflect our position on climate finance.

Economic situation

Over breakfast, Finance Ministers received a de-brief of the previous evening's Eurogroup meeting, and held an exchange of views on the economic situation. I emphasised the importance of the euro area delivering a truly comprehensive solution to the situation in the euro area, which ring-fences vulnerable euro area countries,

recapitalises Europe's banks and resolves uncertainty about Greece, ahead of the G20 summit in Cannes on 3-4 November.

Financial Assistance (Ireland)

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr Mark Hoban): I would like to update Parliament on the loan to Ireland.

Ireland completed the third quarterly review of its International Monetary Fund and European Union programme of financial assistance on 2 September 2011, at which point the first instalment of the UK bilateral loan became available for drawdown.

Upon request, the Treasury has disbursed the first instalment of £403.37 million on 14 October 2011, with a maturity date of 15 April 2019.

HM Treasury will provide a further report to Parliament, as required under the Loans to Ireland Act 2010, at the end of this reporting period.

The Government believe that it is in our national interest that the Irish economy is successful and its banking system is stable. The Government continue to support Ireland's efforts to improve its economic situation.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Community Budgets

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Mr Eric Pickles): I have today published a community budget prospectus which invites areas to express an interest in participating in two new pilot programmes. The first tests how local places can make best use of all the money that is spent in their area on public services on a wide range of problems. The second tests how this approach might be adapted to give neighbourhoods more control over the services that matter most to them.

I have placed a copy of the prospectus in the Library of the House.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

General Affairs Council and Foreign Affairs Council, 10-11 October 2011

The Minister for Europe (Mr David Lidington): The Foreign Affairs Council and General Affairs Council were held on 10-11 October in Luxembourg. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I represented the UK.

The agenda items covered were as follows:

FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL (FAC)

The FAC was chaired by Baroness Ashton. A provisional report of the meeting, and all conclusions adopted, can be found at:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/125028.pdf

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH)

Although BiH was not a formal agenda item, Ministers agreed conclusions which reaffirmed the EU's support for the continuation of the EU's military force's (EUFOR Althea) executive mandate. The conclusions also included a reference to "looking forward to discussions" on the future of the Office of the High Representative (OHR).

Belarus

Ministers agreed to renew the EU's restrictive measures against Belarus, and added 16 new names to the travel ban and assets-freeze list. There was broad agreement that the EU should not consider renewing a dialogue with the Belarusian authorities until all political prisoners have been released and rehabilitated. Ministers also endorsed ongoing work by Commissioner Stefan Füle on engaging civil society in Belarus.

Ukraine

Ministers expressed concern about the trial and upcoming verdict on Yulia Tymoshenko. There was a discussion about the impact the verdict might have on finalising the EU's association agreement with Ukraine.

The day after the FAC, Yulia Tymoshenko was sentenced to seven years in prison. Speaking after the verdict the Foreign Secretary said:

"The conviction of the Ukrainian opposition politician, Yulia Tymoshenko, by a court in Kyiv is deeply concerning. Independent legal experts including the Danish Helsinki Committee have concluded that Ms Tymoshenko's trial was subject to numerous and serious violations of fundamental legal principles, in direct contradiction of common European values.

"Ukraine says it wants to join the EU one day. The UK supports that objective. But that cannot happen until Ukraine can show that it adheres to the highest democratic standards, including respect for human rights, the rule of law and an independent, transparent and fair judicial process. The conviction of Ms Tymoshenko and the ongoing cases against other former Members of the Government call into question Ukraine's commitment to these values. This could pose a major obstacle to the signature and ratification of the association agreement and deep and comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU".

EU-China Summit

Ministers reviewed preparations for the 14th EU-China summit, which takes place in China on 25 October. The Foreign Secretary stressed the need for the EU to focus on increased market access for EU businesses. He also urged the EU to continue to raise human rights issues at the highest level, and underlined the importance of global co-operation on cyber security.

Southern Neighbourhood

Baroness Ashton set out the results of the Tunisian taskforce meeting of 28-29 September. She had co-chaired the meeting with the Prime Minister of Tunisia, which had also been attended by member states, European institutions, the European Investment Bank, the EBRD, the World Bank, the Africa Bank and representatives from the private sector. Around €4 billion was pledged to Tunisia over the next three years.

On Egypt, concern was expressed by many Ministers about the recent outbreaks of violence. There was broad agreement on the importance of protecting freedom of religion and belief.

Ministers agreed conclusions on Libya which:

Reaffirmed the EU's support for the National Transition Council.

Welcomed the continuation of the operation to enforce UNSCR 1973 and ensure the protection of the Libyan population.

Welcomed the adoption of UNSCR 2009 and the return of Libya to the UN as represented by the National Transitional Council.

Stressed the need for all in Libya to respect all international obligations and the rule of law.

Expressed concern about the dissemination of conventional weapons in Libya.

Set out the EU's willingness to work under UN co-ordination to consider Libyan needs in the fields of democratisation, rule of law, institution-building, security sector reform and police training.

Ministers agreed conclusions on Syria which condemned the ongoing brutal repression by the Syrian regime. Ministers expressed disappointment with the failure of the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution against Syria. They reiterated their determination to continue with targeted sanctions against the Syrian regime.

On Yemen, Ministers agreed conclusions which stressed concern about the situation in the country. They called for President Saleh to sign and implement the Gulf Co-operation Council initiative. And they welcomed the report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and urged the authorities in Yemen to act on its recommendations.

On the European neighbourhood policy, the Foreign Secretary and others stressed the need to hold out the possibility of meaningful market access to the neighbourhood, in exchange for real political and democratic reforms.

Middle East Peace Process

Ministers agreed conclusions which reiterated their support for Baroness Ashton's efforts on behalf of the EU to re-launch the peace process. There was an appeal for both parties to resume negotiations under the terms set out in the quartet statement of 23 September.

Ministers expressed their disappointment with the recent settlement expansion in the East Jerusalem settlement of Gilo. Baroness Ashton briefed Ministers on the Quartet envoys' meeting of 9 October in Brussels and plans to invite the parties to meet in the coming days. The Foreign Secretary emphasised the need for continued EU unity in response to any resolutions proposed at the United Nations in New York.

Iran

The discussion on Iran focused on two areas: the EU's growing concern over human rights, and Iran's nuclear programme. On human rights. Ministers agreed to add 29 names to its sanctions list, in addition to the 32 officials previously agreed in April. On the nuclear issue, Baroness Ashton briefed Ministers on E3+3 talks in New York in the margin of the UN General Assembly and her meeting with the Iranian Foreign Minister. She also outlined plans for taking forward talks with Iran. The Foreign Secretary made the following statement:

"I welcome the EU's agreement today to impose restrictive measures on a further 29 Iranians responsible for grave human rights abuses. Those targeted include Government Ministers, members of the security forces, prison staff and judiciary responsible for serious human rights violations.

"In recent months the human rights situation in Iran has continued to deteriorate. As we mark world day against the death penalty we should recall that Iran has now executed over 500 people this year, including a 17-year-old boy. The Government

have violently suppressed protests over the mismanagement of a lake in north-west Iran, and families of a number of journalists have been arrested and harassed. We will continue to identify and list those who seriously violate the human rights of the Iranian people.

"Today's decision sends a clear message to every individual on this list, and others in the Iranian regime, that we will not stand by. They will be held to account for their actions and should not involve themselves in the appalling abuses we continue to witness".

EU External Representation

Ministers had a brief informal exchange on EU external representation in international organisations. The Foreign Secretary said we supported effective external action by the EU, in accordance with the treaties. But we needed to ensure that this did not affect the balance of competences between the EU and member states; and that member states remained free to act where they had the right to do so. He agreed that the EAS should propose effective arrangements in line with these principles.

GENERAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL (GAC)

The GAC was chaired by the Polish EU presidency (Mikolaj Dowgielewicz, State Secretary for European Affairs). A draft record of the meeting can be found at:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/genaff/125036.pdf

Cohesion Policy

Ministers heard a presentation by Commissioner Hahn (regional policy) of proposals for rules on implementing the EU's policy on economic and social cohesion in 2012-2020.

Growth-Enhancing Measures

The presidency presented its report "Towards a European consensus on growth" (see link below).

http://pl2011.eu/sites/default/files/users/shared/spotkania_i_wydarzenia/presidency_report_on_growth.pdf

The report identifies potential growth-enhancing measures which might help the EU overcome the current economic crisis.

G20 Summit in Cannes

Ministers discussed with Commissioner Sefcovic (inter-institutional relations and administration) preparations for the G20 summit in Cannes on 3-4 November. The Commissioner set out proposed EU priorities: the eurozone and the global economic recovery; the resilience of the international monetary system; tackling commodity prices; providing a way forward for Doha and the WTO; development; food security; a strong message on climate change and Durban; and the proposed Financial Transaction Tax (FTT). I stressed that the UK was firmly against promoting a FTT at the G20 summit.

Preparation of the October European Council

Ahead of the GAC, the President of the Council, Van Rompuy, joined Ministers by video link to discuss preparations for the Council. He explained that the Council had been pushed back to Sunday 23 October to allow Heads of State and Government to consider issues relating to Greece, the European banks and the eurozone governance more comprehensively as a package. I argued that any future institutional changes to governance in the eurozone had to protect fully the interests of all 27 member states, and there had to be clear language to that effect in the European Council conclusions.

I also stressed the need for the Council conclusions to address some significant foreign policy developments, particularly Libya.

I will deposit copies of this note in the Libraries of both Houses. And I will also continue to update Parliament on future Foreign and General Affairs Councils.

HEALTH

Strategic Vision for Volunteering

The Minister of State, Department of Health (Paul Burstow): The Government have today announced the launch of a strategic vision for volunteering for health and care. “Social action for health and well-being: building co-operative communities” has been placed in the Library. Copies are available for hon. Members from the Vote Office and to noble Lords from the Printed Paper Office.

The Government recognise that volunteers already make a tremendous contribution towards the health and care services and support within their communities, improving the quality and choice of services available in our country. We want to ensure that this wealth of activity is recognised, celebrated and strengthened and that we nurture and release the capability and capacity that exists within our communities.

This strategic vision for volunteering sets out the Government’s long-term vision for social action, and in particular volunteering, in support of health and well-being. It replaces “Volunteering: involving people and communities in delivering and developing health and social care services”, published in March 2010 and refreshes it to reflect health, public health and social care reforms and the coalition Government’s big society agenda.

The vision highlights the valuable contribution volunteering and wider social action makes to every sphere of health, public health and social care, including prevention, the creation of people-centred and relationship-based services and improved patient and service user experience. It demonstrates how greater involvement of members of the public can help to develop support mechanisms and services that genuinely meet people’s needs, are more personal, strength-based and community-owned.

The strategic vision aims to:

- embed a deeper understanding, genuine appreciation and awareness of volunteering and its benefits across all of health, public health and social care;

- recognise the enormous voluntary effort that contributes to health and well-being and to health, public health and care services in this country and ensure that this is recognised, celebrated and strengthened in the process of system and service reform;

- ensure that services are built around the strengths and assets that people (including those with health and care needs, carers and communities) can bring to them, through volunteering as well as co-production and shared decision making; and

- encourage the various parts of the health, public health and social care systems to recognise the value of volunteering in relation to their respective priorities and consider, from a more informed stance, where a more strategic approach and coherent investment in volunteering would lead to improved quality, equity and outcomes.

As part of the overarching approach of Government outlined in the “Giving” White Paper, Cm 8084 the Department will take a facilitative and enabling role in pursuing this vision, working with partners inside and outside Government to: raise awareness of the potential and added value of volunteering in health and care; improve the evidence base for investment in volunteering in this field; and improve access to best practice and opportunities for shared learning.

JUSTICE

Crimestoppers Initiative (Prisons)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Mr Crispin Blunt): Today, I am advising the House that on 22 September, we announced the launch of an enhanced Crimestoppers initiative in prisons. Crimestoppers will now report direct to the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) all prison-related matters, enabling a faster response. The launch was accompanied by a poster and leaflet campaign advertising the new arrangements and this will be followed by other campaigns on key issues that effect security in prisons. All printing is being undertaken through a contract with prison industries, providing useful employment for prisoners.

NOMS is determined to disrupt the criminal behaviour of prisoners. A key element is the ability to gather good quality intelligence and act quickly on information received. The Crimestoppers initiative provides a valuable source of intelligence with a particular focus on drugs and mobile phones. This will enhance NOMS’ ability to address these threats.

This initiative is a very good example of the invaluable work that the third sector can undertake in prisons.

Petition

Monday 17 October 2011

OBSERVATIONS

TRANSPORT

Lauderdale Avenue Tram Crossing (Blackpool)

The Petition of the people of Blackpool and Cleveleys,

Declares that the Petitioners are opposed to the permanent closure of the Lauderdale Avenue/Blandford Avenue crossing to traffic and pedestrians.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to encourage Blackpool Council to ensure that the Lauderdale Avenue/Blandford Avenue crossing remains open.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Paul Maynard, *Official Report*, 13 September 2011; Vol. 532, c. 1008.]

[P000959]

Observations from the Secretary of State for Transport:

The Blackpool tramway is currently being upgraded. The works include provision of new trams and upgrades to many of the junctions with the road network to allow faster tram services. This includes the closure of some existing crossing points for vehicles and pedestrians.

It is for the highway authorities concerned to decide on the detailed design of the scheme. In the case of the Lauderdale Avenue/Blandford Avenue crossing, this is Blackpool council. While every effort should be made to accommodate the needs of all road users, it is sometimes necessary to make changes to facilities as part of a major upgrade.

Local authorities are free to make their own decisions about the design of the streets under their care, provided they take account of the relevant legislation. It would be inappropriate for the Government to seek to intervene in the process of local democratic accountability.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 17 October 2011

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Billing

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of invoices from suppliers his Department paid within 10 days of receipt in July and August 2010. [74363]

Mr Paterson: The Department figures for payment of supplier invoices in July and August 2010 were 96% and 97% respectively. This information is available to the public and is published on our web site at the following link:

<http://www.nio.gov.uk/index/nio-publication/nio-pubs-search-results.htm?category=&keyword=prompt+payment&order=date&submitbutton.x=15&submitbutton.y=5>

The target for payment of supplier invoices has now changed to five working days effective from May 2010. The Department currently reports its performance against this target.

Departmental Consultants

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what procedures his Department uses when engaging external consultants. [73109]

Mr Paterson: When engaging external consultants, my Department follows the guidance and procedures set out by the Central Procurement Directorate of the Department of Finance and Personnel and/or the Cabinet Office's Government Procurement Service, as appropriate.

Departmental Fines

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many transport-related fines his Department and its predecessors has settled on behalf of its staff; and at what cost in each year since 2007. [74365]

Mr Paterson: Comparable figures for the Department as it is now configured are not available before 12 April 2010 following the completion of devolution of policing and justice functions. However, since April 2010, there have been no transport-related fines settled for any staff in my Department.

Departmental Public Expenditure

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much his Department spent on new furnishings in the last year. [72939]

Mr Paterson: My Department spent a total of £1,095 on new furnishings in the last financial year, 2010-11.

Departmental Training

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many external training courses staff of his Department attended in the last 12 months; and what the cost to the public purse was of each course. [74364]

Mr Paterson: During the 2010-11 financial year, my Department spent a total of £38,000 on training and development—the vast majority of this was provided internally by the National School of Government in Great Britain, or the Centre for Applied Learning in Northern Ireland. It is not possible to provide a further breakdown of these costs without incurring disproportionate cost.

TRANSPORT

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Reform

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects changes to the Air Travel Organisers' Licensing scheme to be implemented. [73943]

Mrs Villiers: The recent consultation on reform of Air Travel Organisers' Licensing (ATOL) scheme proposed that the new secondary legislation needed to implement the reforms should come into effect on 1 January 2012.

A number of consultation responses and other representations raised concerns about the relatively short time this would allow to prepare for the introduction of the ATOL certificate and other reforms. I am currently considering all the consultation responses and plan to make an announcement on the way forward with the reforms later in the autumn.

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the likely costs to travel businesses of implementing his proposals for changes to the Air Travel Organisers' Licensing scheme. [73945]

Mrs Villiers: The impact assessment, published alongside the ATOL Reform Consultation document, estimated that the cost to travel businesses of implementing the proposed reforms would be between £5.5 million and £11.5 million per year.

Departmental Billing

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of invoices from suppliers his Department paid within 10 days of receipt in July and August 2010. [74347]

Norman Baker: The target to pay 90% of invoices within 10 days has been replaced by a target to pay 80% of invoices within five days, and the reply is set out on this basis.

The percentage of invoices paid within five days of receipt for the Department and its agencies for July and August is as follows:

	Percentage	
	July 2010	August 2010
Central Department	96	95
Driving Standards	96	96
Driver and Vehicle Licensing	91	89
Highways	68	86
Maritime and Coastguard	95	97
Vehicle Certification	93	96
Vehicle and Operator Services	85	84
Government Car and Despatch	85	89
Total	84	91

The departmental commercial terms generally specify that payment will be made within 30 days of receipt of a valid invoice. The percentage of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt for the Department and its agencies for July and August is as follows:

	Percentage	
	July 2010	August 2010
Central Department	100	99
Driving Standards	100	100
Driver and Vehicle Licensing	100	100
Highways	99	99
Maritime and Coastguard	100	100
Vehicle Certification	99	100
Vehicle and Operator Services	100	100
Government Car and Despatch	99	100
Total	100	100

I would also refer the hon. Member to my answer of 16 September 2010, *Official Report*, columns 1229-31W, where this information was previously provided to the hon. Member for Dundee East (Stewart Hosie).

The percentage of invoices paid within five days and 30 days of receipt for the Department and its seven agencies for the same months of 2011 is published on the Department's website at the following address:

<http://assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/prompt-payment-statistics/statistics.pdf>

Departmental Official Hospitality

Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what official (a) lunches, (b) dinners and (c) receptions he has hosted in each of the last 12 months; and what the (i) location, (ii) total cost to the public purse and (iii) purpose was of each such event. [72809]

Norman Baker: The then Secretary of State for Transport, the right hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), has hosted two official dinners in the last 12 months:

March 2011—An official dinner at Lancaster House, at a cost of £993.42 to the public purse, the purpose of which was an introductory meeting with the French Minister for Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Housing and her delegation to discuss cargo screening in aviation security, the approach to the implementation of the air quality directive and other issues.

June 2011—An official dinner at Lancaster House, at a cost of £2,104.62 to the public purse, the purpose of which was an introductory meeting with the US Secretary of Transportation and his delegation to discuss High Speed Rail and the European Union's Emissions Trading Scheme.

The then Secretary of State for Transport has not hosted any official lunches or receptions in this time period.

Departmental Repairs and Maintenance

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the maintenance backlog was in his Department's estate in each of the last five years.

[73075]

Norman Baker: I regret that the information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Government Procurement Card

Chris Kelly: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many Government Procurement Card transactions were made by his Department's officials withdrawing cash from automated teller machines from 2006-07 to 2009-10; at what cost; and on which dates.

[73717]

Norman Baker: Staff have not made any cash withdrawals on Government Procurement Card from automated teller machines since 2006.

London Paddington-Bristol Railway Line: Electrification

Mr Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the electrification of the rail line from London Paddington to Bristol; and if he will make a statement. [74886]

Mrs Villiers: The Government have confirmed their commitment to funding the electrification of the Great Western main line to Bristol which is now being delivered by Network Rail. I expect electric passenger services to commence on time in 2016.

Motor Vehicles: EU Action

Mr Brine: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effects on independent motorcycle repairers of the proposed EU Regulation on the type approval and market surveillance of 2- and 3-wheeled vehicles and quadricycles. [73019]

Mike Penning: The repair information aspect of the Commission's proposal will ensure maintenance information is more readily accessible to independent repairers. This will enable them to compete more effectively with franchised repairers.

The effective functioning of a competitive market for motorcycle repair will ensure best value for consumers.

Parking: Fines

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent estimate he has made of the sums in outstanding parking fines owed to local authorities by drivers of foreign registered vehicles. [74149]

Norman Baker: None. Individual local authorities are required to keep records of all penalty charge notices issued, including those issued to drivers of foreign registered vehicles. The Department for Transport does not record this information centrally.

Railways: Felixstowe

Dr Poulter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the electrification of the railroute from Felixstowe to Nuneaton; and if he will make a statement. [73804]

Mrs Villiers: The Government support a progressive electrification of the rail network in England and Wales where this is affordable and generates value for money. Electrification should reduce the cost of running the railways, increase efficiency and reduce carbon emissions. We continue to work with Network Rail to look at the case for further electrification in the next rail control period starting in 2014.

Roads: Cyclists

Dr Huppert: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to ensure adequate maintenance and improvement of cycleways and footways in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. [73935]

Norman Baker: The maintenance and improvement of cycleways and footways in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is a matter for Cambridgeshire county council and Peterborough city council respectively.

Roads: Gloucestershire

Mr Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with the Highways Agency on the duration of the proposed closure of the A4019 on the approach to Junction 10 of the M5; and if he will make a statement. [74059]

Mike Penning [*holding answer 13 October 2011*]: The proposed closure of the overbridge which carries the A4019 over the M5 at Junction 10 is necessary in order to replace the bridge. The foundations of the structure are suffering from sulphate attack which is reducing their strength, making replacement essential.

The current works programme is based on keeping the A4019 open for traffic for the busy period during the Cheltenham Festival. The current estimated duration of works, allowing for demolition of the existing bridge and foundations and construction of a new two span bridge is 47 weeks. However, the Highways Agency will be inviting tenders for this work which will encourage contractors to reduce this duration as much as possible.

I have discussed this project with the Highways Agency. I understand that they have been discussing it with the officers of Gloucestershire county council, the local highway authority, for two years. These discussions are ongoing and will continue to ensure that diversion routes and signage for the works are appropriate.

Rolling Stock

Damian Hinds: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether limits on the volume of train horns apply to train operating companies. [73300]

Mrs Villiers: Limits on the volume of train horns do apply to train operating companies. These are defined by European Technical Standards for Interoperability (TSI) and UK Rail Group Standards.

Siemens

Chris Williamson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether any Siemens (a) employees and (b) consultants (i) hold and (ii) have held security passes allowing access to his Department in the last five years. [72785]

Norman Baker [*holding answer 11 October 2011*]: I regret that the information requested can be established only at disproportionate cost. I can however confirm that no employee or consultant of Siemens working on the Thameslink project has been issued with a permanent security pass. Siemens employees and their consultants have been issued with visitor passes when they have visited DFT premises, at which time they have been escorted by DFT staff.

Transport: Ashfield

Gloria De Piero: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment his Department has made of the effects of the outcome of the comprehensive spending review on local transport services in (a) Ashfield constituency, (b) Nottinghamshire and (c) England. [73554]

Norman Baker [*holding answer 12 October 2011*]: We have radically simplified the Department for Transport's (DFT's) funding to local authorities from 26 grant streams to just four. This change has provided local authorities with greater participation and financial autonomy. The Department, therefore, has not made assessments of local impacts.

The DFT's block capital allocations to Nottinghamshire have been published and can be found at:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/publications/local-transport-capital-block-funding/>

Nottinghamshire is already benefitting from the £9 million centrally-funded Mansfield Public Transport Interchange. The Department is also currently assessing the bid for full approval for phase two of the Nottingham Express Transit. The requested DFT contribution is £433.5 million over the lifetime of the project. The DFT is also currently assessing bids for the Nottingham Ring Road and Hucknall Town Centre schemes as part of the Development pool competition. The requested DFT contributions are £12.8 million and £8.5 million respectively.

As well as funding to local authorities, the Department supports local bus services through the Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG). On a national level, the Department has carried out an equalities impact assessment. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne) on 2 November 2010, *Official Report*, column 702W.

SCOTLAND**Air Passenger Duty**

Ann McKeichin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the devolution of air passenger duty in Scotland following the announcement regarding air passenger duty for long-haul flights from Northern Ireland. [74659]

David Mundell: The Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (Michael Moore), has regular meetings with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), to discuss a range of issues, including all financial issues related to the Scotland Bill.

Child care

Margaret Curran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date he last met the First Minister to discuss future provision of child care support in Scotland. [73256]

Michael Moore: I am in contact with the First Minister on a range of matters. My officials are engaged with officials from the Scottish Government on aspects of the Government's welfare reform agenda which affect Scotland.

Departmental Billing

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of invoices from suppliers his Department paid within 10 days of receipt in July and August 2010. [74387]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office paid 100% of invoices within 10 days of receipt in July and August 2010.

Departmental Buildings

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what (a) building and (b) refurbishment projects his Department plans in (i) the current and (ii) the next financial year; and what the cost will be of each such project. [74386]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office has no building projects or refurbishment projects currently planned in the present financial year or in the next financial year.

Departmental Consultants

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what procedures his Department uses when engaging external consultants. [73110]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office does not generally undertake direct procurement or tendering projects. It utilises framework contracts between suppliers and other Government bodies. All expenditure is incurred in accordance with the principles of Managing Public Money.

Departmental Fines

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many transport-related fines his Department has settled on behalf of its staff; and at what cost in each year since 2007. [74389]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office maintains the policy that road traffic violations are the responsibility of the individual and are not reimbursed from public funds. As such, there has been no expenditure on transport-related fines since 2007.

Departmental Manpower

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many (a) full- and (b) part-time employees his Department employed in each year since 1997. [74598]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office was established on 1 July 1999. Information on staff numbers is routinely published in the Office's Annual Report, copies of which are in the House Library. A breakdown of part-time staff is not provided as identification of individuals may be possible in view of the numbers involved.

Departmental Official Hospitality

Ian Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department spent on hospitality for events hosted by each Minister in his Department in each of the last 12 months. [73660]

David Mundell: Scotland Office expenditure on hospitality for events hosted by each Scotland Office Minister in each of the last 12 months is as shown in the following table:

	£		
	<i>Secretary of State for Scotland</i>	<i>Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland</i>	<i>Advocate- General for Scotland</i>
<i>2010</i>			
October	626.73	0.00	0.00
November	1,396.42	0.00	0.00
December	3,259.11	0.00	0.00
<i>2011</i>			
January	855.00	0.00	0.00
February	1,246.77	0.00	0.00
March	463.35	0.00	0.00
April	0.00	0.00	0.00
May	0.00	120.00	0.00
June	5,291.27	0.00	0.00
July	0.00	0.00	68.67
August	6,221.25	0.00	0.00
September	10.44	300.00	0.00
Total	19,370.34	420.00	68.67

All expenditure incurred was in accordance with the principles of Managing Public Money and the Treasury handbook on Regularity and Propriety.

Departmental Procurement

Stewart Hosie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what contracts of a monetary value of (a) between £100,000 and £500,000, (b) between £500,000 and £1 million and (c) over £1 million his Department and its predecessor have entered into with private suppliers in each year since 1990. [74215]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office was established on 1 July 1999. The office generally does not undertake direct procurement or tendering projects. Rather, it utilises framework contracts between suppliers and other

Government bodies. Of the small contracts held by the Scotland Office, none has a monetary value of over £100,000.

Departmental Public Expenditure

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department spent on new furnishings in the last year. [72940]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office spent £2,748 on furnishings in 2010-11.

Departmental Training

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many external training courses staff of his Department attended in the last 12 months; and what the cost to the public purse was of each course. [74388]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office encourages all staff to undertake learning and development activities. External training courses may be considered where opportunities are not available through central Government.

The Office does not maintain a central record of external training courses attended. However, £ 12,672 was spent on staff training in the year 2010-11.

E-mail

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any (a) Ministers, (b) officials and (c) special advisers in his Department use private e-mail accounts for the conduct of government business. [73203]

David Mundell: The Ministerial Code, the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers, and the Civil Service Code set out how Ministers, officials and special advisers should conduct government business.

Government Procurement Card

Chris Kelly: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Government procurement card transactions were made by his Department's officials withdrawing cash from automated teller machines from 2006-07 to 2009-10; at what cost; and on which dates. [73718]

David Mundell: The first Scotland Office Government procurement card transaction took place during the financial year 2007-08. Since then, no cash withdrawals have been made using Government procurement cards.

Social Fund

Margaret Curran: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date he last met the First Minister to discuss the ending of the social fund. [73257]

Michael Moore: I am in contact with the First Minister on a range of matters. My officials are engaged with officials from the Scottish Government on aspects of the Government's welfare reform agenda which affect Scotland.

Third Sector

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many letters he has received on funding for civil society organisations within his Department's area of responsibility in each month since 1 June 2010; and if he will make a statement. [73990]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office has no responsibility for funding civil sector organisations.

Unemployment: Females

Ann McKechin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has had discussions with the Scottish Government on the rate of unemployment among female workers. [74658]

David Mundell: Scotland Office Ministers and officials have ongoing discussions with the Scottish Government about the number of people in Scotland claiming jobseeker's allowance and trends in labour market statistics.

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Backbench Business Committee

Chris Ruane: To ask the Leader of the House what consideration he has given to forwarding to the Backbench Business Committee for consideration for debate petitions presented to the Government with 100,000 signatures collected (a) both on the Government's e-petitions website and on paper, (b) both on the Government's e-petitions website and elsewhere online, (c) on paper only, (d) on a website other than the Government's e-petitions website only, (e) on paper and online but not on the Government's e-petitions website and (f) on paper, on the Government's e-petitions website and elsewhere online. [73373]

Sir George Young: The Government have chosen to use their own online system for e-petitions as it allowed wide access and a simple way to show support for an issue, while also enabling the Government to quickly and easily verify the validity of signatures. Such verification is not easily manageable with paper petitions or on external websites, and so these signatures are not included as part of the 100,000 threshold.

The Backbench Business Committee has made clear its continued willingness to accept paper petitions upon presentation to the House by a Member of Parliament.

Email

Jack Dromey: To ask the Leader of the House whether any (a) Ministers, (b) officials and (c) special advisers in his office use private e-mail accounts for the conduct of government business. [73206]

Sir George Young: The Ministerial Code, the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers, and the Civil Service Code set out how Ministers, officials and special advisers should conduct government business.

Hillsborough Stadium

Steve Rotheram: To ask the Leader of the House what discussions he has had with the Prime Minister since his appointment on the unredacted release of the Hillsborough Cabinet minutes. [74295]

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), on 14 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 506W.

WALES

E-mail

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales whether any (a) Ministers, (b) officials and (c) special advisers in her Department use private e-mail accounts for the conduct of Government business. [73201]

Mr David Jones: The Ministerial Code, the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers, and the Civil Service Code set out how Ministers, officials and special advisers should conduct government business.

Government Procurement Card

Chris Kelly: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Government procurement card transactions were made by her Department's officials withdrawing cash from automated teller machines from 2006-07 to 2009-10; at what cost; and on which dates. [73715]

Mr David Jones: None.

Roads: A55

Stephen Mosley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what the cost to the public purse was of the construction of the interchange between the A55 and A5104 at Broughton (junction 36 of the A55). [69461]

Mr David Jones: The funding of repairs and improvements for trunk roads in Wales, such as the A55 and A5104, are the responsibility of the Welsh Government.

I understand, however, that the improvements cost the Welsh Government £3.6 million and consisted of the construction of an interchange and two roundabouts on the A5104.

Trade Union Activities

Guto Bebb: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if she will have discussions with the Welsh Government on ending the practice of civil servants in Wales working full time on trade union activities. [73825]

Mr David Jones: The Cabinet Office is currently reviewing the practice of civil servants working full-time on trade union activities.

We will discuss this review with the Welsh Government in due course and once the review is complete, we negotiate with the unions, including those that represent civil servants in Wales.

EDUCATION

Nursery Education

19. **Peter Aldous:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress he has made on extending free nursery education to disadvantaged two-year-olds. [74437]

Sarah Teather: The Education Bill, currently being considered in another place, will enable this Government to introduce a legal entitlement to free education for disadvantaged two-year-olds. We plan to implement the new entitlement in September 2013, and will consult shortly on which children should receive free places.

We have made available £64 million this year and £223 million next year so that local authorities can increase the capacity and quality of provision locally. Funding will rise to £380 million in 2014-15. In addition, £4 million has been distributed to 18 local authorities this year to trial approaches to expanding places.

National Curriculum: Primary Schools

20. **John Pugh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent progress he has made on the review of the primary school national curriculum; and if he will make a statement. [74438]

Mr Gibb: We have undertaken a public call for evidence, analysed the curricula of successful educational jurisdictions, and held discussions with a range of subject experts and others. We are now developing draft curriculum documents for English, mathematics, science and physical education for both primary and secondary phases. We are also considering which other subjects should be part of the national curriculum in future and at which key stages. We will consult on our proposals early next year.

University Technical Colleges

21. **Anne Marie Morris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many university technical colleges he expects to open in 2012. [74439]

Michael Gove: On 10 October 2011, *Official Report*, columns 62-64, I updated the House that we now have 16 new university technical colleges approved and working towards opening. Of these, we expect up to nine may open in September 2012. Precise figures will be known shortly once the buildings they will be located in are confirmed.

Academies: Funding

22. **Craig Whittaker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether academy schools will have the same access to capital and maintenance funds for buildings as community schools when local authorities assess their statement of priorities. [74440]

Mr Gibb: An important principle of our schools funding system is that academies should be funded no more or no less generously than maintained schools. This is a principle which runs through our consultations on reforming revenue and capital funding in the schools sector. We believe that academies and maintained schools should be given equal and fair access to capital funds.

Academies: Underperforming Schools

23. **Mr Gyimah:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what progress he has made on encouraging academies to work with underperforming schools. [74441]

Mr Hayes: There are currently 891 schools that have converted to become academies and these academies are supporting 1,646 weaker schools. We are determined to raise standards in our underperforming schools and are actively engaging with converter academies to encourage them to become academy sponsors.

School Milk

24. **Gloria De Piero:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to increase the take-up of school milk. [74442]

Sarah Teather: The school food standards set out the food and drink which can be provided to pupils throughout the school day. The standards allow for the provision of water, fruit juice and milk, or combinations of these, including flavoured milk. However, there is no requirement for schools to provide milk; it is for individual schools or local authorities to decide whether or not to offer school milk to their pupils.

Capital Funding

Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how he plans to distribute capital funding for building projects to local education authorities. [74436]

Michael Gove: DFE capital funding will continue to be distributed in different ways. Funding for maintained schools is devolved to local authorities; additional funding is devolved directly to every school; and as I announced in July, further funding will be targeted at areas of rising pupil numbers.

Free Schools

Charlotte Leslie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the level of demand for places in the first round of free schools. [74431]

Mr Gibb: The level of demand for the first 24 free schools which opened in September has been exceptionally high. Based on the information supplied by the schools, 19 of the 24 free schools were oversubscribed for their places in 2011. Early signs are that demand will be similarly high for these 24 schools next year.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Departmental Air Travel

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development which travel management companies his Department uses for the purchase of airline tickets. [72693]

Mr O'Brien: The Department for International Development uses the Hogg Robinson Group (HRG) for the purchase of airline tickets for UK based staff and most staff based overseas.

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what (a) contractual obligations and (b) other processes his Department uses in respect of travel management companies to ensure the best value is achieved when purchasing airline tickets. [72707]

Mr O'Brien: The Department for International Development (DFID) currently contracts with the Hogg Robinson Group (HRG) to manage the purchase of airline tickets. The contract is a call-down contract from the framework competed by the Government Procurement Service (GPS), (formerly known as OGC Buying Solutions). DFID's contract with HRG requires that they search for and offer the DFID booker the best fare available at the time of booking, including offering any discounted fares negotiated between HMG and airlines.

The DFID Travel Policy states that HRG should be used to book travel and requires travellers to book the best value for money fare. HRG provide DFID with management information to enable the Department to monitor and manage value for money and compliance to travel policy.

Departmental Consultants

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what procedures his Department uses when engaging external consultants. [73107]

Mr O'Brien: Consultancy is mainly used by the Department for International Development (DFID) as a source of specialist technical advice to inform key areas of policy and processes to ensure aid funds are spent effectively. Consultancy is only used where it is deemed to be an operational necessity by DFID and strong controls have been put in place since 1 April 2010 to ensure effective management of all consultancy-related spend.

All consultancy requirements are subject to a stringent business case process. The business case must be approved at a senior level, following review by DFID human resource and procurement specialists to ensure it represents the best value sourcing option.

Following business case approval, DFID apply the EU principles of open and fair procurement. Where the value is above the EU threshold for services, competition under the EU directives is a legal requirement (unless a suitable framework arrangement is already in place). These opportunities are advertised in the *Official Journal* of the European Union (OJEU) and also available on the DFID portal at:

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Work-with-us/DFID-portal>

Departmental Legal Opinion

Angela Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what the average hourly rate paid was to external (a) solicitors and (b) barristers engaged by his Department in 2010-11; what guidance his Department uses in commissioning external legal

advice; and if he will publish (i) the names of each external (A) solicitor and (B) barrister engaged by his Department in 2010-11 and (ii) the sums paid in each case. [72571]

Mr O'Brien: To provide a meaningful answer to the first part of this question relating to average hourly rates would involve a disproportionate cost.

The Department for International Development provides information on its intranet to all staff regarding the sources of legal advice available. Four primary sources of legal advice are used: The Treasury Solicitor's Department (TSOL); Foreign and Commonwealth Office legal advisers (FCO Legal); Crown Agents Legal (CA Legal) and the Office of the Solicitor to the Advocate General (OSAG). Each of four suppliers have specific areas of expertise and approval must be obtained from the relevant budget holder prior to DFID staff engaging with a supplier for the provision of legal advice.

In 2010-11 spend with the four sources of legal advice noted above was: TSOL (£52,793.64) and CA Legal (£667,057.38).

Departmental Manpower

Stephen Barclay: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will publish an organogram showing the (a) number and (b) job titles of his Department's staff in (i) England and Wales and (ii) Scotland (A) in each team and (B) at each grade. [74169]

Mr O'Brien: The Department for International Development has 622 UK home civil servant staff based in England and 483 UK home civil servant staff based in Scotland. I have deposited in the Library a table of figures showing the number of job titles at each grade. DFID has no staff based in Wales.

Departmental Press: Subscriptions

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much his Department spent on newspapers, periodicals and trade profession magazines in 2010-11. [75003]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: The central accounting records and financial systems of the Department for International Development do not enable analysis of spend by this category of expenditure, without incurring disproportionate cost.

Departmental Procurement

Gordon Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what estimate he has made of the cost of employing civil servants to undertake procurement for his Department in (a) 2008-09, (b) 2009-10 and (c) 2010-11; and what estimate he has made of the cost of (i) employing civil servants and (ii) engaging consultants to undertake procurement for his Department in 2011-12. [73185]

Mr O'Brien: The costs of employing civil servants to undertake procurement in the Department for International Development's central procurement function are provided in the following table:

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>Total cost (£ million)</i>
2008-09	1.499
2009-10	1.479
2010-11	1.468

A similar trend is expected in the financial year 2011-12. However, procurement capacity is under continuous review to ensure the central procurement function has the capacity to effectively meet business requirements.

Departmental Public Expenditure

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much his Department spent on new furnishings in the last year. [72937]

Mr O'Brien: In the period from September 2010 to August 2011 the Department for International Development (DFID) UK spent £25,900 on new furnishings. Of this figure nearly £17,000 was for office chairs.

Developing Countries: Family Planning

Jim Dobbin: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton of 6 July 2011, *Official Report*, column 1265W, on developing countries: family planning, whether his Department has completed its negotiations with Marie Stopes International on a Programme Partnership Arrangement; and if he will make a statement. [74292]

Mr O'Brien: Negotiations between the Department for International Development (DFID) and Marie Stopes International (MSI) on Programme Partnership Arrangement support for the period 2011-14 have been completed. DFID is providing £4.3 million per annum to MSI subject to performance. This will include provision of advice and support directly to 3.2 million people on family planning and a further 2.6 million people will also indirectly benefit from this work. All details are available on the DFID website.

It is a major priority for the UK to improve sexual and reproductive health rights, including access to modern family planning methods in the developing world.

Government Procurement Card

Chris Kelly: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many Government Procurement Card transactions were made by his Department's officials withdrawing cash from automated teller machines from 2006-07 to 2009-10; at what cost; and on which dates. [73721]

Mr O'Brien: DFID's policy is not to allow any cash withdrawals by DFID staff in possession of Government Procurement Cards (GPC). All purchasing cards issued to DFID staff have the cash withdrawal facility blocked.

There were no GPC transactions by DFID staff to withdraw cash from automated teller machines from 2006-07 to 2009-10.

Horn of Africa: Agriculture

Lindsay Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what measures his Department is taking to improve the productivity and resilience of domestic agriculture in the Horn of Africa. [74763]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: In Ethiopia, DFID's investment to the agriculture sector focuses mainly on building the capacity of Ethiopian Government agricultural implementing agencies. For example, DFID supports the Ethiopian Government's Household Asset Building Programme, which improves the capacity of microfinance institutions in providing access to credit for some of the poorest farmers in Ethiopia. To date, 2,300 households have benefitted. DFID investments in the Protection of Basic Services and the Productive Safety Net Programme are also building the capacity of the agricultural extension workers in the crop production, livestock, and natural resource management and contribute to improving the natural resource base of smallholder farmers. Over five million smallholder farmers received this support. In addition, through DFID's humanitarian programme, 26,000 households received seeds and fertilizer, and 9,000 obtained animal health care support.

In Somalia, DFID supports the Food and Agriculture Organisation/World Bank implemented SEEDS (Sustainable Employment and Economic Development Somalia) programme, which is currently operational in Somali land and plans to expand into the severe affected areas of Puntland. SEEDS will directly lead to the creation of about 45,000 jobs, improvements in the investment climate and additional market-related investment. Due to agriculture and related trade being the mainstay of the Somali economy, almost all these jobs will be in agriculture directly or agriculture-related.

India: Overseas Aid

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent work his Department has undertaken in Orissa, India; and if he will make a statement. [73975]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: The Department for International Development's recent work in Orissa concentrates on two priorities:

improving poor people's health and nutrition through the state health sector reform programme; and

supporting disadvantaged communities to obtain public services, social entitlements and combat discrimination through our civil society support programmes.

Our health sector support has on an average prevented, 3,000 infant deaths annually since 2007 and, helped 521,000 women deliver in a health facility in 2010-11. Our civil society programmes will benefit one million socially excluded people by 2015.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether his Department's projects and programmes in India include the promotion of sustainable management of natural resources; and if he will make a statement. [73976]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: Between 2011 and 2015, UK development cooperation in India will focus on health and nutrition, education, water and sanitation, urban development and unlocking the potential of the private sector to promote jobs and opportunities for poor people. New plans are being developed under the International Climate Fund to support programmes that promote increased resilience of the rural poor in India to climate change, including through better natural resource management and sustainable agriculture.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if he will assess the effects of his Department's promotion of mineral-based industries in Orissa on the agricultural economy of the state; and if he will make a statement. [73977]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: The activities supported by DFID in Orissa do not include promotion of mineral-based industries. We are considering providing technical support to help Orissa diversify its industrial base, so that poor people will benefit from jobs and higher incomes. We have supported agricultural development in Orissa, including through the recently-concluded Western Orissa Rural Livelihoods Programme.

India: Poverty

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps his Department is taking to help strengthen the capacity of the Indian Government to develop and implement pro-poor policies; and if he will make a statement. [73974]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: We have agreed with the Government of India a new approach to our development cooperation, focusing on the poorest states of India; in particular Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Our support will help these states to develop and implement pro-poor policies, and make the most effective use of resources available from the Government of India. Our support will be targeted to the poorest women and girls, to help them get quality schooling, healthcare, nutrition and jobs. We will also help unlock the potential of the private sector to deliver jobs, products, infrastructure and basic services.

Nigeria: Corruption

Meg Hillier: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps his Department is taking to support anti-corruption programmes in Nigeria. [73933]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: Through a programme that started in November 2010, the UK is helping to improve the effectiveness of Nigerian anti-corruption agencies, particularly the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The programme will also support civil society to fight corruption. More broadly we are helping to improve public financial management at Federal level and in five DFID focal states.

Nigeria: Education

Meg Hillier: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what progress his Department has made in improving education provision in Nigeria through its programmes in that country. [73932]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: Since 2006 the UK has succeeded in increasing enrolment in six states by 35% and in getting 423,000 more girls into school in northern Nigeria where traditionally girls have not been encouraged to go to school. Through two programmes, over 4,000 head teachers have been trained in effective school management, 4,000 school-based management committees have been trained to monitor their schools and hold schools and teachers more to account, 500 inspectors have been trained and 3,000 scholarships awarded to poor women from rural areas to attend teacher training to return as teachers in their communities.

While encouraged by this progress, the UK is not complacent in the face of the extreme education challenges in Nigeria. The UK is therefore scaling up its effort to ensure more children, particularly girls, get access to education of ever-improving quality. The UK is therefore developing plans to help a further 800,000 children, of which 600,000 will be girls, into school by 2015 and to providing 5,000 further scholarships for women teachers.

Nigeria: Overseas Aid

Meg Hillier: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what plans he has to use development assistance to encourage growth and investment in Nigeria. [73931]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: The Bilateral Aid Review identified the importance of doing more to encourage growth and investment in Nigeria. The Prime Minister and I focused on improving trade and investment opportunities between Nigeria and the UK during our joint visit to the country in July this year. I also pushed forward this agenda on my visit in June.

Over the next four years British development assistance will be used to reduce the constraints on doing business and improve opportunities for investment. Examples include supporting reforms in the power sector, improving roads and other transport facilities, and supporting better access to financial services. British aid will help create investment opportunities in sectors which have the potential to create more jobs, such as agriculture, construction, and trade.

The Department continues to work closely with other international financial agencies such as the World Bank, and other parts of Her Majesty's Government to encourage investment in Nigeria.

Papua: Health

Jeremy Lefroy: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what steps he is taking to help (a) reduce malnourishment, (b) increase health standards and (c) reduce the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in West Papua; [73539]

(2) what discussions he has had with the Government of Indonesia on investment in health and education in West Papua; and what recent discussions he has had on the allocation of international humanitarian and development aid to support the people of West Papua. [73540]

Mr O'Brien: Indonesia is one of the world's fastest growing emerging economies. In April 2011, the Department for International Development (DFID)

agreed with the Government of Indonesia to focus future UK aid for Indonesia on issues related to climate change. The UK bilateral aid programme to Indonesia is planned to end in 2015.

DFID's climate change programme in Indonesia will have a particular focus on Papua, helping to reduce deforestation and promoting low carbon jobs and growth. We believe that working to reduce deforestation is the most effective way in which we can help to improve the lives of poor people in Indonesia in the long term. DFID officials meet regularly with counterparts in Papua, Jakarta and London to ensure that our programmes will deliver tangible benefits for the population of the province.

Rwanda: Human Rights

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent reports he has received on the human rights situation in Rwanda. [73770]

Mr O'Brien: The most recent reports the Secretary of State for International Development, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), has received on the human rights situation in Rwanda were a May 2011 Human Rights Watch report (focused on the community-based gacaca courts) and the Human Rights Watch submission to the International Development Committee, (also May 2011).

Respect for human rights is one of the partnership commitments related to DFID budget support. DFID and FCO continue to monitor this commitment closely and raise any concerns about democracy, human rights and good governance, regularly and at the highest levels. The Secretary of State is kept up to date by British high commission and DFID office, and raised these issues directly with President Kagame during a visit to Rwanda in July.

Rwanda: Overseas Aid

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what monitoring his Department applies to the use by the Government of Rwanda of overseas aid provided by the UK. [73763]

Mr O'Brien: All aid provided by the Department for International Development (DFID) has specific targets against which progress is formally monitored annually and at the conclusion of a programme. DFID officials in-country carry out frequent and detailed discussions with the Government of Rwanda about programme delivery, risks and mitigation.

Before any UK aid is provided to Government, an independent detailed fiduciary risk appraisal (FRA) is conducted to assess the risk of funds not being used for the purposes for which they were intended. These risks are monitored and updated at least annually.

Furthermore, in Rwanda, a country performance assessment framework (CPAF), agreed by donors and the Government, annually monitors progress against specific targets set out in Rwanda's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Tax Havens

Jim McGovern: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions he has had with the Prime Minister on increasing transparency of international tax havens. [73065]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: Ministers discuss G20 priorities regularly and tax transparency and tax havens are important issues in this context. The Global Forum on Tax Transparency and Exchange of Information, an intergovernmental body with worldwide membership, has been the main means by which G20 objectives have been delivered in this area, for example by encouraging the signing of Tax Information Exchange Agreements and conducting peer reviews of countries' implementation of international standards. The Global Forum is due to give its latest report to G20 Heads of Government at the Cannes summit in November.

Third Sector

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many letters he has received on funding for civil society organisations within his Department's area of responsibility in each month since 1 June 2010; and if he will make a statement. [73981]

Mr O'Brien: I regularly receive correspondence from civil society organisations inquiring about funding possibilities. I encourage people to refer to the DFID website at:

www.dfid.gov.uk

which provides a comprehensive summary of all of DFID's funds for civil society.

DFID does not keep a record of how many such requests are received each month. To provide information on how many requests for funding DFID has received from civil society organisations each month since June 2010 would incur disproportionate costs.

West Bank: Education

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what reports he has received of access to education for the Bedouin population in the West Bank. [73587]

Mr Duncan: We are aware that Palestinians in the West Bank, and especially Area C, have encountered various difficulties in accessing education, including restrictions on movement and/or inability to get planning permission for schools. These problems were highlighted in the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs report "West Bank Movement and Access Update" published in August.

While we have not received any reports into access to education specifically for the Bedouin population, we are aware of the risk of demolition of the school building in the village of Khan al Ahmar, which is used by children from the Jahalin Bedouin community. The UK funds the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to provide legal assistance and advice to Palestinians to help them understand and defend their housing, land and property rights. As part of this programme the

NRC is providing legal representation to the village of Khan al Ahmar to prevent the demolition of the school and houses. The British embassy in Tel Aviv has also made representations to Israeli Ministers, requesting that the demolition should not proceed.

Yemen: Schools

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps his Department is taking to help ensure that schools in Yemen remain open. [73059]

Mr Duncan: We are acutely aware of the multiple problems facing Yemeni children who want to go to school. In Sana'a we know of 32 schools occupied by armed forces. The defence attaché and chargé d'affaires are actively lobbying both sides to ask them to leave and allow children to return to school. We are also monitoring the overall situation closely and remain in regular contact with UNICEF about what we can do to address this problem.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Departmental Flags

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government pursuant to the answer of 13 September 2011, *Official Report*, column 1089W, on departmental flags, what information his Department holds on (a) the European Commission and (b) other European Union institutions imposing fines described as financial corrections on Government departments for failing to fly the flag of the European Union in front of its premises for one week every year, after Europe Day; and in any such case what the (i) date, (ii) department and (iii) amount of the fine so imposed was. [73440]

Robert Neill: My Department has always complied with the regulation and therefore has not received any financial corrections for failure to comply with Article 7(2)c of the Commission Regulation (EC) 1828/2006.

However, English European regional development fund programmes have, in the past, received corrections for projects' failure to comply with publicity regulations.

I refer my hon. Friend to my answer of 5 July 2011, *Official Report*, columns 1147-50W, for a list of these fines.

We do not hold information on other Government Departments.

Empty Property

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when his Department plans to publish its empty homes strategy. [73436]

Grant Shapps: We will be publishing the Government's approach to tackling empty homes later in the autumn as part of the wider housing strategy.

Empty Property: Electricity

Henry Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will consider requiring developers to lay telephone and electricity service ducting when building new residential and commercial properties. [73022]

Grant Shapps: The Department for Communities and Local Government has no current plans to introduce requirements for developers to lay telephone and electricity service ducting through either the Building Regulations or National Planning Policy.

Family Intervention Projects: Scotland

Ann McKechnin: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) how much funding will be allocated to the family intervention programme in respect of families with multiple problems living in Scotland; [74660]

(2) what discussions he has had with (a) the Secretary of State for Scotland, (b) the Scottish Executive and (c) Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the implementation of the family intervention programme for families suffering from multiple problems; [74661]

(3) how many families with multiple problems living in Scotland he expects to be requested to participate in a family-intervention programme. [74662]

Andrew Stunell: There have been no discussions. Responsibility for dealing with families with multiple problems living in Scotland, including the allocation of any funding has been devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

Housing: Construction

Mike Weatherley: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many central government-funded loan applications were approved for self-build homes in (a) Brighton and Hove, (b) Sussex and (c) nationally in (i) 2008, (ii) 2009 and (iii) 2010. [74549]

Grant Shapps: The Government have not approved any loans or funding for self build housing anywhere in England during the period 2008-10.

Mike Weatherley: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government pursuant to the answer of 22 March 2011, *Official Report*, columns 913-4W, on housing: construction, what progress has been made in preparing an action plan to make it easier for people to build their own homes. [74550]

Grant Shapps: 'An Action Plan to Promote the Growth of Self Build Housing', prepared by the Government-Industry Self Build Working Group, was published on 13 July 2011. It is available at:

www.nasba.org.uk

Localism Bill

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) pursuant to the contribution of the Minister of State of 17 May 2011, *Official Report*, column 274, on the Localism Bill, what definition of sovereign his Department uses; [73439]

(2) what the legal basis is of his proposed democratically agreed local planning plans. [73533]

Greg Clark: The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, section 38 (6), requires that local councils' decisions on planning applications must be made in accordance with a council's development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. While the weight given to other considerations is a matter for the decision maker, the Act is clear that the primary basis for deciding planning applications is the council's local plan.

We do not propose to alter the legal basis of councils' local plans, which is that they are prepared in accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

The Localism Bill proposes to abolish regional strategies which will increase the importance and weight of councils' local plans.

Mortgages: Government Assistance

Richard Fuller: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) what assessment he has made of the (a) effectiveness and (b) adequacy to meet demand of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme; [73046]

(2) what plans he has to amend the (a) availability and (b) terms of the Mortgage Rescue Scheme if mortgage interest rates rise. [73047]

Grant Shapps: The Government Mortgage Rescue Scheme is designed to be an option of last resort for vulnerable homeowners who are at risk of repossession and homelessness. Over 2,600 households have completed the full process to remain in their homes since the scheme began and almost 39,000 households with mortgage difficulties have received free advice from their local authority through the scheme.

The Government reviewed the scheme in July 2010, and again in February 2011, and made changes to improve the value for money by reducing unit costs to ensure that the scheme can help as many households as possible. The scheme will be kept under review to ensure it continues to provide value for money.

The spending review confirmed over £220 million funding for the Mortgage Rescue Scheme from April 2011 to deliver a two year scheme to provide on-going support to households facing repossession. The scheme is delivered by local authorities in partnership with registered social landlords and the Homes and Communities Agency. It is for local authorities to prioritise those households who are most appropriate for the Mortgage Rescue Scheme.

Planning Permission: Fraud

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what sanctions may be imposed on persons who have made false statements or provided false evidence in a planning application. [73703]

Robert Neill: The planning application process relies on people acting in good faith. There is an expectation that applicants and those representing them provide decision makers with true and accurate information upon which to base their decisions. However, under

section 65(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, it is an offence to issue a false ownership certificate knowingly or recklessly.

If a local planning authority feels that an application does not accurately or fully describe the proposed development, or that it is in any way misleading, it is entitled to ask the applicant to amend it or rectify any omissions before it agrees to process the application.

Planning applications are publicised during the determination period so that any interested parties have the opportunity to comment. If any party considers that the application includes deliberately misleading information, or lacks important information that would be material to the decision, they should report this to the relevant local authority who will decide what, action is appropriate. Planning permission can be refused on the grounds that information provided was insufficient to accurately describe the nature and anticipated impacts of the proposed development.

Regeneration: Finance

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he plans to announce allocations of transition funding for locally-led regeneration. [75211]

Grant Shapps: I expect to announce the outcome shortly.

Social Security Benefits

Richard Fuller: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether he plans to bring forward proposals to means test benefit claims for people who are subject to section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983 and living in residential care. [73048]

Paul Burstow: I have been asked to reply.

The Department has no plans to introduce means-testing for services provided under section 117 of the Mental Health Act. After-care under section 117 is only provided for a person's mental disorder. Where a person who is entitled to after-care under section 117 lives in residential care for reasons other than their mental disorder (for example, for reasons of physical disability) their entitlement to financial support from the local authority would be calculated in the same way as everyone else's.

Vacant Land

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his policy is on the development on (a) greenfield and (b) green belt land. [72976]

Greg Clark: The draft National Planning Policy Framework, currently undergoing public consultation, sets out our proposals for planning policy including the protection of greenfield and green belt land. The Framework maintains robust green belt protection. To preserve the natural environment, it states that local plans should seek to allocate land for development with the least environmental or amenity value, and should plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement

and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure. A copy of the Framework is in the Library of the House.

The abolition of Regional Strategies through the Localism Bill will remove 'top down' pressure to weaken green belt protection in 30 towns and cities. Our revision to planning guidance on traveller sites, currently in draft, proposes to strengthen protection of the green belt and open countryside.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Athletics

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what progress has been made on London's bid to host the 2017 World Athletics Championships; and if he will make a statement. [73175]

Mr Jeremy Hunt: The Minister for Sport and the Olympics, my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Hugh Robertson), recently attended the visit of the IAAF Evaluation Team to London last week, at which he confirmed Government support for the event and the retention of a running track at the Olympic Stadium. The Evaluation Team stated they were

"very pleased and impressed with what we have seen here in London",
and that it was

"very heartening to see that the commitment of our IAAF Member Federation to hosting the 2017 World Championships is fully supported by the British Government and the City of London".

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what (a) financial and (b) other support his Department has provided in support of London's bid to host the 2017 World Athletics Championships. [73176]

Mr Jeremy Hunt: The financial support for the bid to host the 2017 World Athletics Championships has been provided by UK Sport, UK Athletics and the Greater London Authority.

The Minister for Sport and the Olympics, my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Hugh Robertson), recently attended the visit of the IAAF Evaluation Team to London. The Minister and officials in my Department are involved in developing the bid and will continue to support it in the build up to the decision on 11 November 2011.

Broadband

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the allocation of funds for an urban superfast broadband pilot in the UK. [73479]

Mr Vaizey: The Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt), has discussed with the

Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), a range of ways to help to ensure that broadband provision in UK rural and urban areas is world-class, in accordance with the Government's aim of having the best broadband network in Europe by 2015.

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what discussions his Department has had with HM Treasury on the allocation of the unallocated Broadband Delivery UK funds. [73481]

Mr Vaizey: The Department has regular discussions with HM Treasury on Broadband Delivery UK's funding to ensure efficient and effective delivery.

Departmental Billing

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what the average cost to his Department was of processing the payment of an invoice in the latest period for which figures are available; and what proportion of invoices settled in that period his Department paid (a) electronically and (b) by cheque. [74990]

John Penrose: The average cost to this Department of processing the payment of an invoice for the period was £10.07. The proportion paid electronically (including by procurement card) was 99.16%, and by cheque, was 0.84%. These figures are based on costs and volumes from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.

Departmental Buildings

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what (a) building and (b) refurbishment projects his Department plans in (i) 2011-12 and (ii) 2012-13; and what the cost of each such project will be. [74366]

John Penrose: The Department has no current building or refurbishment projects planned for 2011-12 or 2012-13.

Departmental Fines

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how many transport-related fines his Department and its predecessors have settled on behalf of its staff in each year since 2007; and at what cost. [74369]

John Penrose: The Department has not settled any transport related fines on behalf of its staff in the period from 2007 onward.

Departmental Press: Subscriptions

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how much his Department spent on newspapers, periodicals and trade profession magazines in 2010-11. [74996]

John Penrose: This Department spent £25,432.06 on newspapers, periodicals and trade profession magazines in 2010-11.

Departmental Procurement

Gordon Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what estimate he has made of the cost of employing civil servants to undertake procurement for his Department in (a) 2008-09, (b) 2009-10 and (c) 2010-11; and what estimate he has made of the cost of (i) employing civil servants and (ii) engaging consultants to undertake procurement for his Department in 2011-12. [73194]

John Penrose: The following table shows the cost of employing civil servants to undertake procurement work in the Department, (i) in each of the last three financial years and (ii) the current financial year to date:

	£
2008-09	156,988.75
2009-10	164,577.25
2010-11 ¹	181,938
2011-12	88,563

¹ The increase in cost for 2010-11 was due to an additional staff resource, annual pay awards and an increase in statutory contributions.

The Department incurred no cost engaging consultants to undertake procurement in 2011-12.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how many contracts his Department has advertised on the Contracts Finder website in each month since May 2010; what the value was of such contracts; what proportion were awarded to (a) third sector organisations and (b) small businesses; and if he will make a statement. [75125]

John Penrose: This Department has advertised five contracts on the Contracts Finder website, since it launched in January 2011:

<http://www.contractsfinder.businesslink.gov.uk/>

In March 2011, £24,725 was awarded, but not to a third sector organisation or small business.

In April 2011, a contract was awarded to a third sector organisation, but has not yet been valued as it will be based on commission.

In May 2011, £34,680 was awarded to a small and medium enterprise (SME).

This month, two contracts have been advertised but not yet awarded. Both are open to SMEs to apply.

Departmental Sick Leave

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport for how many days on average his Department's staff in each pay grade were absent from work as a result of ill health in 2010-11. [75010]

John Penrose: The information requested can be found in the following table.

Grade	Average working days lost
D	16.1
C	8.3
B	4.2

Grade	Average working days lost
A	1.8
A(U)	2.1
SCS	1.7
Departmental average	4.8

Departmental Training

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how many external training courses staff of his Department attended in the last 12 months; and what the cost to the public purse was of each course. [74368]

John Penrose: Staff at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport attended 87 external courses in the last 12 months at a total cost of £113,211. We are unable to provide costing for each course without incurring disproportionate costs.

Film Industry: Tax Credit

Jim McGovern: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how much his Department spent under the Film Tax Credit scheme in each year since 2008. [74036]

Mr Vaizey: The Department does not keep the relevant details as the operation of the scheme is administered by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). HMRC does publish annual statistics on the relief given which can be found at:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/films/ftc-monitoring-summary-aug2010.pdf>

Jim McGovern: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how much his Department has allocated to the film tax credit scheme in each year from 2008 to 2013. [74189]

Mr Vaizey: DCMS does not allocate any budget to the film tax relief scheme. It is a tax relief dependent on the UK spend of film production companies.

Horse Racing

Philip Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport pursuant to the oral answer of 28 April 2011, *Official Report*, column 327, on race course pitch tenures, when his Department next plans to review the progress of negotiations on an agreement; and if he will make a statement. [74621]

John Penrose: My officials are in close and regular contact with the Federation of Racecourse Bookmakers Ltd (FRB) and the Racecourse Association (RCA) over the discussions on race course pitch tenures. I receive regular updates on the discussions between the two groups and, while progress is slow, it is being made. I would strongly encourage both sides to conclude the outstanding issues and reach agreements as soon as possible.

Mobile Phones

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport by what date he expects 4G mobile services to be deployed in (a) the UK and (b) other EU countries; and what assessment he has made of the potential effects on economic growth of the timing of such deployment. [74534]

Mr Vaizey: We expect the deployment of 4G mobile services to begin in 2013 in the UK. Across the rest of the EU, four countries (Finland, Norway, Sweden and Germany) have started deployments of commercial 4G networks. A number of others have completed national spectrum licensing processes but have not yet started to deploy networks and others, including the UK, are intending to undertake licensing exercises during 2012.

We have not made any assessment of the effects of deployment timing on economic growth.

Olympic Games 2012

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what meetings he has had in the last 12 months on the convergence and regeneration legacy of the London 2012 Olympics. [73516]

Mr Jeremy Hunt: I have met with the Mayor and representatives of the Olympic Park Legacy Company to discuss the future of the Park, including the legacy. The Mayor takes leadership of the East London Legacy Board, which draws together Government Departments, principally the Department for Communities and Local Government, local authorities and other key agencies involved in east London renewal, to explore more efficient and smarter ways to deliver improved services, and develop new strategic approaches to poor health and fitness. I am aware of the significant effort and contribution the six host boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest are making themselves, and the arrangements they have made in establishing a Host Borough Unit to work together to make the most of the significant investment in the Park.

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what assessment he has made of his Department's contribution to achieving convergence in the London boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Greenwich, Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest; and if he will make a statement. [73517]

Mr Jeremy Hunt: Convergence is an aim which reflects long-term shared ambitions across all levels of Government to secure regeneration of the area that improves conditions for local people. A wide range of regeneration initiatives have been targeted historically on east London, of which the Olympics is the latest and perhaps most striking example. It is too early in what is a very long term process to assess our contribution but I am confident that we are focusing on areas where we can add most value.

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what funding his Department has allocated to achieve (a) Olympic legacy goals overall and (b) the regeneration legacy in the host boroughs in the next three years. [73518]

Mr Jeremy Hunt: As set out in the Department's Legacy Plan, published in December 2010, the Government are committed to securing a lasting legacy from the Games which include ensuring that the Olympic Park can be developed as one of the principal drivers of regeneration in East London. The main departmental priorities and areas of spending are set out as follows, which are part of a wider commitment by Government to make the most of the Games.

We will be delivering a sporting legacy for young people, and bringing back a culture of competitive sport in schools. Sport England is investing up to £35.5 million of lottery funding from now until March 2015 in the School Games which is a key part of the Government's plans for a lasting sporting legacy. In addition, DCMS Exchequer funding of £2 million will be provided in 2011-12. We have also allocated £135 million of lottery funding towards Places, People, Play—the London 2012 mass participation legacy programme.

We are also committed to ensuring that we deliver a lasting tourism legacy. The Prime Minister recently announced the launch of the GREAT campaign, which is designed to promote the UK abroad, and aims to deliver long-term economic benefits from the unprecedented level of interest generated by the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The campaign aims to generate at least £1 billion in Olympic business boost and attract 4 million extra visitors. In addition, over the next four years VisitBritain will be running the "You're Invited" programme, which will capitalise on the international interest in the recent Royal Wedding, as well as next year's Diamond Jubilee and Olympic and Paralympic Games, and showcase Britain to the world. The programme is backed by a £100 million marketing fund, funded by the public and private sector.

Olympic venues and investment in training facilities will support local communities after the Games. We are preserving Whole Sport Plans and holding sports to account on meeting challenging participation targets.

75p of every pound the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) is spending on the venues and infrastructure construction programme for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games is an investment in long-term regeneration. Therefore a considerable physical legacy from the Games has already been largely delivered in the host boroughs. The Anticipated Final Cost (AFC) of the ODA programme, including risks, scope changes and inflation is currently £7.25 billion.

The job of transforming Olympic Park venues and infrastructure for legacy use after the Games has been passed from the ODA to the Olympic Park Legacy Company (OPLC).

With regard to the Cultural Olympiad, we have contributed £661,000 to part-fund a network of Creative Programmers in the English Regions, and £3.06 million to help ensure the success of the London 2012 Festival—the finale of the Cultural Olympiad taking place from 21 June to 9 September 2012. The funding is for a small

number of additional events that will be managed by LOCOC. The details of the events are being finalised, and will be announced this autumn.

Simon Kirby: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what projects and events in (a) Brighton Kemptown constituency, (b) East Sussex and (c) the South East have been awarded the inspire mark. [73800]

Hugh Robertson: Over 1,700 cultural or sporting projects across the UK have been awarded the Inspire mark. In the South East 156 projects have been awarded Inspire marks to date.

In the Brighton and East Sussex area there are six Inspire marked projects including Scanning for Gold a commission of the Universities of Brighton and Sussex Creative Campus Initiative. It will work with six university athletes, all training for London 2012, at the Clinical Imaging Sciences Centre, profiling them in action with professional photography. The result will be a photographic gallery exhibition that will be featured in arts, sports and medical venues in Sussex. Also, Gold Run a project to support learning-disabled and marginalised artists in the creation of an ambitious multi-genre performance. The performance will comprise three elements: film, music and visual art. The finished piece will be performed at Glyndebourne, the Brighton Corn Exchange and at the Chichester Festival Theatre. Other projects include 'Oh We Do like to be beside the Seaside', the Emergence of Consciousness, Creative Landscapes and a project run by the university of Brighton and Sussex.

In the Brighton area there are also a number of projects linked to Festival 2012 and the Games. At Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, work is under way to create an innovative new World Stories gallery, opening 21 June 2012 as part of London 2012 Festival. The gallery will display Brighton Museum's collections from Africa, Asia, the Americas and the Pacific alongside contemporary art and artefacts.

Stephen Phillips: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what steps his Department is taking to encourage a sustainable equestrian legacy following the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics. [75269]

Hugh Robertson: Greenwich was chosen as the venue for the Equestrian events for the London 2012 games with the support of the International Equestrian Federation and the British Equestrian Federation (BEF). Staging the events in Greenwich Park ensures a compact games, increases exposure and stimulates interest in equestrian sports with new audiences locally and across the UK. The London 2012 Organising Committee (LOCOC) staged the equestrian test event in July attended by 5,000 local people, including over 3,500 from local schools and colleges—the vast majority of whom attended an equestrian event for the first time.

Sport England is providing £4.2 million of funding to the BEF between 2009 and 2013 to increase access to equestrian sports under its Whole Sports Plan as part of the 2012 legacy.

Olympic Games 2012: Facilities

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport whether he expects redevelopment of the Olympic stadium to be complete before the commencement of the first lease in 2014.

[74673]

Hugh Robertson: We anticipate the Olympic stadium will be converted ahead of the first tenants taking occupation.

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what steps he is taking to ensure that demand to occupy the Olympic stadium extends beyond the first letting period.

[74674]

Hugh Robertson: The Olympic Park Legacy Company (OPLC) will be commencing a process shortly to identify prospective tenants for the Olympic stadium and, as part of that process, will determine the appropriate letting periods.

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what assessment he has made of the effects of the decision to retain the Olympic stadium in public ownership on the stability of the 25 year regeneration plan for the East End of London.

[74675]

Hugh Robertson: Ensuring there is a sustainable, long-term legacy for the Olympic stadium remains an integral part of the plans for regenerating the park and its surroundings. Retaining the stadium in public ownership will not depart from this ambition.

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport whether he expects decisions to have been made on the future (a) ownership and (b) occupation of the Olympic stadium before the London 2012 Olympics commence.

[74676]

Hugh Robertson: Ownership of the Olympic stadium will remain, as now, with the Olympic Park Legacy Company (OPLC). It also remains the intention that OPLC will have completed negotiations with prospective tenants for the stadium before the commencement of the 2012 games.

Public Sector

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport (1) what steps he is taking to put in place a right to provide for public sector workers to take over the running of services; and if he will make a statement;

[74776]

(2) what steps his Department has taken to encourage the development of public service mutuals in its area of responsibility; and if he will make a statement.

[74833]

John Penrose: The Department fully supports the idea of a "right to provide" for public service workers and believes that mutualisation can be a powerful tool in improving the quality of services. We are working closely with the Cabinet Office on this agenda and will

give detailed consideration to any employee applications to run services for which the Department is directly responsible.

Radio Frequencies

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport if he will make it his policy to take account of the dates for the release of 800 MHz and 2600 MHz spectrum in the Best in Europe scorecard developed by Broadband Delivery UK.

[74535]

Mr Vaizey: The Best in Europe scorecard will take into account a range of factors, including mobile data coverage, in measuring how to get the best superfast broadband network in Europe.

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport for what reasons community radio stations operating on an FM frequency are not able to make community radio licence applications for the north-west in 2012-13.

[74707]

Mr Vaizey: Ofcom have begun a third round of community radio licensing and expect to invite applications from the north-west during the first half of 2013. However, there are some areas of the north-west where Ofcom will be unable to invite applications for FM licences due to a lack of available frequencies. Ofcom will consider at the time applications are invited whether capacity on MW might be available in some of the areas.

S4C

Mr Mark Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what assessment he has made of the effect on S4C's independence of having BBC employees on its management team.

[74006]

Mr Vaizey: The S4C-BBC partnership arrangements will ensure a strong, sustainable future for S4C and Welsh language broadcasting. S4C, the BBC and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport are currently in discussion about the details of how the partnership arrangements will work.

Mr Mark Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport whether he intends to hold a public consultation on any future proposals to change the governance arrangements for S4C.

[74007]

Mr Vaizey: The Government are committed to consulting interested parties on S4C's new governance arrangements before they are implemented.

Television: Advertising

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what recent representations he has received on the advertisement of abortion services on television channels.

[74222]

Mr Vaizey: The Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, my hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt), has received 232 representations on the advertisement of post-conception advice services on television over the course of the last six months (since 1 April 2011).

Television: Local Broadcasting

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what steps his Department is taking to remove barriers to market entry experienced by local television producers. [74221]

Mr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what steps he plans to take to ensure sufficient locally-generated television content in programming in England. [74180]

Mr Vaizey: The steps the Government plan to take are set out in the two recent publications released by the Department: The new framework for local TV in the UK and the Local TV Pioneer locations document.

The Government expect to publish their response and confirm the proposals in the near future. This will include the steps the Government propose to take to address market barriers for local TV including reservation of local spectrum, electronic programme guide prominence and a fit for purpose regulatory regime.

Third Sector

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how many letters he has received on funding for civil society organisations within his Department's area of responsibility in each month since 1 June 2010; and if he will make a statement. [73986]

John Penrose: We have received 1,441 pieces of correspondence relating to funding since 1 June 2010. Some of these letters concern funding for civil sector organisations but also funding for areas such as community clubs, sports, arts and leisure projects and libraries. We are unable to determine the number of letters that are solely related to civil sector organisations, as we do not record the information in this way.

A breakdown by month can be found in the following table:

Date	Volume
<i>2010</i>	
June	75
July	104
August	77
September	96
October	140
November	121
December	81
<i>2011</i>	
January	84
February	60
March	95
April	94

Date	Volume
May	97
June	83
July	80
August	62
September 11	61
October 11	31

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how much direct funding his Department provided to each civil society organisation it funded in (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12; how much it expects to provide in (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14 and (iii) 2014-15; and if he will make a statement. [74834]

John Penrose: The Department provides direct funding to its arm's length bodies through grant in aid. It also provides funding, specific grants, strategic commissioning and the procurement of services to a range of bodies. However, it does not record the status of the bodies that it makes payments to, and to identify those which class themselves as civil society organisations, could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Tourism

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what recent assessment the Government have made of the effect on levels of inbound tourism of the cost of a visa to visit the UK compared to the cost of a visa to visit a country in the Schengen zone. [74037]

John Penrose: The cost of a visit visa for the UK is significantly below the cost of processing an application. These costs are associated with securing the border and the Home Office only recover just over half of those. The fee charged helps to support the investment we make to ensure visas are issued safely, securely and quickly. Very few people choose their holiday purely on the basis of the cost of a visa, but rather on whether the overall cost of the trip (including much bigger items such as travel or accommodation) represents good overall value. That's why econometric analysis of available data undertaken by the Home Office has indicated that visa fee levels have a minimal impact on application volumes. None the less it would be wrong to ignore the issue, which is why the Government's Tourism Policy (published in March) aims to improve productivity across the entire visitor economy and, of course, the cost and convenience of visas are part of this.

As a result, improving the pre-entry visa experience is a key part of the Government's new Tourism Policy. I am working closely with the Home Office and the UK Border Agency (UKBA) to look at simplifying and improving the process of arranging a visa. For example, from the end of this year, the UKBA is moving to online visa processing and has already published visa application guidance in five key foreign languages.

Tourism: Finance

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport whether (a) VisitBritain, (b) VisitEngland, (c) VisitScotland and (d) VisitWales has been allocated any additional budget for front-line

marketing to develop the tourism potential of (i) the London 2012 Olympics and (ii) the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth games. [75051]

John Penrose: We are making available up to £4 million from the public sector funding package for the Olympic and Paralympic games to support a domestic tourism campaign to maximise the economic benefits from the Torch Relay and the Cultural Olympiad. This is an investment in a key objective of the Olympic programme: to ensure that the benefits from the games are felt throughout the UK. The Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt), has invited the devolved nations to participate in this campaign, which has been discussed with ministerial colleagues. VisitEngland are working with the tourist boards of the devolved nations to take this forward.

VisitBritain have already launched a four-year international marketing campaign ("You're Invited"), aimed at core and emerging markets, based on investment of almost £50 million from their funds, and matched by equivalent support from the private sector. This will cover the period of not only the Olympic and Paralympic games, but also other significant sporting events such as the Commonwealth games and Rugby League World cup too.

We are also examining options for a complementary tourism marketing effort, supporting the Prime Minister's "GREAT" initiative, to promote Britain abroad. Allocations for this have not been finalised yet.

DEFENCE

Armoured Fighting Vehicles

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the preferred bidder for the Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme will be announced. [74113]

Peter Luff: An announcement concerning the main investment decision for the Warrior Capability Sustainment Programme will be made shortly.

Astute Class Submarines

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what his most recent estimate is of the (a) completion date and (b) cost to the public purse of the Valiant Jetty programme. [74128]

Peter Luff: The latest forecast completion date for the Valiant Jetty project is September 2012, which puts the in-service date out to December 2012. This is nearly four years after the contracted completion date of October 2008.

The current contractual maximum price of the project is £134 million. However, the contractor, AMEC, is forecasting an out-turn of around £92 million over this figure. Under the terms of the contract AMEC is responsible for the first £50 million of this cost overrun. The Ministry of Defence may be liable for a proportion of any cost overrun beyond £50 million over the maximum

price, but only insofar as AMEC is able to show that the additional costs in question have been reasonably and properly incurred.

Departmental Billing

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of invoices from suppliers his Department paid within 10 days of receipt in July and August 2010. [74323]

Peter Luff: The percentage of UK supplier invoices paid by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) within 10 working days for July 2010 was 98.9%, and for August 2010 was 98.7%. These invoices were for UK suppliers only. Information for overseas suppliers is not held in the format requested.

The MOD now reports percentage of invoices paid within five working days. The requirement for the Department to report percentage of invoices paid within 10 working days was changed in May 2010. The percentage of UK supplier invoices paid within five working days for July 2010 was 95.7% and for August was 96.8%.

The monthly MOD prompt payment statistics can be found on the following website:

<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/FinanceandProcurement/FMSSC/MinistryOfDefencePaymentPerformance.htm>

European Fighter Aircraft

Graham Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what discussions (a) he and (b) his officials have had with their counterparts in (i) HM Treasury and (ii) the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills on a slow-down in orders for tranche 3A of the Eurofighter; and when such discussions took place; [73795]

(2) what discussions (a) he and (b) his officials have had with BAe systems on a slow-down in orders for tranche 3A of the Eurofighter; and when such discussions took place; [73796]

(3) what discussions (a) he and (b) his have had with their counterparts from partner core nations on a slow-down in tranche 3A of the Eurofighter; and when such discussions took place; [73797]

(4) whether his Department has (a) undertaken and (b) evaluated any impact assessment on the potential effects on (i) levels of employment and (ii) the economy of a slow-down in orders for tranche 3A of the Eurofighter; and when any such assessment was made; [73798]

(5) when the meeting took place which decided to slow down production of tranche 3A of the Eurofighter; and who represented his Department at that meeting. [73799]

Peter Luff: A proposal was made in May 2010 by the Eurofighter GmbH consortium to slow down rate of production of Typhoon Tranche 3A aircraft for all four partner nations. The Typhoon partner nations agreed to this proposal in July 2011.

The agreement on production slowdown aims to protect the industrial capacity of the Eurofighter partner companies to service export orders for Typhoon while meeting the requirements of the partner nations. The UK Government are fully committed to the Typhoon

programme and potential exports, and recognises the wider benefits that these bring to the UK economy in terms of revenue and jobs for both the short and long term.

The proposal was agreed by Ministers and by officials, both within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and with our Typhoon international partners. Officials from the UK Trade and Investment's Defence and Security Organisation provided some input to the issue, but were not involved in this decision as it falls within the MOD's delegated authority. HM Treasury was also not involved in this decision for the same reason. The Eurofighter partner companies, which include BAE Systems, were instrumental in negotiating acceptable arrangements with the partner nations from the outset.

Military Afloat Reach and Sustainability Programme

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he expects the final downselection in the Military Afloat Reach and Sustainability tanker contract to occur; [74131]

(2) what the total cost to the public purse is of the Military Afloat Reach and Sustainability tanker contract; [74275]

(3) on what date he expects the (a) first and (b) last Military Afloat Reach and Sustainability tankers to be delivered to the Royal Navy. [74276]

Peter Luff: Final bids have been requested from the bidders in the ongoing international competition for the Military Afloat Reach and Sustainability (MARS) Tanker contract. We anticipate announcing the winning bidder early next year.

I am withholding information on the cost of the contract and the planned delivery schedule as their disclosure would prejudice commercial interests.

Military Aircraft

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the purchase cost was of the Sentinel R1; and if he will make a statement. [73699]

Peter Luff: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence, my noble Friend, Lord Astor of Hever, to the noble Lord, Lord Moonie in the other place, on 18 November 2010, *Official Report, House of Lords*, columns WA219-220.

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which aircraft have been identified as potential replacements for the Sentinel R1; and if he will make a statement. [73700]

Peter Luff: There is currently no plan to replace the Sentinel R1. The withdrawal of this capability will be mitigated by utilising a number of other platforms and assets including unmanned air systems such as Watchkeeper.

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects the Sentinel R1 to be retired from service; and if he will make a statement. [73701]

Peter Luff: As announced in the strategic defence and security review, our current plan is to withdraw the Sentinel system from service when it is no longer required to support operations in Afghanistan.

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of (a) retaining, (b) upgrading and (c) replacing the Sentinel R1; and if he will make a statement. [73702]

Peter Luff: As announced in the strategic defence and security review, our current plan is to withdraw the Sentinel system from service when it is no longer required to support operations in Afghanistan. There are, therefore, no estimates of the cost to retain, upgrade or replace the platform.

Military Bases

Mike Crockart: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the monetary value was of contracts awarded to local firms by (a) Craigiehall, (b) Redford and (c) Dreghorn Barracks in each of the last five years. [73352]

Peter Luff: This information is not held in the format requested.

Scout Specialist Vehicle

Mr Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what obligations his Department has placed on General Dynamics to manufacture and assemble the Scout Specialist Vehicle in the UK. [72961]

Peter Luff: The Ministry of Defence has placed no contractual obligations on General Dynamics UK (GDUK) to manufacture the Scout Specialist Vehicles (Scout SV) platforms in the UK. GDUK has, however, indicated that a significant proportion of the activity may be conducted in the UK.

In addition, the contract allows for the transfer of the assembly integration and test work on the platforms from off-shore facilities, to the Defence Support Group in the UK. A value for money decision on whether to transfer this work will be taken later in the programme, closer to production. An enabling arrangement for industrial participation has also been put in place with General Dynamics, that will see work being carried out in the UK, or assistance being provided to UK exporters to Spain (assembly of ASCOD, the base vehicle for Scout SV is currently conducted in Spain).

Victims of Crime

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the likely effects of adopting in its present form the proposed EU Directive establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime on matters for which his Department is responsible; and whether his Department was consulted on the decision to opt in to that proposed Directive. [73430]

Mr Gerald Howarth: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) was involved in the Government's consideration of whether the UK should opt in to the proposed EU Victims Directive, and made an assessment of the likely effects.

While in many respects, a number of the requirements of the directive are consistent with the MOD's existing non-statutory Service code of practice (Joint Service Publication 839), there were found to be a number of provisions where the intended effect was unclear, and where it was assessed there was potential negative impact on the Service Justice System. These included the areas of:

- Application of the directive outside the EU
- Application outside the UK but inside the EU
- Directly enforceable rights.

These points have accordingly been reflected in the UK negotiating mandate for the directive.

PRIME MINISTER

E-mail

Jack Dromey: To ask the Prime Minister whether (a) he, (b) his officials and (c) his special advisers use private e-mail accounts for the conduct of government business. [73204]

The Prime Minister: The Ministerial Code, the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers and the Civil Service Code set out how Ministers, officials and special advisers should conduct government business.

Environment Protection

Luciana Berger: To ask the Prime Minister whether he plans to attend the Global Green Growth Forum in Denmark. [74885]

The Prime Minister: Officials from the Department of Energy and Climate Change attended the Global Green Growth Forum on 11 October.

Hillsborough Stadium

Steve Rotherham: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues since his appointment on the unredacted release of the Hillsborough cabinet minutes; [74301]

(2) when he last discussed with the Deputy Prime Minister the release of unredacted Government files relating to the 1989 Hillsborough disaster. [74767]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), on 13 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 506W. I have regular discussions with the Deputy Prime Minister and others on a range of subjects.

Ministerial Policy Advisers: Pay

Angus Robertson: To ask the Prime Minister (1) what the pay band is of the special adviser in his Office for liaison between 10 Downing street and the Scotland Office; [74279]

(2) what the pay band is of the civil servant in 10 Downing street who is to manage Scottish matters at an official level; [74280]

(3) whether he has appointed any other special advisers or civil servants to advise or assist 10 Downing street on Scottish matters since September 2011; and at what (a) salary and (b) other set up or relocation cost. [74281]

The Prime Minister: An updated list of special advisers, and their pay bands, is published quarterly. Information about the pay bands of civil servants working in the Cabinet Office can be found on the Cabinet Office website:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/structure-charts-cabinet-office>

Taxation

Keith Vaz: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with (a) ministerial colleagues and (b) others on the introduction of a tax to discourage people from eating fattening foods and drinks. [73803]

The Prime Minister: I have discussions with ministerial colleagues and others on a range of subjects.

Visits Abroad

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Prime Minister (1) which human rights cases he raised with his Russian counterpart during his recent visit to the Russian Federation; [73283]

(2) what discussions he had on freedom of expression online and in print during his recent visit to the Russian Federation; [73284]

(3) which (a) business people and (b) special advisers accompanied him on his recent visit to the Russian Federation; [73285]

(4) what discussions he had on cyber security during his recent visit to the Russian Federation. [73286]

The Prime Minister: I refer the right hon. Member to the articles on the No. 10 website about my visit to Russia:

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pm-visits-russia-to-boost-trade/>

and to the answer I gave on 14 September 2011, *Official Report*, column 1027.

During my visit I had a meeting with a number of Russian human rights activists. We discussed a broad range of issues including the importance of debate online and in print.

There was no substantive discussion on the issue of cyber security during my visit. However we continue to engage with Russia on this subject in the run-up to the London Conference on Cyberspace in November, most recently through an expert level visit to Moscow in September.

As set out in the Ministerial Code, details of my overseas travel will be published at least quarterly. I have placed in the Libraries of both Houses a list of the business delegation who accompanied me.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Badgers

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what representations she has received from the scientific community on her plans to pilot the free shooting of badgers. [73894]

Mr Paice: We have received a large number of representations, including from members of the scientific community. DEFRA's Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Bob Watson, has also discussed the evidence with a group of leading scientists, who were able to agree on a number of key points. Their conclusions have been published on the DEFRA website.

Biofuels: Timber

Graham Stringer: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of wood combusted at each biomass generating plant was (a) virgin and (b) waste wood in the last year for which figures are available. [73876]

Gregory Barker [*holding answer 13 October 2011*]: I have been asked to reply.

Figures are not currently available on a per plant basis. Based on returns submitted to Ofgem for the renewables obligation period April 2010 to March 2011, a total of 1,818,326 metric tonnes of wood were reported to be combusted, of which 28% comprised waste wood and 72% virgin material in biomass generating plant comprising co-firing, dedicated biomass and dedicated biomass with CHP. The following table provides a breakdown by generating type.

	Metric tonnes	
	Waste wood	Virgin wood
Co-firing	59,383	813,487
Dedicated biomass	156,282	326,236
Dedicated biomass plus CHP	296,816	166,122

Bovine Tuberculosis

Glyn Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what the cost to her Department was of measures to combat bovine TB in cattle in each of the last 10 years. [69409]

Mr Paice: The following table shows the costs of combating bovine TB over the last 10 years¹.

Year ²	Costs (£ million) ³
2010-11	126.9
2009-10	131.6
2008-09	108.4
2007-08	82
2006-07	81.4
2005-06	100.1
2004-05	90.2
2003-04	88.9
2002-03	65.8

Year ²	Costs (£ million) ³
2001-02	27.3

¹ Data have been extracted from DEFRA's financial records system.

² Expenditure figures from 2009-10 onwards have been calculated on a different basis to previous years as a result of the full absorption of the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) costs including Estates, IT, Travel and Subsistence, Shared Services and overheads.

³ Expenditure figures include: cattle testing, other surveillance activity, cattle compensation (England only), and Research and Development.

TB is a serious animal health problem. Tens of thousands of cattle are slaughtered every year. It can be devastating for affected farmers. And the cost to the taxpayer is huge—it is set to exceed £1 billion over the next 10 years in England alone. That is why this Government are committed to ensuring we have a comprehensive and balanced package of measures to tackle TB, with eradication as our ultimate long-term goal.

Carbon Emissions

Graham Stringer: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what information her Department holds on the (a) level and (b) sources of black carbon emissions in the UK. [72303]

Mr Paice: The Department measures black carbon concentrations in air at a number of locations across the UK and data are made publically available through the UK Air Information resource:

<http://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/>

Measurements are available for 2009 and 2010 and no clear trend has yet emerged. Annual average concentrations in 2010 ranged from 0.5 microgrammes/m³ at Harwell in Oxfordshire, a rural site, to 8.8 microgrammes/m³ at the Marylebone Road in central London, a roadside site.

UK specific inventories for the sources of black carbon are not produced by DEFRA at present. However, analysis carried out by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) estimates that in 2005 the major source categories making up 93% of UK black carbon emissions were: diesel vehicles for both on and off-road use (77%); flaring of oil and gas industry wastes (6.8%); domestic solid fuel burning (6.4%); and barbeque use (2.1%). As a result of existing measures to reduce emissions of particulate matter from these sectors, IIASA estimates that UK emissions will reduce significantly between 2005 and 2020, from 29.1 kilo tonnes to 8.3 kilo tonnes.

Chemicals

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether she has considered the merits of regulating the use of flame-retardant chemicals. [72355]

Mr Paice: The control and use of all chemicals in the EU, including flame retardants, is regulated by the EU REACH (registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals) regulation. There are many different flame retardant chemicals with varying properties, hazard profiles, uses and modes of exposure. For this reason, it is appropriate to take a risk-based approach to regulation for each chemical, and where there is evidence of particular risk, to consider controls to minimise those risks to human health and the environment.

Coastal Areas: Access

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent discussions she has had with Natural England on the implementation of the coastal access provisions under Part 9 of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009 beyond the initial coastal stretches set out by Natural England in March 2011. [73893]

Richard Benyon: We will introduce the new right of coastal access on a stretch of the English coast at Weymouth in time for the start of the Olympic games. Natural England is also working on proposals to implement coastal access in a further five areas around the coast.

We are reviewing the costs and lessons learnt from the current implementation with Natural England so we can ensure that coastal access is delivered as cost effectively as possible.

Fish Discards

Michael Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress she has made on reform of fisheries policy to reduce fish discards; and if she will make a statement. [73896]

Richard Benyon: Reform of the common fisheries policy must tackle discards; I therefore support the EU Commission in its ambition to eliminate discards. We need a flexible framework that enables fishermen to minimise discards in ways that suit different fisheries. I will continue to argue for change drawing on the work in the UK with the fishing industry, for example our trials of catch quotas and use of more selective fishing gear.

Food Labelling

Mary Macleod: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions she has had with her EU counterparts on food labelling legislation. [73890]

Mr Paice: Improving food labels is a priority for the coalition. I am pleased that the EU Regulation on the Provision of Food Information to consumers was agreed on 29 September. We successfully negotiated mandatory origin labelling for fresh meat and a commitment to extend origin labelling to other foods, if practical. This is a significant step forward in the provision of better labelling for consumers.

Inland Waterways

Claire Perry: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps she is taking to ensure the future prosperity of inland waterways; and if she will make a statement. [73892]

Richard Benyon: In April 2012 and subject to parliamentary approval, we plan to move British Waterways in England and Wales to civil society. The new Canal and River Trust will be endowed with a valuable property portfolio, and supported by a long-term Government funding agreement. As a charity, it will generate new commercial and charitable income, ensuring the sustainability of the waterways into the future.

Livestock: Animal Welfare

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps her Department is taking to prevent attacks on horses and other livestock. [74219]

Mr Paice: There are already laws in place that make it an offence to cause unnecessary suffering to an animal. It is also an offence to allow a dog to attack livestock. If anyone has any information about such incidents they should report the matter to the police.

Mobile Spectrum: Auction

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the potential effects on rural communities of the timetable for the auction of mobile spectrum. [73891]

Richard Benyon: Ofcom has announced that it expects the 800 MHz and 2.6 GHz auction will take place in the last quarter of 2012.

The timing is entirely a matter for Ofcom, but we share its view that this new timetable is unlikely to have a significant impact on the availability of services to consumers in rural areas, as the spectrum will not be available for its new use until 2013.

National Planning Policy Framework

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many officials in her Department worked on the draft of the national planning policy framework produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government. [71885]

Richard Benyon: One official led DEFRA's engagement with the Department for Communities and Local Government on the draft National Planning Policy Framework, consulting a wide range of colleagues as necessary.

Retailing Sustainable Local Produce

Chris White: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps she is taking to promote the use of sustainable local produce by retailers. [73895]

Mr Paice: This Government are determined to support British food and farming. I strongly agree that retailers and the catering industry should give people the opportunity to buy food that is from their local area. To do this we need to provide consumers with honest information on the provenance of the food they buy. This is why clearer origin labelling is a key commitment in the Government's programme.

Wildlife: Medicine

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what requirements there are on veterinary practices to provide to the customer information on the prices of widely used veterinary medicines. [74153]

Mr Paice: The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons' guide to professional conduct requires veterinary surgeons and practices to inform clients of the price of veterinary medicines when requested.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Afghanistan: Females

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to encourage the Government of Afghanistan to protect women's rights to (a) employment, (b) education, (c) freedom of movement, (d) political participation and (e) political representation. [73865]

Alistair Burt: We continue to work closely with the Afghan Government, Afghan civil society organisations, international partners and organisations to improve the status of women in Afghanistan, so they can play as full a part as possible in a future, peaceful Afghanistan.

We provide support to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Justice's Human Rights Support Unit. Both institutions are vital for the progress of women's rights in Afghanistan. In addition, UK aid is creating opportunities for economic growth and social well-being, for example by supporting women's technical and vocational education and training.

Afghanistan: Human Rights

Mr Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with the Government of Afghanistan on the human rights of women in Afghanistan; and if he will make a statement. [75101]

Alistair Burt: Embassy officials in Kabul continue to press the Afghan Government to implement their national and international human rights commitments, including the elimination of violence against women law and the UN convention of the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. We have made clear that any political settlement should be inclusive and address the concerns of all Afghan citizens.

We continue to provide support to the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Justice's Human Rights Support Unit. Both institutions are vital for the progress of women's rights in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan: Pakistan

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reason his Department did not produce a long-term soft power strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan in May 2011 as previously planned; and when he expects such a strategy to be published. [73289]

Mr Hague: A long-term soft power strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan was developed during the first half of 2011 and was finalised in August 2011. To protect the Government's ability to promote these interests overseas, we do not intend to publish this detailed strategy.

Afghanistan: Peace Negotiations

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has made to the Government of Afghanistan on the adoption of benchmarks on (a) school attendance by girls, (b) women's access to health care, (c) maternal mortality and infant health and (d) operation by aid workers, civil society activists and women's human rights campaigners in areas under the control of the respective parties arising from reconciliation talks with insurgent groups. [73136]

Alistair Burt: We have made clear that any political settlement should be inclusive and address the concerns of all Afghan citizens. We welcome the work of the Government of Afghanistan to take forward a political process of reconciliation and reintegration for Afghans who meet its end-state conditions of renouncing violence, breaking ties with al-Qaeda and abiding by the Afghan Constitution, including its protection for all Afghan women and men.

We continue to follow developments on this situation closely.

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what representations his Department has made to the Government of Afghanistan on the adoption of benchmarks in respect of the joint implementation of human rights obligations arising from reconciliation talks with insurgent groups; [73137]

(2) what representations his Department has made to the Government of Afghanistan on the human rights obligations of parties involved in reconciliation talks with insurgent groups. [73138]

Alistair Burt: We have made clear that any political settlement should be inclusive and address the concerns of all Afghan citizens. We welcome the work of the Government of Afghanistan to take forward a political process of reconciliation and reintegration for Afghans who meet its end-state conditions of renouncing violence, breaking ties with al-Qaeda and abiding by the Afghan Constitution, including its protection for all Afghan men and women.

We continue to remind the Afghan Government to uphold its commitments to protect the human rights of all Afghans.

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs with reference to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, what representations his Department has made to the Government of Afghanistan on the involvement of women in the planning of and participation in any reconciliation talks with the Taliban and other insurgent groups. [73139]

Alistair Burt: The UK National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 includes a country action plan for Afghanistan. Our activities in the plan include support to the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) to build awareness of the APRP and the peace process among women; build the capacity of women involved in the peace process; and increase women's participation in the APRP. In addition, there are nine female members of the High Peace Council, who sit on all the committees.

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has made to the Government of Afghanistan on the involvement of civic society, including minorities, women and the business community in any reconciliation talks with the Taliban and other insurgent groups. [73140]

Alistair Burt: We have made clear that any political settlement should be inclusive and address the concerns of all Afghan citizens. We welcome the work of the Government of Afghanistan to take forward a political process of reconciliation and reintegration for Afghans who meet its end-state conditions of renouncing violence, breaking ties with al-Qaeda and abiding by the Afghan constitution, including its protection for all Afghan women and men. The High Peace Council includes representatives of all the major ethnic groups, civil society, women and former insurgents.

Arms Trade: Treaties

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps he has taken towards the negotiation of an international arms trade treaty. [73290]

Mr Hague: The UK is fully committed to securing a robust and effective arms trade treaty (ATT). The UK delegation played an active and constructive role in the July 2011 Preparatory Committee meeting, at which further progress towards an ATT was made; including a joint P5 statement in support of the UN process. We continue to press with key states ahead of the crucial Negotiating Work Conference in July 2012; while also working closely with civil society and the UK defence industry to build widespread support for the Treaty.

British Indian Ocean Territory

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to change the number of officials in his Department stationed in the British Indian Ocean Territory. [74501]

Mr Bellingham: There are no members of Foreign and Commonwealth staff stationed in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). The BIOT Administration is located at the FCO in London.

The Ministry of Defence currently has about 40 staff stationed in the BIOT, including the Commissioner's Representative.

British Indian Ocean Territory: Marine Environment

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is on the designated Marine Protected Area surrounding the Chagos archipelago. [74247]

Mr Bellingham: The British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) declared a Marine Protected Area (MPA) on 1 April 2010 to ensure the ongoing protection of the unique environment of the Territory.

A Science Advisory group has been created to draw up a scientific framework for the MPA and to advise on research and other activity to enhance its effectiveness.

The BIOT Administration is working closely with interested Chagossian groups and non-governmental organisations to work on specific environmental projects in BIOT.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many infringements of the designated Marine Protected Area surrounding the Chagos Archipelago have been reported to his Department since the area's inception. [74248]

Mr Bellingham: There have been 12 infringements of the Marine Protected area in the British Indian Ocean territory since 1 April 2010.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department has spent on enforcement of the British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos Islands) Marine Protected Area since the area's inception. [74249]

Mr Bellingham: In the period since the declaration of the British Indian Ocean Territory Marine Protected Area (MPA) on 1 April 2010, a total of £3,089,943.31 has been spent on enforcement of the MPA. This includes the costs of the British Indian Overseas Territories patrol vessel, which performs a range of functions in the Territory.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many of his officials have duties associated with enforcing the British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos Islands) Marine Protected Area. [74250]

Mr Bellingham: There are a number of officials of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) who have duties associated with the enforcement of the BIOT Marine Protected Area.

The BIOT Commissioner is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen by instructions through a Secretary of State. Mr Colin Roberts (Director of the FCO's Overseas Territories Directorate (OTD)) is the current BIOT Commissioner.

Under section 7 of the BIOT (Constitution) Order 2004, the Commissioner appoints a Commissioner's Representative, a Deputy Commissioner and a BIOT Administrator. There is in addition an Assistant Administrator.

The current Commissioner's representative is a Royal Navy commander appointed by the Ministry of Defence as Commander British Forces at BIOT. The Deputy Commissioner and the BIOT Administrator are currently members of OTD.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has any plans to propose the repeal of the legislation establishing the British Indian Ocean Territory (Chagos Islands) Marine Protected Area. [74251]

Mr Bellingham: There are no plans to repeal the legislation which established the Marine Protected Area in the British Indian Ocean Territory.

British Overseas Territories

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to visit any British Overseas Territories in the next 12 months. [74471]

Mr Bellingham: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), and I have plans within the next 12 months to visit the British overseas territories. It is not usual practice to announce these visits until they are confirmed.

China: Human Rights

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on human rights in China. [73278]

Mr Hague: I regularly discuss human rights in China with my EU and other international counterparts, most recently at the meeting of EU Foreign Ministers on 10 October. We have liaised closely with EU member states on our concerns about the human rights situation in China over the last nine months, resulting in a number of EU statements and démarches on specific issues and individual cases.

Columbia: Armed Conflict

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his international counterparts on joint steps to identify and where appropriate seek the extradition of those suspected of crimes against humanity and crimes of sexual violence during the armed conflict in Colombia. [73384]

Mr Lidington: We regularly make clear that those responsible for international crimes must be held to account. We work closely with the Colombian Government and with civil society on human rights and justice reform, including addressing impunity. Our embassy in Bogota is supporting a project with the Colombian Attorney-General's office to improve the efficiency of the prosecution system to prioritise the most serious cases.

The UK has a bilateral extradition treaty with Colombia. Any decision on whether to seek a person's extradition is a matter for the prosecuting authorities.

Croatia: EU Enlargement

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has established a timetable for the passage of proposed legislation to ratify Croatia's EU accession treaty. [73532]

Mr Lidington: Croatia's EU accession treaty is due to be signed in December 2011 with a likely target date for actual accession of 1 July 2013, provided all member states have ratified the treaty in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements. Mindful of the likely target date, we will introduce the necessary legislation to ratify the treaty as soon as practicable.

Departmental Billing

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of invoices from suppliers his Department paid within 10 days of receipt in July and August 2010. [74371]

Mr Lidington: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 7 September 2010, *Official Report*, column 466W, to the hon. Member for Dundee East (Stewart Hosie).

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the average cost to his Department was of processing the payment of an invoice in the latest period for which figures are available; and what proportion of invoices settled in that period his Department paid (a) electronically and (b) by cheque. [74981]

Mr Hague: The average cost of processing an invoice for payment at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) UK Corporate Service Centre in Milton Keynes is £2.94 for the month of September 2011. The number provided is based on average salary costs, excluding overheads. The Department is unable to provide the average cost of processing invoices for payment across the whole of the FCO's global network. This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

In the UK, the FCO settles all invoices electronically. Our overseas posts are able to make cheque payments. However, obtaining transactional level information from our overseas network could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Buildings

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what (a) building and (b) refurbishment projects his Department plans in (i) 2011-12 and (ii) 2012-13; and what the cost of each such project will be. [74370]

Mr Lidington: The information is as follows:

Projects for 2011-12:

Contracted projects amount to £41 million across the global network. This includes new builds, refurbishments, health and safety and security improvements.

Maintenance projects across the global network to the amount of £16.3 million across 158 posts. Maintenance projects are works over £3,000 and generally under £250,000. Expenditure is limited to immediate health and safety risk to personal safety or security, legal and statutory compliance, leasehold obligations and maintaining freehold asset, values.

Refurbishment and maintenance of UK Estate at £1,096,323, includes replacement of light fittings, health and safety works to the roof at King Charles street and installation of new lifts. All scheduled work has been prioritised within available funding and constitutes essential health and safety work, or subject to lease requirements or part of the scheduled maintenance programme of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Smaller projects which our overseas missions manage themselves have not been included. This information is not held centrally and to collate it would incur a disproportionate cost.

Finalised figures for the planned works/refurbishment for the period 2012-13 are not currently available.

Departmental Consultants

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what procedures his Department uses when engaging external consultants.

[73104]

Mr Lidington: The Government introduced spending controls and approval routes for all new proposed spend on consultancy in May 2010 and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office follows these procedures. All requests to procure external consultancy costing in excess of £20,000 must have a business case prior to engaging external consultants, and the following minimum criteria are considered when giving approval:

The requirement is of genuine operational necessity;

The work cannot be undertaken by existing in house resources;

The commercial proposals represent real value for money with a demonstrable return on investment and do not exceed the prices and rates advice provided by Government Procurement Service.

Business case requests to procure external consultancy costing in excess of £20,000 must be approved by the nominated departmental board member. Requests costing in excess of £100,000, or expected to last longer than nine months and/or involve the use of procurement consultants are also subject to additional approval by Cabinet Office and/or Government Procurement Service.

Departmental Fines

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many transport-related fines his Department has settled on behalf of its staff in each year since 2007; and at what cost. [74373]

Mr Lidington: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) expects staff to pay any transport-related fines without recourse to public funds.

Budgets in the FCO are devolved to individual directorates within the UK and its network of nearly 270 posts overseas. As a result, this information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Legal Opinion

Angela Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what the average hourly rate paid was to external (a) solicitors and (b) barristers engaged by his Department in 2010-11; what guidance his Department uses in commissioning external legal advice; and if he will publish (i) the names of each external (A) solicitor and (B) barrister engaged by his Department in 2010-11 and (ii) the sums paid in each case. [72568]

Mr Lidington: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Litigation matters in the UK are generally dealt with by the Treasury Solicitors Department, and there is little requirement for recourse to external solicitors. Barristers were engaged during the financial year 2010-11 for a variety of litigation matters. The majority of these barristers were appointed from the Attorney-General's Panel or were First Treasury Counsel. On the minority of occasions where the Foreign and Commonwealth Office required the services of specialist barristers not on the Panel, nominations were sought from the Attorney-General's Office. In these cases agreement of their hourly rates must be reached before a nomination is made. Guidance on the Attorney-General's Panels, including details of hourly rates, can be found at:

http://www.tsol.gov.uk/attorney_generals_panel_of_counsel.htm

In relation to recourse to legal advice and representation on non-contentious matters (for example contracts or property matters) during 2010-11, in cases where the Treasury Solicitors Department was not used, external solicitors were chosen through a tender process in accordance with the Legal Services Framework. Legal firms which took part in the tender process will have competed on the basis of the quality of the service offered and the price. There is also scope for further competition on price before a firm is chosen. This process ensures that Government Departments are able to obtain legal advice cost-effectively.

Departmental Official Hospitality

Ian Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department spent on hospitality for events hosted by each Minister in his Department in each of the last 12 months. [73665]

Mr Lidington: The total spend by Private Offices for Ministers on Government hospitality was:

	£
<hr/>	
<i>2010</i>	
October	1,464
November	4,299
December	6,936
<i>2011</i>	
January	3,457
February	919
March	913
April	727
May	1,120
June	1,231
July	2,593
August	1,905
September	61

These figures are based on services used and paid for in the months quoted. Activities funded include working meetings with Ministers in the UK, meetings with senior political and military figures from other countries, and events hosted for political and business delegations (including those in support of UK Trade and Industry). Any expenditure on official hospitality is kept under rigorous scrutiny to ensure value for money and effectiveness and is incurred in accordance with the principles of Managing Public Money and the Treasury handbook on Regularity, Propriety and Value for Money.

Departmental Procurement

Julian Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress his Department has made in eliminating pre-qualification questionnaires for procurements with a value of under £100,000. [73835]

Mr Lidington: In the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, pre-qualification questionnaires are not a mandated part of the procurement process for procurements under £100,000. Our procurement guidance incorporates the Cabinet Office requirement to eliminate pre-qualification questionnaires for procurements under this value unless it involves matters of national security.

Departmental Training

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many external training courses staff of his Department attended in the last 12 months; and what the cost to the public purse was of each course. [74372]

Mr Bellingham: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Drugs

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his (a) Brazilian, (b) Russian, (c) Indian and (d) Chinese counterparts on the international trade in illegal narcotics. [73282]

Mr Hague: The UK has ongoing dialogue with these countries on a wide range of bilateral co-operation issues, including the international trade in illegal narcotics. We are committed to cutting the harm from drugs and reducing their supply. We work closely with a wide range of countries on counter narcotics, particularly where drug trafficking from and in those countries poses a threat to the UK.

Egypt: Economic Situation

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment his Department has made of the state of Egypt's economy. [73293]

Mr Hague: Political transition in Egypt has opened up the potential for long needed reform to stimulate entrepreneurship and greater prosperity. The short-term impact, however, has been a sharp decline in growth due to disrupted economic activity, a weakened investment climate and a significant decline in foreign direct investment and tourism. Egypt will need to navigate through the economic downturn, with limited room for public spending and rising borrowing costs. The immediate challenge for the Government of Egypt is to fulfil public expectations and build social cohesion while preserving macro-economic stability. Restoring fiscal health and more inclusive growth which generates new jobs will be critical over the medium term.

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps he has taken to provide support to the Egyptian economy; and what such steps he has taken together with his EU counterparts. [73294]

Mr Hague: The UK is working through the G8 to provide short-term economic assistance. Up to \$38 billion of support to countries in the region, including Egypt, is available through the Deauville Partnership. We encourage Egypt to turn to international borrowing if the situation requires it. G8 countries have committed to open their markets for trade and investment for countries in the region committed to reform.

We encourage Egypt to respond to the EU offer of short-term assistance, and support the EU's efforts to intensify negotiations on the liberalisation of trade in services and investment. In the longer term, the EU intends to work on a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area that firmly ties Egypt into the EU market.

Bilaterally, as part of the Arab Partnership, we have allocated £70 million to support economic reform in the region. The UK remains the largest foreign direct investor in Egypt, and we will continue to promote trade links between the two countries.

Egypt: Elections

Kwasi Kwarteng: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he plans to take to help ensure that the outcome of the proposed November 2011 elections in Egypt is implemented in a stable and orderly manner. [73462]

Alistair Burt: The Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), have urged the Egyptian authorities to deliver an open and plural election process, and encouraged them to ensure full transparency and consultation during the transition process.

The Government have made it clear that we stand ready to support Egypt during this challenging time to ensure that the aspirations of the Egyptian people are met. Under the UK's Arab Partnership we have allocated over £1 million to Egypt to help put in place the building blocks of democracy. This includes projects with the Egyptian as well as likeminded governments to co-ordinate practical assistance to the electoral process. The UK hosted Egyptian Interior Ministry officials during the UK local elections and referendum in May, providing technical advice on electoral management including ensuring access to polling stations and the integrity of the vote. We are also working with non-governmental partners to support inclusive political dialogue and to strengthen the capacity of nascent political parties in areas including policy-making and parliamentary procedure to help facilitate a smooth transition.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has also encouraged the Government of Egypt to consider international observation of forthcoming elections. We welcome recent indications that the Egyptian authorities will permit an international presence during parliamentary elections, and encourage them to finalise arrangements for this as soon as possible.

Egypt: Freedom of Expression

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the extent of freedom of speech in Egypt. [73307]

Mr Hague: There is greater space for public debate in Egyptian society since the fall of Mubarak. But we are concerned about limits on freedom of expression in Egypt, including the increase in prosecutions of bloggers and activists, and closing of satellite television stations. Our embassy in Cairo maintains regular contact with the Egyptian Government on human rights issues.

On 7 October 2011 the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), issued a statement expressing our serious concerns about the treatment of Maikel Nabil Sanad, an Egyptian blogger sentenced to three years imprisonment on 10 April by an Egyptian military court. He also stated the British Government's view that freedom of expression, including freedom of media and the ability for citizens to debate issues and challenge their governments, is fundamental to building a democratic society, and that we will continue to follow the human rights situation in Egypt closely.

Egypt: Religious Freedom

Mr Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the violence against Coptic Christians in Egypt; and whether he has plans to make representations to the Government of Egypt on the protection of religious minorities. [74303]

Alistair Burt: Tensions between Christians and Muslims had initially eased during the revolution, but there has been a resurgence of violence between the communities. The Coptic community has been calling for greater protection, equality and new legislation. We have raised our concerns about the dangers of extremism and sectarianism in Egypt with the authorities, and urged that respect for human rights be enshrined in the constitution, including guarantees for minority rights.

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), issued a statement on 10 October expressing his deep concern over the unrest and the loss of life in Cairo on 9 October. He urged all Egyptians to refrain from violence, support the Egyptian Prime Minister's call for calm and for all sides to engage in dialogue. He said that the freedom of religious belief needs to be protected and that the ability to worship in peace is a vital component of a democratic society. On 12 October the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs discussed the situation in Egypt with the Egyptian Foreign Minister, Mohamed Amro.

Egypt: Trade Unions

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment his Department has made of the rights of trade unions in Egypt. [73308]

Mr Hague: The Egyptian authorities have indicated that they will reform labour laws and have made some progress. However Egypt has seen dramatic changes this year and significant challenges remain. As part of wider reform in Egypt, we support labour law reform and are monitoring the situation. In March 2011, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), raised our concerns about new Egyptian laws to outlaw protests and strikes with the Egyptian Finance Minister. Staff from the British embassy in Cairo have also discussed the possibility of establishing an independent Trade Union Congress in Egypt with local trade unionists in Cairo.

E-mail

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any (a) Ministers, (b) officials and (c) special advisers in his Department use private e-mail accounts for the conduct of Government business. [73211]

Mr Lidington: It is Foreign and Commonwealth Office policy that staff only use official e-mail accounts for official business.

EU General Affairs Council: Climate Change

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what agreements on the EU position for the climate change discussions in Durban were made at the EU General Affairs Council on 12 September 2011. [73010]

Mr Bellingham: The General Affairs Council in September discussed climate change in the context of agreeing the draft agenda for the October European Council.

The EU's position for Durban was agreed at the EU Environment Council on 10 October, at which the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, my right hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Chris Huhne), represented the UK.

The European Council on 23 October will discuss the EU's position.

European Union Bill 2010-12

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 28 February 2011, *Official Report*, column 166W, on the European Union Bill, what the final cost to his Department was of the preparing and supporting the passage of the European Union Act 2011. [73004]

Mr Hague: The estimated cost to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) of preparing and supporting the passage of the European Union Act 2011 is £420,000. This figure includes the estimate of £195,000 provided in my answer of 28 February 2011 and comprises the estimated staff costs incurred by those officials engaged full-time to prepare and support the passage of the Bill, the costs charged to the FCO by the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel for the same purpose, and administrative expenditure such as travel costs incurred engaging with the EU institutions on the Bill.

Both the assembly of a team of officials and the use of the services of the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel, for which a charge is made, are standard practice for Whitehall Departments in preparing legislation. However, no additional Government staff have been employed to develop or support the EU Bill, so there has been no increase in Government spending overall as a result of its development.

Fiji: Trade Unions

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the rights of trade unions in Fiji. [73297]

Mr Hague: The arrest of two trade unionists in Fiji on 4 August for organising meetings is a contravention of the right to peaceful assembly. This is only the latest act by the military against the unions and their rights.

On 12 August, the Minister for Europe, my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr Lidington), issued a statement expressing the Government's concern over the arrests.

On 12 October, the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane (Mr Browne), raised our concerns with the Fijian high commissioner.

Freedom of Expression: Internet

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from (a) foreign governments and (b) international non-governmental organisations on online freedom of expression. [73309]

Mr Hague: There is no centrally held information on what representations we have received either from foreign governments or non-governmental organisation on this issue. Representations in the UK and with our diplomats overseas may be verbal or written; discussed directly with Ministers; or through letters to individual country desks. It is not possible to quantify this without incurring disproportionate cost.

We regularly discuss this important issue with other governments and human rights organisations and at a sub-group of my Advisory Group on Human Rights which was set up specifically to advise the Foreign and Commonwealth Office on freedom of expression on the internet.

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what date has been set for the next meeting of his Department's Freedom of Expression on the Internet Expert Group. [73311]

Mr Hague: The Freedom of Expression on the Internet Expert Group met for the second time on 5 October, as a follow-up to the first meeting on 20 July. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in the new year, although a date has not yet been set.

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what groups and companies were invited to and (a) did not attend and (b) attended the first meeting of his Department's Freedom of Expression on the Internet Expert Group. [73312]

Mr Hague: Those invited to, but unable to attend, the first meeting of the Freedom of Expression on the Internet Expert Group were Facebook, Global Network Initiative, university of Nottingham, London metropolitan university, Reuters and Oxford Internet Institute. Those who attended were Google, Global Partners, Vodafone, Reporters Without Borders, University college London, Article 19, Amnesty International and Index on Censorship. As a matter of courtesy, all members of the Foreign Secretary's Advisory Group on Human Rights were invited.

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of each paper prepared for the first meeting of his Department's Freedom of Expression on the Internet Expert Group. [73313]

Mr Hague: No papers were prepared in advance of this meeting.

The Government strongly support freedom of expression on the internet, and listening to civil society and experts from academia, non-governmental organisations and the private sector is crucial to our understanding of this complex set of issues.

Ghana

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many officials of his Department are posted to Ghana. [74237]

Mr Bellingham: Approximately 170 staff work at the British high commission in Accra. This includes UK-based civil servants and staff employed locally. For operational and security reasons we cannot provide a more detailed breakdown.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he plans to visit Ghana. [74238]

Mr Bellingham: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), has no plans to visit Ghana in the near future. I visited Ghana in February and May this year. Department for International Development and Home Office Ministers visited in July and September this year respectively.

Ghana: Foreign Relations

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the state of relations between the UK and Ghana. [74241]

Mr Bellingham: The relationship between the UK and Ghana is strong and vibrant. It is rooted in our long-standing economic, political and cultural connections, our shared values, and the deep links between our peoples. The UK has historically played a key role in the country and we continue to work closely with the Ghanaians politically, commercially and through development aid.

Politically, the UK enjoys close working relationships with all parts of the Ghanaian Government, co-operating on a range of issues, including migration, counter-narcotics and maritime security. Commercially, there are a number of large UK investments in the Ghanaian energy and telecommunications sectors.

The UK is the second largest bilateral aid donor to Ghana and fourth largest overall. The UK has committed £85 million in development assistance in the current financial year. This will rise to £100 million in financial year 2014-15.

Gilad Shalit

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps he has taken to assist efforts towards the release of Gilad Shalit. [73306]

Mr Hague: The UK has long called for Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit's immediate and unconditional release. We welcome the agreement between Israel and Hamas announced on 11 October to release him as part of a prisoner exchange. Holding him in captivity has been utterly unjustified from the beginning and yet it has gone on for five long years. We are pleased that this long overdue development is finally taking place.

During his visit in June, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for North East Bedfordshire (Alistair Burt), met the father of Gilad Shalit and conveyed our sympathies and concerns. Baroness Ashton, EU High Representative, met the parents on 19 July and issued a statement confirming that she would continue to raise this issue in all her meetings, on behalf of the EU.

On 22 June, I released the following statement:

"On the fifth anniversary of the kidnap of Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit, we remember his family and call again for his immediate release. For five years Gilad Shalit's parents, Noam and Aviva, have been waiting for his return and praying that each day should be the last day of his captivity. It is unacceptable that Gilad Shalit is being held by Hamas without any access to the Red Cross.

Hamas must immediately allow a representative of the Red Cross to visit him. The last sign of life was received on 2 October 2009. Gilad Shalit's family have been waiting for almost two years for another such message. It is difficult to imagine the pain and anguish they must feel. My thoughts are very much with Gilad and his family on this day. I call again for Hamas to release Gilad Shalit immediately and unconditionally."

Mr Shalit's long captivity has been painful for his family and I hope that he will be reunited with them as soon as possible.

Human Trafficking

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his (a) Brazilian, (b) Russian, (c) Indian and (d) Chinese counterparts on international trafficking in human beings. [73281]

Mr Hague: The UK has ongoing dialogue on a wide range of bilateral co-operation issues with these countries. Recent dialogues with India, China and Brazil have included discussion of international trafficking in human beings.

Indonesia: Papua

Jeremy Lefroy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions his Department has had with the government of Indonesia on West Papua; and if he will make a statement. [73537]

Mr Jeremy Browne: We regularly discuss the situation in the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua with the Indonesian Government.

Our priority for the provinces is to encourage full implementation of special autonomy and to press for increased focus on meaningful economic and social development to address the widespread poverty in the region. We also run a significant climate change programme aimed at reducing carbon emissions in Papua.

Jeremy Lefroy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the prospects for dialogue between the Government of Indonesia and representatives of the people of West Papua; and what steps he is taking to encourage such a process. [73538]

Mr Jeremy Browne: There is no formal dialogue process currently underway between the central Government of Indonesia and representatives of the people of Papua and West Papua. The President has indicated his support for 'constructive communication' to resolve differences and the Papua Peace Network has been working hard to build consensus around what issues any dialogue might cover. The UK continues to encourage all sides to explore the use of constructive and peaceful dialogue to resolve differences between the Government of Indonesia and representatives of the Papuan and West Papuan people.

Indonesia: Religious Freedom

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has made to the Government of Indonesia on its treatment of Ahmadiyya Muslims in East Java, West Java and South Sumatra. [73044]

Mr Jeremy Browne: We have been following the cases of attacks on members of the Ahmadiyya community closely. This issue was raised bilaterally on 4 August by our embassy in Jakarta with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and by Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials in London with the Indonesian embassy.

The recent rise in violent incidents towards minority faith groups in Indonesia is a concern and we will continue to press for tolerance and respect for all religious minorities at official and ministerial level as appropriate. Tackling discrimination and protecting minority communities was also discussed with the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the EU-Indonesia Human Rights Dialogue in Brussels on 9 March 2011. We will continue to push for freedom of religion to be included

in discussions at future Human Rights Dialogues as well as raising the issue bilaterally with the Indonesian authorities.

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations his Department has made to the Government of Indonesia on the operation of the criminal justice system in that country in respect of crimes of violence committed against Ahmadiyya Muslims. [73045]

Mr Jeremy Browne: We have been following the cases of attacks on members of minority faith communities, including the Ahmadiyya community, closely. The UK fully supported the EU statement of 29 July 2011 which expressed strong concern that “sentences imposed for violent crimes against religious or other minorities should always be commensurate with the gravity of the crimes committed”.

We will continue to stress to the Indonesian Government that hate crimes should be robustly investigated and that those found guilty of involvement should receive sentences commensurate with the severity of the crimes.

This issue was discussed bilaterally on 4 August by our embassy in Jakarta with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and by Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials in London with the Indonesian embassy. Tackling discrimination and protecting minority communities was also discussed with the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the EU-Indonesia Human Rights Dialogue in Brussels on 9 March 2011.

Internet: Conferences

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what (a) companies, (b) non-governmental organisations and (c) representatives of foreign governments have been invited to his Department’s conference on cyberspace on 1 and 2 November 2011. [73310]

Mr Lidington: To date, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has invited approximately 245 companies and non-governmental organisations and over 60 representatives of foreign governments to the London Conference on Cyberspace on 1 to 2 November. We do not yet have a list of confirmed attendees but a complete list of all confirmed participants will be placed in the Library of the House at the start of the conference.

Iran: Nuclear Power

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment his Department has made of the Bushehr nuclear power project in Iran; and if he will make a statement. [73292]

Mr Hague: UN and EU sanctions against Iran have specifically allowed the construction and operation of the Bushehr power reactor. We have always respected Iran’s right to a peaceful civilian nuclear programme as long as it meets its international obligations and responsibilities. The Bushehr project underlines the fact that Iran does not need to pursue illegal activities in order to enjoy the benefits of nuclear power.

But it should be of serious concern that as Bushehr becomes operational, Iran will be the only country with a significant nuclear programme outside the convention on nuclear safety. Iran’s isolation means its nuclear programme falls short on safety in some key respects. The convention on nuclear safety is a system of mutual oversight that sets international benchmarks on the design, construction and operation of reactors. We are pleased that Russian experts are working to ensure Bushehr is operated safely, but full co-operation with the international community is the key to Iran accessing the best international expertise and realising the full potential of a safe, secure and economically viable nuclear power programme.

Israel: Abortion

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department holds on the abortion rate in Israel in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [R] [74685]

Alistair Burt: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office does not hold information on abortion rates in Israel, but the Israel Central Bureau of statistics publishes data annually. These data cover the period between 2009 to 2011.

Israel: Politics and Government

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent meetings he has had with the Israeli Leader of the Opposition; what issues were discussed; and if he will make a statement. [R] [74693]

Alistair Burt: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), most recently met with the Leader of the Opposition of Israel, Tzipi Livni, on 6 October 2011. Speaking after the meeting, he issued the following statement:

“I was delighted to welcome Ms Livni to London at a critical moment for the Middle East. It was an appalling situation when political abuse of our legal procedures prevented people like Mrs Livni from travelling legitimately to the UK. We have dealt with this urgently as we promised to on coming to office. The UK will continue to honour our international obligations and make sure that people who have committed some of the most awful crimes—wherever in the world they took place—can be brought to justice in our courts.

Today’s meeting showed the warmth and strength of our bilateral relations. Israel is an important ally and we will continue to work together to face common threats such as the Iranian nuclear programme. We discussed the importance of building support for a two state solution that leads to a lasting peace in the Middle East. I made clear my desire to see Israel secure now and in the future, alongside a Palestinian state, and my belief that both Israelis and Palestinians should return to talks in line with the Quartet Statement.”

Libya: Armed Conflict

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Libyan National Transitional Council on the implementation of (a) extradition policy and (b) other new policies for that country. [73474]

Alistair Burt: The National Transitional Council's (NTC) immediate priorities are ensuring security across the country and dealing with short-term humanitarian needs. In parallel, they are starting to rebuild their country and establish new structures for political dialogue. We are in discussion with the NTC on all these issues.

While we have had a number of discussions with the NTC regarding crimes committed by the Gaddafi regime, we have not as yet discussed Libya's extradition policies in particular. There is a wide range of issues we will want to raise with a new transitional Government and its post-election successors, among which will be their approach to this subject.

Libya: Economic Situation

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the potential contribution of member countries of the Arab League to economic recovery in Libya. [73272]

Mr Hague: Regional states have played an integral role in the international effort to protect civilians in Libya and will also be crucial to Libya's economic recovery. The UN, in the form of the UN Support Mission in Libya, has been tasked with co-ordinating the international response to the stabilisation agenda in Libya. We anticipate that the countries of the Arab League will play an important part in providing the support the Libyan Government requires to rebuild the Libyan economy, and the Government will continue to work closely with them, the UN, International Monetary Fund and World Bank on this issue.

Libya: Politics and Government

Kwasi Kwarteng: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the ideological objectives of the National Transitional Council in Libya. [73461]

Alistair Burt: In their draft constitutional declaration, the National Transitional Council (NTC) set out their road map for governance, leading up to elections and achieving democracy. Their stated aims are that Libya works towards

'a stable, secure and just society that promotes education and culture, provides welfare and healthcare, raising the young generation according to the values of Islam, selflessness and patriotism'.

The NTC have also said that they want to see a Libya that is a democratic, independent state, with its people the source of authority, Islam its religion and Islamic sharia as the main source of legislation while guaranteeing the rights of all sections of Libyan society.

Libya: Terrorism

David Mowat: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with members of Libya's National Transitional Council on compensation payments for British victims of Libyan state-sponsored terrorism. [73813]

Alistair Burt: As the Prime Minister, said on 5 September 2011, *Official Report*, columns 23-26, this will be an important bilateral issue between the UK and the new Libyan authorities. The National Transitional Council's Chairman Abdul Jalil and Prime Minister Jibril have assured the Government that they will work with the UK to resolve bilateral issues arising from the wrongs of the Gaddafi regime. More detailed discussions with Libya on this specific issue will await the establishment of a new Libyan transitional Government.

Malawi: Demonstrations

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Government of Malawi on its response to recent anti-government protests. [74193]

Mr Bellingham: The UK deplored the violence that marred the demonstrations across Malawi on 20 July 2011. As well as urging restraint on both sides, I publicly condemned the threatening behaviour of elements of President Mutharika's party, and the violence meted out to protestors and the media by the police resulting in the deaths of 20 people. In discussions with Malawi's Foreign Minister in London on 12 October, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr O'Brien), and I made it clear that the rights of free assembly and expression guaranteed under the Malawian constitution must be respected, and the safety of people exercising those rights must be guaranteed.

Malawi: Human Rights

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the human rights situation in Malawi following the death of Robert Chasowa. [74192]

Mr Bellingham: I am deeply concerned about the human rights situation in Malawi. The death of Robert Chasowa, a student activist, comes after a string of arson attacks and death threats against prominent civil society figures and other Malawians who have criticised the behaviour of their President. In discussions with Malawi's Foreign Minister in London on 12 October, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Development, my hon. Friend the Member for Eddisbury (Mr O'Brien), and I called on the Malawian Government to do all it can to protect human rights defenders, investigate these crimes and hold those responsible accountable for their actions. We further underlined our serious concern at the dangerous rhetoric President Mutharika has used against civil society, which has the potential to incite further violence. While HMG takes no partisan position in Malawian politics, we will continue to put pressure on the Government of Malawi to respect their international human rights commitments, and we intend to step up our support to civil society organisations in Malawi that promote accountability, transparency and respect for human rights.

Nigeria: Armed Conflict

Meg Hillier: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support his Department is providing to the Government of Nigeria to help resolve localised violent conflict in that country. [73928]

Mr Bellingham: During post-election violence in April 2011, the British high commission in Abuja initiated an international community statement urging restraint, and worked with Nigerian political leaders to use their influence to calm the inflamed situation, particularly in northern Nigeria.

We remain concerned about inter-communal violence in Plateau State in Nigeria. Over the past year the British high commission in Abuja has regularly met state and federal level authorities including the Chair of the Presidential Committee on the Jos Crisis, Chief Solomon Lar, as well as traditional and religious leaders, and stressed the need to implement a long-term approach combining job opportunities, reconciliation and political settlement. The British high commission also works closely with the Department for International Development on ground-level peace initiatives in Jos which have worked to increase dialogue between communities and to provide vocational skills training.

We welcome the improved levels of peace and security in the Niger delta which have resulted from the Nigerian Government's amnesty process which began in 2009. On my visit to Nigeria in February this year I stressed the importance of economic growth and the provision of employment opportunities for young people in the delta when I met Rotimi Amaechi, the Governor of Rivers State, in Port Harcourt.

Nigeria: Terrorism

Meg Hillier: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution his Department is making to combating emerging terrorist threats in Nigeria. [73929]

Mr Bellingham: As the Prime Minister made clear on his visit to Nigeria in July, we have a strong counter-terrorism relationship with Nigeria that we want to develop. Following the 26 August attack on the UN building in Abuja, it is clear that the threat from terrorism in Nigeria is evolving. We are working with the Nigerian Government to promote a response that is both proportionate and targeted.

Piracy

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with his (a) Brazilian, (b) Russian, (c) Indian and (d) Chinese counterparts on international piracy. [73280]

Mr Hague: The UK has ongoing dialogue with these countries on a wide range of bilateral co-operation issues, including international piracy. The Government are committed to tackling piracy in the Indian ocean and critical Gulf of Aden trade artery and UK naval forces work alongside those of China, India and Russia demonstrating unprecedented levels of military co-ordination. The Government works closely with Brazil, China, India and Russia through the UN Security

Council, which pays close attention to piracy, as well as in the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, to ensure that the international effort to counter-piracy is as co-ordinated and effective as possible in protecting seafarers, safeguarding the freedom of global trade and in promoting stability in Somalia and the region. Piracy will be discussed during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Perth this month.

Public Sector

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department has taken to encourage the development of public service mutuals in its area of responsibility; and if he will make a statement. [74825]

Mr Hague: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office supports this policy. It has not identified any opportunities to implement this policy within its own operations, but will continue to discuss the subject with the Cabinet Office.

Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he considered in assessing the merits of instituting a Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review. [73305]

Mr Hague: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) departmental business plan contains a commitment to assess the merits of Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR).

FCO officials are currently working with their Department for International Development and Cabinet Office counterparts to provide a single assessment for Ministers on the merits of instituting a QDDR.

The work is due to be completed in December 2011.

Sierra Leone

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many officials of his Department are posted to Sierra Leone. [74232]

Mr Bellingham: Approximately 200 staff work at the British high commission in Freetown. This includes UK-based civil servants and staff employed locally. For operational and security reasons we cannot provide a more detailed breakdown.

Sierra Leone: Foreign Relations

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the state of relations between the UK and Sierra Leone. [74231]

Mr Bellingham: The UK's bilateral relationship with Sierra Leone is strong. The UK has historically played a key role in bringing stability to the country and we continue to do so politically, commercially, militarily and through development aid.

Politically, the UK enjoys close working relationships with all parts of the Sierra Leonean Government. Commercially, there are a number of large UK investments in the Sierra Leonean mining and energy sectors. I will address an investment conference in London on 20 October designed to promote UK-Sierra Leone commercial links.

The UK-led international military assistance training team in Freetown has provided training to the Sierra Leone armed forces and continues to provide mentoring and advice at senior levels of Government. The UK is the largest bilateral aid donor to Sierra Leone, giving approximately £445 million over the past 10 years. Following the outcome of the Department for International Development's bilateral aid review, UK aid spend in Sierra Leone will increase over the next four years.

South Sudan: Politics and Government

Kwasi Kwarteng: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of (a) the political development of South Sudan and (b) the state of relations between South Sudan and Sudan. [73463]

Mr Bellingham: President Kiir appointed a new Cabinet in September. The British ambassador and Head of the Department for International Development (DFID), South Sudan hold regular meetings with South Sudanese Ministers and will continue to engage with them. The UK is also offering support through DFID to support capacity building in political institutions.

Long-term peace between Sudan and South Sudan can only be found through negotiation. South Sudanese President Kiir and Sudanese President Bashir met in Khartoum on 9 October, where they committed to peaceful dialogue. We urge them to now deliver on this commitment and resolve their remaining areas of difference, particularly on oil, citizenship and border demarcation and the status of the disputed region of Abyei.

Sudan: Politics and Government

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the dismissal of the elected governor of Blue Nile state in Sudan; and if he will make a statement. [73807]

Mr Bellingham: We are greatly concerned at the ongoing violence in Blue Nile state following the outbreak of fighting on 2 September, and the dismissal of its elected governor, Malik Agar, and his replacement by a Government nominee. We urge all parties to work towards a ceasefire, and to address the root causes of conflict in the area.

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the nomination of the (a) Deputy Chief Administrator for the Abyei Area and (b) Speaker of Abyei Area Council; and if he will make a statement. [73808]

Mr Bellingham: We continue to encourage the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan to reach an agreement quickly on arrangements for the administration of Abyei, in line with the Abyei Interim Agreement of 20 June.

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is on parties that missed the deadline for withdrawal of forces from the Abyei Area. [73809]

Mr Bellingham: We are deeply concerned that the Sudanese armed forces and the Sudan People's Liberation Army have not yet withdrawn from the Abyei area despite the presence of the UN Interim Security Force in Abyei. This contravenes the arrangements set out in the Abyei Interim Agreement of 20 June and of UN Security Council Resolution 1990. We call on both sides to withdraw fully their troops immediately, and for full humanitarian access to be granted.

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has received reports from the Force Commander of the UN Interim Security Force for Abyei on the withdrawal of Sudanese People's Liberation Army forces from the Abyei area. [73857]

Mr Bellingham: UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous said in his briefing on the deployment of the UN Interim Security Force in Abyei to the UN Security Council on 6 October that neither the Sudanese People's Liberation Army nor the Sudanese armed forces had withdrawn from Abyei.

We continue to make clear to both parties, including through the UN Security Council, that both sides should fully withdraw immediately and allow full humanitarian access to the area.

Syria: Foreign Relations

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the governments of (a) Russia and (b) China on their relations with the government of Syria and attempts to bring about peaceful change in that country. [75227]

Alistair Burt: The UK has led efforts to build international pressure on President Assad's regime to end the violence in Syria. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), has spoken to both his Chinese and Russian counterparts about this, most recently with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov during his visit to Moscow with the Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron), on 12 September. The Foreign Secretary made clear that he thought the Russian and Chinese veto of the draft UN Security Council Resolution on Syria on 3 October was:

"a bitter blow to all those Syrians who have implored the international community to take a stand."

The UK will continue to press Russia and China to put pressure on the Syrian regime to stop the violence.

Syria: Politics and Government

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent estimate he has made of the number of civilian deaths in Syria during the recent demonstrations in that country. [73274]

Mr Hague: The latest estimate provided by the UN, on 6 October, is in excess of 3,000 dead since the violence in Syria began. The severe restrictions imposed by the Syrian authorities on reporting in Syria and the refusal by the Syrian authorities to allow unfettered access to independent international organisations and international media to Syria means that figures for the number of casualties can only be estimated.

Third Sector

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much direct funding his Department provided to each civil society organisation it funded in (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12; how much it expects to provide in (i) 2012-13, (ii) 2013-14 and (iii) 2014-15; and if he will make a statement. [74826]

Mr Lidington: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) makes grants to project implementers and other organisations around the world to help deliver UK foreign policy objectives.

Budgets in the FCO are devolved to nearly 270 posts and details of these payments are not held centrally. As a result, this information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made on the installation of the Coastal Radar System in the British Overseas Territory of Turks and Caicos; and if he will make a statement. [74467]

Mr Bellingham: The Coastal Radar System is not yet operational. This delay is frustrating as the system will give the Turks and Caicos Islands increased capability to tackle drug and people trafficking.

Work on the building, tower and antennae for the Coastal Radar Station is now complete and the transceivers are in place. However, other electronic equipment deteriorated while in storage. The supplier has been asked to tender for remedial work to make the station operational as soon as possible.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in the British Overseas Territory of Turks and Caicos in 2012. [74469]

Mr Bellingham: The Turks and Caicos Islands will participate in the Diamond Jubilee Beacons project which will see 2,012 beacons lit across the UK and around the world. The Turks and Caicos Islands Government are considering other ideas for marking the diamond jubilee.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on the investigation by the Special Investigation and Prosecution Team in Turks and Caicos; and if he will make a statement. [74470]

Mr Bellingham: I am following the progress of the Special Investigation and Prosecution Team and receive regular reports on their work.

The Special Prosecutor has concluded the majority of the investigation within her 18-month estimate. It would be premature to make any further statement because this is a criminal investigation and until such time as charges are preferred and persons are brought before the court, it would be improper and potentially prejudicial to the investigation to do so.

USA: Scholarships

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information his Department holds on the number of Marshall scholars who are employed in the US executive or legislature. [73295]

Mr Hague: Records held by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission indicate that there are at least 25 former Marshall scholars currently working in the US Government's executive and legislature and one former Marshall scholar is currently one of the nine Supreme Court Justices.

USA: Visas

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received on the cost of obtaining a visa for travel to the US. [74262]

Alistair Burt: The United States Visa Waiver Programme (VWP) allows most British passport holders to visit the US for up to 90 days without having to obtain a visa, although those doing so must apply for advanced authorisation through the Electronic System for Travel Authorisation (ESTA). There are also a variety of visas available for other types of travel, including for workers and students, and the cost of obtaining these can range from approximately \$140-800. Our records show that we have received no representations related to visa costs in 2011.

Yemen

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many officials in his Department are stationed in Yemen. [74497]

Alistair Burt: I refer my hon. Friend to the response given by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), on 17 February 2011, *Official Report*, columns 993-97W.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consular assistance his Department is providing to British citizens in Yemen following recent civil unrest in that country. [74641]

Alistair Burt: As our travel advice makes clear the FCO's current ability to provide any consular assistance in Yemen is very limited. We currently advise against all travel to Yemen and strongly urge British nationals to leave now by commercial means. It also makes clear that if British nationals do not leave the country now while there are some commercial airlines still operating, it is extremely unlikely that the British Government will be able to evacuate them or provide consular assistance. We strongly advise British nationals to make plans and leave immediately.

Yulia Tymoshenko

Mr MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of Ukraine against the prison sentence given to Yulia Tymoshenko; and if he will make a statement. [75036]

Mr Lidington: I refer the right hon. Member to the answer given by the Prime Minister on 12 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 315. We have repeatedly and consistently told representatives of the Ukrainian Government that the way the trials against their political opponents, including Ms Tymoshenko, have been conducted belies their commitment to a closer relationship with the EU. The Deputy Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr Clegg), spoke directly to President Yanukovich during the Eastern Partnership summit in Warsaw on 29-30 September and told him that cases such as Tymoshenko's were a threat to UK parliamentary support for ratification of the Association Agreement and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA). The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), issued a press statement on 12 October 2011 expressing deep concern about the verdict and sentence.

We continue to monitor the situation closely and to use every opportunity to urge the Ukrainian authorities to respect EU standards.

Yvonne Fletcher

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what work has been undertaken to secure the extradition from Libya of the main suspect in the case of the shooting of WPC Yvonne Fletcher. [73475]

Alistair Burt: Helping the Metropolitan Police Service conclude the investigation into the killing of WPC Yvonne Fletcher is a priority for this Government. It will be an important issue in the UK's bilateral relations with the new Libyan authorities. The Government are in regular contact with the Metropolitan police and we stand ready to assist them in returning to Tripoli as soon as the conditions on the ground allow.

The National Transitional Council's chairman, Abdul Jalil, and Prime Minister Jibril have assured the Government that they will work with the UK to resolve the ongoing investigation into the killing of WPC Fletcher.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Asbestos

Lindsay Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether he plans to take steps to raise the awareness of the dangers of asbestos to (a) construction workers, (b) plumbers, (c) carpenters and joiners and (d) electricians. [75215]

Chris Grayling: Since 2008, the HSE's 'Hidden Killer' campaign has been effective in raising awareness among the workers most likely to be exposed to asbestos in the workplace, including plumbers, joiners and electricians. HSE continues to work with industry and others to develop and deliver new approaches to raise awareness among those most at risk.

Examples of these approaches include:

The asbestos "Training Pledge" initiative, launched on 5 September this year. Under the initiative, training providers have pledged to provide free asbestos awareness training to tradespeople who may be exposed to asbestos as part of their work. By the end of the pledge period on 30 September, training companies throughout Great Britain had pledged over 13,500 hours of free classroom based and online training. Tradespeople will be able to undertake this training throughout October and November 2011.

Work with educational partners to develop training materials that colleges can use to raise awareness of the risks of working with asbestos to those new to the construction and maintenance industries.

Child Benefit: Ashfield

Gloria De Piero: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many claimants there were of child benefit in Ashfield constituency in each year from 2005 to 2011. [72978]

Mr Gauke: I have been asked to reply.

The following table gives the requested information:

	<i>Child benefit claimants in Ashfield Constituency, 2005-10</i>	
	<i>Number of families</i>	<i>Number of children</i>
2010	12,840	21,795
2009	12,625	21,455
2008	12,415	21,175
2007	12,390	21,260
2006	12,335	21,245
2005	12,235	21,085

This data can be found in the geographical statistics publications on the HMRC website at:

http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/child_benefit/geographical.htm

Child Support Agency

Alok Sharma: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what estimate he has made of the number of Child Support Agency cases where regular payments by the non-resident parent are not made; [71180]

(2) how many clients of the Child Support Agency are resident in Reading West constituency; [71181]

(3) how many successful prosecutions there have been for failure to make payments to the Child Support Agency of non-resident parents of children residing in Reading West constituency. [71174]

Maria Miller: 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 Noel Shanahan, dated 8 September 2011:

In reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about the Child Support Agency, the Secretary of State promised a substantive reply from the Child Maintenance Commissioner as the Child Support Agency is now the responsibility of the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission.

You asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, what estimate he has made of the number of Child Support Agency cases where regular payments by the non-resident parent are not made [71180]; and

You asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many clients of the Child Support Agency are resident in Reading West constituency [71181]; and

You asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, how many successful prosecutions there have been for failure to make payments to the Child Support Agency of non-resident parents of children residing in Reading West constituency. [71174]

The June 2011 Child Support Agency Quarterly Summary of Statistics (QSS) available at:

<http://www.childmaintenance.org/en/publications/stats0611.html>

and in the House of Commons library shows that 669,400 cases made a child maintenance payment out of 862,100 cases where maintenance was due in the quarter to June 2011. This leaves 192,700 cases which did not make a maintenance payment.

There were 1,770 cases as at June 2011 where the parent with care was resident in Reading West constituency. Of these cases, 1,030 received a child maintenance payment in the quarter to June 2011 out of 1,310 cases where maintenance was due. This leaves 280 cases which did not receive a maintenance payment.

There were 1,870 cases as at June 2011 where the non-resident parent was resident in Reading West constituency. Of these cases, 1,130 made a child maintenance payment in the quarter to June 2011 out of 1,430 cases where maintenance was due. This leaves 300 cases which did not make a maintenance payment.

Please note a proportion of these cases will be the same caseload where both the non-resident parent and the parent with care are resident in Reading West constituency. Caseload figures include cases administered on the CS2 and CSCS computer systems as well as cases administered off-system.

Failure to pay child maintenance is not a criminal offence, so parents can not be prosecuted. However, where a non-resident parent fails to pay maintenance, there are a number of enforcement

actions available. Money can be taken directly from a non-resident parent's earnings if the non-resident parent is employed, money can be taken directly from a non-resident parent's bank or building society account, or action can be taken through the courts.

The most serious forms of enforcement are commitment to prison or disqualification from driving. The decision whether to implement, and the length of the order, is at the discretion of a Magistrates' Court (or Sheriff in Scotland) where they are satisfied that a non-resident parent has "wilfully refused or culpably neglected" to pay child maintenance - but this is not a criminal sanction.

Page 23 of the June 2011 QSS shows enforcement actions carried out by the Child Support Agency. It is not possible to break these figures specifically for those non-resident parents who have failed to pay maintenance for children residing in Reading West.

I hope you find this answer helpful.

Children: Maintenance

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will assess the likely effects of the introduction of charges for use of the statutory child support service on (a) each income decile of the population and (b) lone parents. [73246]

Maria Miller: The Department for Work and Pensions will produce estimates of the numbers impacted when we publish detailed proposals in the form of draft regulations. The impact assessments for the draft regulations will set out the estimated impacts on volumes and individuals.

Crisis Loans: South Wales

Simon Hart: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many applications for (a) crisis loans and (b) budgeting loans were rejected in Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire constituency in each of the last five years. [74576]

Steve Webb: Data are not available for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire therefore the budget area of Llanelli has been used as it covers the relevant constituency. However, data for Llanelli also cover areas outside of the constituency.

The data are provided in the following table:

Number of initial refusals for budgeting loans (BLs) and crisis loans (CLs) over the last five years

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
BLs initial refusals	6,940	5,880	7,010	7,570	7,370
CLs initial refusals	5,740	11,870	12,510	12,840	10,580

Notes:

- The information provided is Management Information. Our preference is to answer all parliamentary questions using Official/National Statistics but in this case we only have Management Information available. It is not quality assured to the same extent as Official/National statistics and there are some issues with the data, for example they do not include applications which were processed clerically and have not yet been entered on to the Social Fund Computer System.
- Figures are based on initial refusals and do not include changes made on review.
- Figures rounded to the nearest 10.

Simon Hart: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people have (a) applied for and (b) received (i) crisis loans and (ii) budgeting loans in Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire constituency in each of the last five years. [74651]

Steve Webb: Data are not available for Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire therefore the budget

area of Llanelli has been used as it covers the relevant constituency. However, data for Llanelli also cover areas outside of the constituency.

The data are provided in the following table.

Number of applications and initial awards received for budgeting loans (BLs) and crisis loans (CLs) over the last five years

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
BLs applications	30,870	27,570	27,870	29,980	28,520
BLs initial awards	23,070	20,950	19,640	21,110	20,340
CLs applications	25,250	48,740	63,140	71,570	58,420
CLs initial awards	18,320	34,330	46,840	55,370	46,480

Notes:

1. The information provided is Management Information. Our preference is to answer all parliamentary questions using Official/National Statistics but in this case we only have Management Information available. It is not quality assured to the same extent as Official/National statistics and there are some issues with the data, for example, they do not include applications which were processed clerically and have not yet been entered on to the Social Fund Computer System.
2. Figures are based on initial awards and do not include changes made on review.
3. Figures rounded to the nearest 10.

Disability Living Allowance: Scotland

Margaret Curran: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many children in (a) Glasgow and (b) Scotland currently receive disability living allowance for cancer. [73086]

Maria Miller: Information on the number of children in Glasgow local authority and Scotland receiving disability living allowance with malignant disease as their main disabling condition is contained in the following table.

Children (aged under 16) in receipt of disability living allowance in Scotland and Glasgow local authority with malignant disease as their main disabling condition, February 2011

	Number
Glasgow local authority	40
Scotland	290

Notes:

1. Case loads are rounded to the nearest 10. Totals may not sum due to rounding.
2. Figures do not include people with entitlement where the payment has been suspended, for example, if they are in hospital.
3. A diagnosed medical condition does not mean that someone is automatically entitled to DLA. Entitlement is dependent on an assessment of how much help someone needs with personal care and/or mobility because of their disability. These statistics are only collected for administrative purposes.

Source:

Department for Work and Pensions, Information Directorate 100% WPLS.

Employment Schemes: Offenders

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether he plans to make provision at the entry point to the work programme for ex-offenders to allow them to be met on the day of their release from prison by work programme providers. [74542]

Chris Grayling: The Deputy Prime Minister announced on 16 August that, from March 2012, the Government intend to bring forward the entry point to the Work Programme for prison leavers. Any prison leaver who claims jobseeker's allowance within 13 weeks of release will be mandated to the Work Programme from the point of claim.

To enable mandatory referral to the Work Programme immediately on release and provide a true "through the gates" service, Jobcentre Plus will build on current arrangements by bringing forward the jobseeker's allowance claim taking and processing of information in prison, which is currently carried out post-release. The decision to make a claim to benefit will be on a voluntary basis.

Employment: Scotland

Ann McKechin: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what discussions he has had with Scottish Ministers on the likely effect of his legislative proposals on welfare reform on the future employment of local authority employees in Scotland who administer housing benefits. [72010]

Chris Grayling: The Department of Work and Pensions keeps in regular contact with the Scottish Government on the subject of welfare reform at both ministerial and official levels. For example, universal credit programme officials are working jointly with both the Scottish Government and with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, as well as wider Scottish stakeholders, on the delivery implications of universal credit in Scotland. The Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities are also both members of the Universal Credit Senior Stakeholder Board, which provides advice and guidance to the Programme Board. This enables Scotland to share knowledge, experience and insights to inform the thinking of the Board and to support design, development and implementation. The views and advice of the group are represented at the Programme Board to inform decision making on issues including the delivery model.

Universal credit will be delivered by DWP—drawing on the expertise of HMRC and local authorities. As DWP start to build the organisation to deliver universal credit, and we have yet to settle on the precise detail, and select the right people with the right capability it is likely some of those skills will exist within local authorities. We will therefore always look to include local authority staff in our thinking. In relation to the longer term delivery of universal credit, we will continue to work with colleagues in HM Revenue and Customs and Local Authorities to test new ways of working and impact ongoing delivery model design at both a national and local level. Our aim is to work collaboratively to enable the decision making process and deliver optimal value.

Homelessness: Cambridge

Dr Huppert: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what assessment he has made of the effect of the boundaries of the Cambridge Broad Rental Market Area on levels of (a) unemployment and (b) homelessness in Cambridge; [74569]

(2) what assessment he has made of the efficacy of Broad Rental Market Areas since the completion of the most recent reviews of their boundaries. [74570]

Steve Webb: Broad Rental Market Areas are an essential feature in calculating rates of housing benefit for tenants in the private rented sector. All English Broad Rental Market Areas were reviewed by the Valuation Office Agency rent officers over a two-year period ending in March 2011. On the whole we are satisfied that these current arrangements are working well and there are no current plans to assess the effect or the efficacy of the boundaries.

Industrial Health and Safety

Mr Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what progress the Government have made in implementing the proposals of Lord Young of Graffham's 2010 report on deregulation. [74797]

Chris Grayling: Regular updates on progress against the Common Sense Common Safety recommendations, according to the Government body which is responsible for updating them, are published on the DWP website at:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/health-and-safety/>

A further updated progress report will be published later in the autumn.

Mr Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the Government's policy is on the provisions of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulation Bill. [74798]

Chris Grayling: The Government note that the provisions of this Bill seek to repeal part of the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) 1995 so that there is no duty to report injuries causing incapacitation.

The Government have already accepted the recommendation in 'Common Sense, Common Safety' for a re-examination of RIDDOR to determine whether this is the best approach to providing an accurate national picture of workplace accidents. In the meantime, the Government are already proposing to amend RIDDOR to extend, from three to seven days, the period of incapacitation before an injury to a person at work must be reported.

Mr Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the Government's policy is on the provisions of the Self-Employment (Risk Assessment Exemption) Bill. [74799]

Chris Grayling: The Government note that the provisions of the Bill seek to implement the recommendation in "Common Sense Common Safety" to exempt the self-employed in low hazard businesses from risk assessments.

Currently those who employ five or fewer do not need to record the outcome of their risk assessment, this already covers a large number of self-employed people. HSE continues to emphasise this exemption in guidance such as Health and Safety Made Simple.

I have initiated an independent review of health and safety, led by Professor Ragnar Löfstedt. The review will consider the opportunities for reducing the burden of health and safety legislation on UK businesses, including the self-employed. The outcome of the review will be published later in the autumn.

Mr Chope: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the Government's policy is on the provisions of the Low Hazard Workplaces (Risk Assessment Exemption) Bill. [74800]

Chris Grayling: The Government note that the provisions of the Bill seek to implement the recommendations in "Common Sense Common Safety" for low hazard workplaces. I can report that implementation of the recommendations is progressing rapidly.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has developed online risk assessment tools for offices, shops and charity shops and has developed guidance such as Health and Safety Made Simple which sets out clearly what the basic health and safety requirements are. This includes making clear that those who employ fewer than five do not have to record their risk assessments.

Motability

Gloria De Piero: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people will no longer have access to the Motability scheme in (a) Nottinghamshire and (b) England following changes in funding for the high rate disability living allowance. [73316]

Maria Miller: We have made it clear that we will not remove the disability living allowance mobility component from people in residential care in 2012. Instead, we will consider the needs of people living in residential care at the same time as all other disability living allowance recipients as we develop the personal independence payment.

We will ensure that when we introduce personal independence payment from April 2013 it treats disabled people fairly, regardless of their place of residence and does not diminish disabled people's ability to get out and about.

We estimate that there are around 12,000 Motability customers in Great Britain resident in care homes who have their care funded by the state. It is not possible to obtain reliable estimates of Motability customers below Great Britain level.

Pension Credit

Mr Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when his Department expects to determine the claim for pension credit of Brian Tudor made on 16 July 2011. [73071]

Steve Webb: Mr Tudor's pension credit was awarded on 29 September 2011 and arrears for the period 20 July 2011 to 4 October 2011 were also issued on that date.

Mr Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether people making a second claim for pension credit are required to fill in another copy of the application form by which they made their original claim. [74459]

Steve Webb: Entitlement to pension credit is dependant on the making of a claim. Where an award of pension credit has been made following a claim, and that award is ended, a further claim will be required before the benefit may be awarded again. This will enable up-to-date details of the claimant's circumstances to be established before a further award is made.

Pension credit may be claimed in writing or by telephone. It is not therefore always necessary for an individual to complete an application form themselves as the initial claim and any subsequent claims may be made by telephone. Where applying by telephone or in writing is difficult for the claimant, it may be possible to arrange a visit in order to take the claim.

Where a claim is made by telephone, but all the information needed to decide the claim is not provided at that time, that claim will be defective. In that case, the person making the claim will be given the opportunity to provide the necessary information, and if that information is provided within one month or a longer period as may be considered reasonable, the claim is treated as if it were made on the original date.

Pensioners: Scotland

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many pensioners in Scotland were (a) eligible and (b) received the winter fuel payment in 2010-11; and how many such pensioners he estimate will be eligible for the winter fuel payment in 2011-12. [74188]

Steve Webb: The information is available in the document winter fuel payment recipients 2010-11 by age and gender and local authority. This is available in the Commons Library and on the internet at

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=wfp>

We expect a similar number of payments to be made in Scotland for winter 2011-12.

Pensions

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether he has made an assessment of the implications for UK pension schemes of the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals for the Southern District of New York's ruling of 19 September 2011 on *Aguinda v. Chevron*; and what plans he has to review pension providers' management of environmental, social and governance risks. [73950]

Steve Webb: The *Aguinda v. Chevron* case concerns a long dispute over the environmental damage caused by an oil company in Ecuador. On the 19 September 2011 a US court overturned a block on Ecuadoreans collecting damages totalling \$18.2 billion (£11.5 billion) from Chevron over Amazon oil pollution.

The law already requires that an occupational pension scheme's 'Statement of Investment Principles' must include a declaration of the extent to which social, environmental and ethical considerations are taken into account in the scheme's investments. The statement must also include the scheme's policy (if any) in relation to the exercise of the rights (including voting rights) attaching to the investments.

The Government fully support the highest standards of corporate governance and ethical behaviour and consider such high standards can contribute to better company performance, by helping a board discharge its duties in the best interests of shareholders. The Government continue to keep under review the role of pension scheme trustees in the governance process and, in particular, the adequacy of the rules that apply to the investment of scheme funds.

Pensions: Females

Nicky Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proposals he plans to bring forward to offer financial assistance to women born between December 1953 and October 1954 on a transitional basis as a result of the proposed increase in the state pension age. [74524]

Steve Webb: I refer the hon. Member to the written statement I gave on 13 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 47WS.

The Government have tabled an amendment to clause 1 of the Pensions Bill for Parliament to consider at the next stage of the Bill, scheduled for 18 October.

Stress

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his policy is on addressing work-related stress problems and if he will make a statement. [72813]

Chris Grayling: To help business address this issue appropriately, HSE has developed the Management Standards for work related stress. The standards were the subject of consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and build on an extensive evidence base. This voluntary approach, which is supported by further guidance and free on-line tools, has been taken up by many employers as a sensible and proportionate way to address the issue in the workplace.

Telephone Calls

Simon Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what guidance he has issued to Work programme providers on the use of 084 and 087 prefix telephone numbers. [72249]

Chris Grayling: The underlying principles of the Work programme give providers the flexibility to design an innovative and personalised approach to helping participants into sustained employment. The providers are best placed to decide how to communicate with participants. If they choose to use 084 or 087 telephone numbers, they need to ensure that they adhere to the Advertising Standards Authority code of practice—this mandates marketers and communicators to advise customers of the potential cost of telephone calls whenever a non-geographical number is referenced.

DWP have been clear with providers that participants should not be worse off by virtue of attending the Work programme.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Alcoholic Drinks: Young People

Mr Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were (a) cautioned, (b) charged and (c) given a penalty notice for disorder for selling alcohol to people under the age of 18 in each London borough in each of the last three years. [74308]

Mr Blunt: I have been asked to reply.

The number of cautions issued and persons proceeded against at magistrates courts in the Metropolitan and City of London Police Force Areas for selling alcohol to people under the age of 18 is provided in table 1. Table 2 shows the number of penalty notices issued in the Metropolitan and City of London Police Force Areas for selling alcohol to people under the age of 18.

Charging data are not collected centrally by the Ministry of Justice; prosecution data are provided in lieu.

Information available centrally does not allow a breakdown at borough level.

Court proceedings data for 2011 are planned for publication in the spring, 2012.

Table 1: Persons cautioned^{1,2} and proceeded against at magistrates courts for the sale of alcohol to persons under 18 years³, London⁴, 2008-10⁵

	2008	2009	2010
<i>Cautioned</i>			
London	—	1	—
England and Wales	28	39	32
<i>Proceeded against⁶</i>			
London	66	76	49
England and Wales	393	400	297

¹ The cautions statistics relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When an offender has been cautioned for two or more offences at the same time the principal offence is the more serious offence.

² From 1 June 2000 the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 came into force nationally and removed the use of cautions for persons under 18 and replaced them with reprimands and warnings. These figures have been included in the totals.

³ Offences include:

Licensing Act 2003 section 146 Sale of alcohol to person under 18 section 147A Persistently selling alcohol to children

⁴ Includes both Metropolitan police force area and City of London.

⁵ 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.

⁶ The figures given in the table on court proceedings 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 it 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.

Source:

Justice Statistics Analytical Services—Ministry of Justice

Table 2: Number of Penalty Notices for Disorder issued to persons aged 16 and over for sale of alcohol to person aged under 18 years, London¹, 2008-10²

	2008	2009	2010
London	260	345	234
England and Wales	2,824	3,002	2,098

¹ Includes both Metropolitan police force area and City of London.

² Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by 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

Asylum: Commonwealth

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people from the Commonwealth were granted asylum on political grounds in each of the last 10 years; [74472]

(2) how many people from the Commonwealth were granted asylum on the grounds of being a victim of torture in each of the last 10 years. [74473]

Damian Green: While United Kingdom Borders Agency (UKBA) holds information on the grounds for an asylum claim, this is not centrally recorded and to provide this information would require a manual case by case search at disproportionate cost.

British Nationals Abroad: Homicide

Bridget Phillipson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of the effects of (a) the closure of the National Policing Improvement Agency and (b) other changes to the organisation of policing on her Department's ability to respond effectively to deaths of UK citizens abroad. [64228]

Nick Herbert: Work to decide on the future of the functions of the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) has been undertaken in close consultation with the police service. The Home Office will make an announcement regarding the future of NPIA functions shortly. We continue to assess the impact of all policing reforms on public safety and are confident that the policing reforms taken as a whole will not reduce our ability to respond effectively to deaths of UK citizens abroad.

Civil Disorder

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of the damage caused to the London borough of Havering by recent civil disorder. [74220]

Nick Herbert: No assessment has been made by the Home Office of the damage caused in the London borough of Havering in light of the civil disorder in August 2011. Under the Riot Damages Act 1886, a police authority in England and Wales is liable to pay for damages to buildings and their contents when a riot

has occurred. The responsibility to assess damages and compensation claims therefore rests with the police authority.

Criminal Records Bureau: Government Procurement Card

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the (a) date of purchase, (b) amount, (c) supplier and (d) level 3 or enhanced transaction entry was of each transaction undertaken by the Criminal Records Bureau using the Government Procurement Card in (i) 2007-08, (ii) 2008-09 and (iii) 2009-10. [73505]

Lynne Featherstone: Details of Government Procurement Card transactions undertaken by the Criminal Records Bureau in 2007-08, 2008-09 and 2009-10 can be obtained only at disproportionate cost due to manually redacting sensitive information.

Departmental Contracts

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many contracts her Department holds with (a) Blue Light Global Solutions, (b) Capita, (c) Co sponsor and (d) Steria. [74456]

Damian Green: The Home Department including its executive agencies has no recorded contracts with (a) Blue Light Global Solutions or (c) Co sponsor. The Department holds one contract each with (b) Capita and (d) Steria.

Departmental Press Releases

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many press releases her Department has issued in the last 12 months. [74565]

Damian Green: The Home Office has issued 570 press releases in the last 12 months (12 October 2010-12 October 2011).

Departmental Procurement

Gordon Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate she has made of the cost of employing civil servants to undertake procurement for her Department in (a) 2008-09, (b) 2009-10 and (c) 2010-11; and what estimate she has made of the cost of (i) employing civil servants and (ii) engaging consultants to undertake procurement for her Department in 2011-12. [73188]

Damian Green: The cost of employing civil servants to undertake procurement in the Home Department including its executive agencies is provided in the following table:

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>£</i>
2008-09	10,936,608
2009-10	13,006,559
2010-11	13,645,972
2011-12	12,838,698

Procurement staff has been interpreted to include contract managers engaged within procurement units.

The estimated cost of engaging consultants to undertake procurement for the Department in 2011-12 is £1,033,000.

Departmental Training

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many external training courses staff of her Department attended in the last 12 months; and what the cost to the public purse was of each course. [74380]

Damian Green: The information requested is not held centrally and would be available only at disproportionate cost.

Deportation

Tom Brake: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have been deported to each country in each month since May 2010. [73338]

Damian Green: Given the size of the table, listing every country, I have placed a copy of the table, showing the monthly number of removals and voluntary departures from the United Kingdom, by country of destination between May 2010 and June 2011 in the Library of the House.

Data for July 2011 onwards are not yet available, but quarterly data for July to September 2011 will be published as part of the regular Home Office publication scheme on 24 November.

The Home Office publishes quarterly and annual statistics on the number of persons removed or departed voluntarily from the UK within immigration statistics. The data on removals and voluntary departures are available in tables rv.01 to rv.08 from the Library of the House and from the Home Office science, research and statistics webpages at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/science-research/research-statistics/migration/migration-statistics1/>

Entry Clearances

Shabana Mahmood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether she is taking steps to ensure that Tier 2 visas remain accessible for the duration of a given year after the introduction of an annual quota. [73245]

Damian Green: The annual limit is divided into monthly allocations to ensure that places are available throughout the year.

Shabana Mahmood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps she is taking to minimise the cost to small specialist colleges of applying for Tier 4 accreditation. [73339]

Damian Green: The Government are implementing a system of more rigorous inspection of those privately funded institutions that sponsor international students, carried out by independent bodies that already inspect the sectors with the highest levels of compliance. The fees charged reflect the costs of conducting a thorough

and robust inspection, by an experienced specialist, of the quality of educational outcomes and provision. There are different levels of fees based on the size of the institution.

Entry Clearances: Birmingham

Shabana Mahmood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) Tier 1 and (b) Tier 2 visas were awarded to applicants resident in the Birmingham Ladywood constituency in the last 12 months.

[73446]

Damian Green: The number of Tier 1 and Tier 2 applications granted to applicants currently residing in the Birmingham Ladywood constituency from 1 October 2010 to 30 September 2011 is as follows:

Tier 1: 4,958

Tier 2: 1,371

All figures quoted are internal management information only and are subject to change. This information has not been quality assured under National Statistics protocols.

Entry Clearances: Overseas Students

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department to which accreditation inspection body education academies in Northern Ireland apply in order to enrol international students for long-term courses of more than six months. [74806]

Damian Green: The Government are implementing a system of more rigorous inspection of those privately funded institutions that sponsor international students, carried out by independent bodies that already inspect the sectors with the highest levels of compliance. My officials are in discussion with the body with responsibility for the inspection of publicly funded education in Northern Ireland, the Education and Training Inspectorate, and will confirm shortly whether they will inspect privately funded providers in Northern Ireland. If they do not wish to do so, we shall invite the Independent Schools Inspectorate to extend their activity in respect of international students to cover providers in Northern Ireland.

Firearms

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) legal and (b) illegal firearms have been seized by the police in each year since 1997. [74587]

Nick Herbert: The information requested is not collected centrally by the Home Office.

Foreign Workers: EU Nationals

Mr Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 29 June 2011, *Official Report*, column 861W, on foreign workers: EU nationals, when she expects to receive a report from the Migration Advisory Committee on restrictions on Bulgarian and Romanian nationals. [75191]

Damian Green: I have asked the Migration Advisory Committee to report on this issue by the end of October.

Humberside Police

Mr Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what funding arrangements exist between the Humberside police and East Riding of Yorkshire council; what arrangements are in place to enable the local authority to have influence over policing decisions; and if she will make a statement.

[71304]

Nick Herbert [*holding answer 14 September 2011*]: Funding for community safety will remain with local authorities until police and crime commissioners are in place in 2012. Transitional arrangements for 2012-13 are being finalised. Local authorities will have a representative on the police and crime panels that will act as a key check and balance on police and crime commissioners.

Immigration

Mr Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps she is taking to ensure that those who are refused leave to remain in the UK are removed promptly. [71074]

Damian Green: Individuals who have been refused leave to remain in the UK are expected to leave the country. The United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) take active steps to promote voluntary return and assisted voluntary return and Refugee Action are also engaged by UKBA to increase the number of people taking up this option.

Where an individual chooses not to leave voluntarily, the UK Border Agency will continue to detain and enforce their removal at the earliest opportunity.

Should cases be delayed, for example, by further legal challenges, arranging re-documentation or consideration of extenuating circumstances, the agency actively progresses cases towards conclusion.

Immigration Controls

Shabana Mahmood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on smart zones for processing pre-checked low-risk passengers at certain ports and airports. [73343]

Damian Green: The UK Border Agency is currently developing a number of new initiatives as part of a wider review of operating processes at ports, which make most effective and efficient use of technology and of our people.

Smart Zones are one part of this and operate by using information gathered through the e-Borders system to conduct enhanced watch list checks in advance of arrival. Passengers are then directed through a designated "Smart Zone" where the appropriate level of checks can be made on arrival. This has the potential to remove duplication of detailed checks at the border, thereby improving the passenger experience while simultaneously maintaining border security.

Smart Zone trials have taken place at Luton, Calais (coaches), Birmingham, Leeds/Bradford and Gatwick South.

The UK Border Agency is now engaging with port operators and carriers to design port specific solutions which enhance border security and represent best value for the taxpayer.

Internet: Anti-Semitism

Mr Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what steps her Department is taking to tackle UK-based websites which promote (a) racism, (b) sectarianism and (c) bigotry; and if she will make a statement; [73610]

(2) if she will discuss with the Minister for Women and Equalities action against UK-based websites which encourage (a) religious conflict, (b) racism and (c) bigotry; and if she will make a statement. [73611]

Lynne Featherstone [*holding answer 12 October 2011*]: We are clear that hatred and prejudice have no place in our society. Tackling hate crime is an issue that the Government take very seriously. We have a number of laws in place which make it a criminal offence to use threatening words or behaviour and or to display, publish or distribute any written material with intent to stir up hatred on the grounds of race, religion or sexual orientation. These laws apply equally to online material and our courts have convicted offenders for such offences.

We recognise however, there is also online content that, while not illegal, is considered to be either harmful or offensive. Such content raises issues which require a considered approach that balances freedom of expression with necessary and proportionate protections. We continue to work across Government and with industry representatives to seek practical solutions in responding adequately to offensive and criminal online material.

Knives

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many knives have been recovered by the police in each year since 1997. [74589]

Nick Herbert: The information requested is not collected centrally by the Home Office.

Knives: Crime

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many recorded crimes involved the use of a knife in each year since 1997. [74590]

Nick Herbert: Data for selected offences involving the use of a knife or sharp instrument have been collected by the Home Office since April 2007. From these data, it is not possible to identify which offences specifically involved the use of a knife.

In 2007-08, police forces in England and Wales recorded 25,548 offences involving a knife or sharp instrument for a select group of offences. These offences were: homicide, attempted murder, grievous bodily harm (GBH) with intent, GBH without intent and robbery.

In 2008-09, the offence coverage was expanded to also include actual bodily harm (ABH), threats to kill, sexual assault and rape offences. Therefore figures are not comparable with those offences recorded in 2007-08.

In 2008-09, police forces in England and Wales recorded 36,347 offences involving a knife or sharp instrument. The corresponding figure for 2009-10 was 33,774 offences.

A 2009 audit of how bottle and glass offences were recorded in the knife and sharp instrument data collection identified that some forces were including unbroken bottle and glass offences in their returns, which should have been outside the scope of this collection. The 2008-09 and 2009-10 data above include these offences for four police forces. One of these forces, West Midlands police, subsequently changed its recording practice in April 2010 and now excludes these offences. As such, data for England and Wales for 2010-11 are not comparable to those for 2008-09 and 2009-10. In 2010-11; police forces in England and Wales recorded 32,714 offences involving a knife or a sharp instrument.

Comparable figures for 2008-09 to 2010-11 can be obtained only by excluding West Midlands from the total. On this basis, total figures for offences involving a knife or a sharp instrument in England and Wales (excluding West Midlands) are as follows: 2008-09—32,641 offences, 2009-10—30,549 offences and 2010-11—29,696 offences.

Further information on homicides involving the use of a knife or sharp instrument can be found in 'Homicides Firearm Offences and Intimate Violence 2009-10' at the following link:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

Offensive Weapons: Seized Articles

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) illegal and (b) air weapons have been seized by police in each year since 1997. [74592]

Nick Herbert: The information requested is not collected centrally by the Home Office.

Passports: Forgery

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many forged passports have been seized in each year since 1997. [74588]

Damian Green: The following table details the detections of false passports encountered by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate of the Home Office (before 31 March 2007), the Border and Immigration Agency (between 1 April 2007 and 31 March 2008) and the UK Border Agency (since 1 April 2008).

	<i>Number of detections</i>
1997	4,411
1998	6,338
1999	5,516
2000	5,394
2001	7,320
2002	10,125
2003	9,546
2004	10,620
2005	7,712
2006	7,354
2007	6,939
2008	5,960

	<i>Number of detections</i>
2009	4,545
2010	3,872

Figures from 1997 to 2000 inclusive represent detections at the border only. Those from 2001 to 2010 inclusive detail detections at the border and those made in country by caseworking offices and enforcement officers. They do not include the numbers of inadequately documented passengers denied boarding by commercial carriers overseas working in conjunction with UK Immigration Liaison Officers and Managers (formerly Airline Liaison Officers) from the Risk and Liaison Overseas Network. Some of these passengers will have held false documents but precise figures for the numbers denied boarding for this reason are unavailable.

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of the operation of section 153 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011; and if she will make a statement. [R] [74694]

Mr Blunt: I have been asked to reply.

Section 153 of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, which came into force on 15 September 2011, requires the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions to be given before an arrest warrant can be issued in a private prosecution for offences of universal jurisdiction. These are offences—including certain war crimes, torture, and hostage-taking—which can be prosecuted here even if committed outside the UK by someone who is not a British national. The Director of Public Prosecutions is well aware that speed is important in dealing with applications of this kind, and he has made clear that it is open to anyone who wants to pursue a crime of universal jurisdiction to engage with the CPS as early as possible.

Police: Obesity

Philip Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate she has made of the number of police officers who are classified as obese. [74264]

Nick Herbert: The requested information is not collected centrally.

Police: Termination of Employment

Mr Evennett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) police officers and (b) police civilian staff have (i) been subject to disciplinary action and (ii) had their employment terminated due to breaches of protocol relating to Police National Computer checks in each of the last five years. [74305]

Nick Herbert: The Home Office does not hold this information. Individual police forces or their police authorities hold this information.

Polygamy

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether her Department has amended its guidelines for immigration officers which instruct them to allow polygamous families to live in the UK even if that sets up a polygamous marriage in the UK since her appointment. [73632]

Damian Green [*holding answer 12 October 2011*]: Guidance to UK Border Agency staff has not been amended on this issue since this Government came into power.

It has been the policy of successive governments to prevent the formation of polygamous households in this country. Section 2 of the Immigration Act 1988 and paragraphs 278 and 279 of the Immigration Rules (HC 395) are intended to achieve this policy.

Serious Organised Crime Agency: Government Procurement Card

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the (a) date of purchase, (b) amount, (c) supplier and (d) level 3 or enhanced transaction entry was of each transaction undertaken by the Serious Organised Crime Agency using the Government Procurement Card in (i) 2007-08, (ii) 2008-09 and (iii) 2009-10. [73503]

Nick Herbert: The Serious Organised Crime Agency did not use Government Procurement Cards during (i) 2007-08, (ii) 2008-09, and (iii) 2009-10.

UK Border Agency: Patrol Craft

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether she plans to review the number of vessels used by the UK Border Agency for coastline patrols. [74252]

Damian Green: The UK Border Agency operates five offshore patrol vessels, known as cutters, to police the UK coast, territorial waters and adjacent seas to disrupt the trafficking of prohibited goods and illegal immigration. Departmental spending across the whole of government remains under close scrutiny and this encompasses all areas of the UK Border Agency including its maritime operations.

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the cost to the public purse was of coastline patrols by the UK Border Agency in 2010-11. [74253]

Damian Green: The UK Border Agency's expenditure for the cutter operations in 2010-11 was £14.583 million.

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests were made following coastline patrols by the UK Border Agency in 2010-11. [74255]

Damian Green: The UK Border Agency's cutters routinely work in partnership with other law enforcement agencies both in the UK and overseas. In the majority of cases, it is other law enforcement agencies which

carry out arrests in relation to operations in which the cutters are involved. Four arrests have been made by cutter crew.

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what illegal goods were seized by the UK Border Agency as a result of coastline patrols in 2010-11; and what the monetary value was of such goods. [74256]

Damian Green: From the start of 2010 until the end of September 2011 UK Border Agency cutters have been involved in the seizure of approximately 5.5 tonnes of controlled drugs, approximately 980,000 smuggled cigarettes, 770 litres of smuggled spirits and have referred approximately 400 immigration issues for further inquiry. The estimated street level value of the drugs seized is in the region of £300 million and the estimated revenue protected through the seizure of smuggled excise goods is in the region of £300,000.

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many vessels the UK Border Agency uses to patrol the Scottish coastline; and how many staff are employed to crew such vessels. [74254]

Damian Green: The UK Border Agency's cutters are deployed flexibly to meet risk and in response to intelligence and are therefore not based in particular locations. Allocated patrol sectors are such that two of the five cutters have work areas which include the waters off the Scottish coast. Each cutter has a crew of 12 UK Border Agency officers.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Arrest Warrants

Mr Love: To ask the Attorney-General what discussions he has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions on (a) the visit to the UK in October 2011 of the Leader of the Opposition in Israel and (b) the potential issue of an arrest warrant on his arrival; and if he will make a statement. [74146]

The Attorney-General: During the afternoon of 4 October 2011, an application was made to the Director of Public Prosecutions, Keir Starmer, QC, to exercise his consent pursuant to section 153 of the Police and Social Responsibility Act 2011, for a private prosecutor to apply for a warrant to arrest Ms Tzipi Livni, the former Foreign Secretary in Israel for alleged offences relating to grave breaches of the Fourth Geneva convention in relation to military action in Gaza in December 2008.

I had no discussions with the director in respect of Ms Livni's visit in advance of the visit taking place. I was consulted by him in the evening of 5 October. It is normal practice for the director to consult with the Attorney-General in cases of particular sensitivity and was necessary in this case as the offence for which arrest was sought was one that required the consent of the Attorney-General for it to proceed to trial. The decision remained that of the director.

Departmental Legal Opinion

Angela Smith: To ask the Attorney-General what the average hourly rate paid to external (a) solicitors and (b) barristers engaged by the Law Officers' Departments was in 2010-11; what guidance the Law Officers' Departments use in commissioning external legal advice; and if he will publish (i) the names of each external (A) solicitor and (B) barrister engaged by the Law Officer's Departments in 2010-11 and (ii) the sums paid in each case. [72557]

The Attorney-General: The information requested is as follows:

Treasury Solicitor's Department Attorney General's Office and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate

The Treasury Solicitor's Department (including also for these purposes the Attorney-General's Office and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate) does not keep records of the average hourly rates paid to all external solicitors and counsel. We are, however, able to offer the following information.

Hourly Rates

(a) The hourly rates paid to the solicitors who are part of the Litigation Catalogue are shown in the following table. The table shows the range of hourly rates for each level of experience across all regions and all areas of work.

<i>Level of experience</i>	<i>Hourly rate (£)</i>
Partner	55-235
Senior solicitor	55-215
Junior solicitor	50-165
Trainee solicitor/paralegal	40-153

The Department is expected to use solicitors from the Litigation Catalogue wherever possible. The use of solicitors from outside the framework is only permitted where there are no suitable solicitors available from the Litigation Catalogue. Government procurement procedures should be followed when engaging solicitors from outside of the Litigation Catalogue framework.

(b) The hourly rates for advocates on the Attorney-General's Panels of Counsel who are approved to undertake government work are shown in the following table. The panel system is supplemented by the retention of two First Treasury Counsel to advise and represent government in particularly complex and sensitive matters. Their hourly rate is also shown in the following table.

<i>Level of experience</i>	<i>Hourly rate (£)</i>
Panel A (over 10 years)	120
Panel B (between 5 and 10 years)	100
Panel C (between 2 and 5 years)	160
	280
Regional Panel	160
	390
	4110
First Treasury Counsel	220

¹ If under five years' experience.

² If over five years' experience.

³ Five to 10 years' experience.

⁴ Over 10 years' experience.

The Department is required to seek the Attorney-General's nomination in any case in which it wishes to choose advocates who are not on the panel (for example, to use leading counsel). Fees in these cases are individually set but the nomination process ensures that a strong business case must be made for the engagement of higher charging counsel.

Use of external barristers and solicitors

A list of the external barristers and solicitors who have undertaken work for the Treasury Solicitor's Department and the Attorney-General's Office in 2010-11

<i>Counsel type</i>	<i>Hourly rate</i>	<i>Half-day rate</i>	<i>Full-day rate</i>
QC (more than five years' seniority)	185.00	325.00	650.00
QC (less than five years' seniority)	165.00	275.00	550.00
Panel A (more than 10 years' seniority)	105.00	185.00	370.00
Panel B (between five and 10 years' seniority)	85.00	145.00	290.00
Panel C (between one and five years' seniority)	75.00	125.00	250.00
Disclosure	55.00	125.00	250.00

The SFO has issued guidance and instructions on all aspects of engaging counsel to SFO staff. This includes directions on the appropriateness of half-day, day or hourly rates.

The SFO permanently publishes details of QCs and Counsel who have been appointed to be on a selection list by open competition:

<http://www.sfo.gov.uk/about-us/what-we-do-and-who-we-work-with/counsel.aspx>

The SFO operates a three panel system for junior counsel, categorising them according to the number of years they have been practising. Appointment to the list was by open competition.

The SFO regularly publishes Counsel expenditure that exceeds £25,000 in accordance with the agreements made in 2010 relating to the Government commitment to greater transparency. This data can be found at:

<http://data.gov.uk/dataset/financial-transactions-data-serious-fraud-office>

The Crown Prosecution Service

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) remunerates self-employed advocates according to established fee scheme arrangements. Unless otherwise stated, the fee schemes apply equally to solicitors and barristers.

In respect of Crown court advocacy the CPS uses two fee schemes: a graduated fee scheme (GFS) for cases due to last up to 40 days at trial; and a very high cost case (VHCC) scheme for cases due to last 40 days or more.

GFS provides advocates with a fee based on a formula taking into account the offence type, advocate type, case outcome, length of trial, pages of prosecution evidence and number of witnesses. GFS does not provide hourly rate remuneration for the main hearing fee but there are some limited aspects of the scheme where remuneration is based on hours worked.

In respect of special preparation, wasted preparation (payments to counsel for preparation when they cannot continue with a case for a good reason, such as if they are appointed to the judiciary) and conference time the GFS hourly rates are:

has been placed in the Library of the House. Except where otherwise shown the amount paid was less than £25,000. This list does not include those barristers and solicitors engaged to provide legal services to other Government Departments, as they are engaged on behalf of those other Departments, which pay the relevant costs.

The Serious Fraud Office

The Serious Fraud Office (SFO) pays the following for external counsel

	<i>£ per hour</i>
Queen's Counsel	62.50
Leading Junior	47.00
Junior alone	33.50

The VHCC scheme provides hourly rate remuneration for the advocate. VHCC casework is assigned to one of three categories, defined by set criteria.

The criteria, in broad terms, provides for the following three categories:

Category 1: Terrorism cases.

Category 2: Offences with a maximum sentence of 30 years and there are over 10,000 pages of served evidence.

Category 3: All other VHCCs.

The hourly rates are:

<i>Counsel</i>	<i>Category 1</i>	<i>Category 2</i>	<i>Category 3</i>
QC	180	140	110
Leading junior	140	110	90
Led junior	100	80	70
Junior alone	110	90	80
Second led junior*	90	70	60
Second led junior	70	55	50

The CPS also engages barristers and solicitors to undertake magistrates courts advocacy as agents on a sessional basis. Agent prosecutors are paid £125 for a half-day session or £200 for a full-day session. Higher daily rates are payable for "special fee" trials where exceptional preparation is required.

In-house CPS lawyers provide the vast majority of policy and casework related advice. However, if advice is required on a specialist area of law or policy then external legal advice can be commissioned. The decision to commission external advice is taken on a case-by-case basis and is not subject to written criteria.

The CPS engages solicitors firms to act in a range of civil matters including employment tribunal cases, contract negotiations and advice and land and property advice. During 2010-11 costs associated with these engagements were approximately £1.5 million.

The table detailing all of the barristers and solicitors who received payment for legal services in respect of Crown court and Higher Court casework and civil matters in 2010-11 has been placed in the Library of the House. It is not possible to state the precise total sum paid to each individual without checking the accuracy of the totals with the individuals concerned. To make these checks across over 4,000 individuals and solicitors firms would incur disproportionate cost.

However, since April 2010 details of payments made by the CPS to external barristers and solicitors in 2010-11 where the value of individual payments exceeded £25,000 are already published by the CPS on a monthly basis as part of the Government's transparency agenda. These can be found on the data.gov website at:

<http://data.gov.uk/dataset/financial-transactions-data-ago-cps>

Departmental Procurement

Julian Smith: To ask the Attorney-General what progress the Law Officers' Departments have made in eliminating pre-qualification questionnaires for procurements with a value of under £100,000. [73845]

The Solicitor-General: Following the announcement of the Government's intention to eliminate such pre-qualification questionnaires, the Treasury Solicitor's Department, Attorney-General's Office and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate have not issued any low value procurement exercises with the requirement for the completion of a pre-qualification questionnaire.

In cases where the Law Officers' Departments have a procurement requirement for goods and services below £100,000 and where there is not a suitable pan-Government framework agreement in place, the Department tenders for the contract using the Government's 'Contracts Finder' website under an 'open' procedure. The open procedure does not involve the use of pre-qualification questionnaires.

Using an existing pan-Government framework contract means that suppliers on the framework will have already met any requisite pre-qualification requirements.

Departmental Public Expenditure

David Simpson: To ask the Attorney-General how much the Law Officers' Departments spent on new furnishings in the last year. [73115]

The Attorney-General: Expenditure by the Law Officers' Departments on new furnishings during the last financial year is outlined in the following table.

Recorded spend on new furnishings, financial year 2010-11

Department	£
Crown Prosecution Service	1,538,722
Treasury Solicitor's Department ¹	233,000
Serious Fraud Office	0

¹ The Treasury Solicitor's data also covers expenditure for the Attorney-General's Office and HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate.

² The figure provided is the recorded expenditure on furniture, fixtures and fittings. It is not possible to separate spend on furniture from fixtures and fittings.

Government Procurement Card

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Attorney-General what the (a) date of purchase, (b) amount, (c) supplier and (d) level 3 or enhanced transaction entry was of each transaction undertaken by the Serious Fraud Office using the Government Procurement Card in (i) 2007-08, (ii) 2008-09 and (iii) 2009-10. [73499]

The Attorney-General: Reports detailing individual Government Procurement Card transactions undertaken by the Serious Fraud Office for the years 2009, 2010 and up to July 2011 are available on the SFO website at:

<http://www.sfo.gov.uk/media/179831/2011-55.doc>

Details of transactions prior to these dates could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

The Department does not hold level 3 or enhanced transaction entry data centrally for individual transactions.

Hillsborough Stadium

Steve Rotheram: To ask the Attorney-General (1) what discussions he has had with the Prime Minister on the unredacted release of the Hillsborough Cabinet minutes since his appointment; [74299]

(2) when he last met the Deputy Prime Minister to discuss the release of unredacted government files relating to the 1989 Hillsborough disaster. [74719]

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on this matter by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), on 13 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 506W.

Polygamy

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases of polygamy have been (a) successfully and (b) unsuccessfully prosecuted by the Crown Prosecution Service in each of the last three years. [73966]

The Attorney-General: Polygamy is not recognised as a specific offence by the criminal law. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does not maintain a record of the number of defendants charged with or convicted of bigamy rather than polygamy (which is a specific offence under the criminal law in England and Wales). This information is held on individual case files, and may be retrieved only by locating and examining every relevant file in each CPS office in England and Wales, which would incur a disproportionate cost.

The CPS central records show the number of offences of bigamy charged under section 57 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 and in respect of which a prosecution was commenced in magistrates courts. The figures for the last three years are contained in the following table:

Offences charged and reaching a first hearing in magistrates courts

		2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Offences Against the Person Act 1861 (57)	Bigamy	22	29	43

Notes:

1. Offences recorded in the MIS Offences Universe are those which reached a hearing. There is no indication of final outcome or if the charged offence was the substantive charge at finalisation.
2. Data relate to the number of offences recorded in magistrates courts, in which a prosecution commenced, as recorded on the CMS.
3. Offences data are not held by defendant or outcome.
4. Offences recorded in the Offences Universe of the MIS are those which were charged at any time and reached at least one hearing. This offence will remain recorded whether or not that offence was proceeded with and there is no indication of final outcome or if the offence charged was the substantive offence at finalisation.
5. CPS data are available through its Case Management System (CMS) and associated Management Information System (MIS). The CPS collects data to assist in the effective management of its prosecution functions. The CPS does not collect data which constitute official statistics as defined in the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007. These data have been drawn from the CPS's administrative IT system, which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information is recorded by the CPS.
6. The official statistics relating to crime and policing are maintained by the Home Office and the official statistics relating to sentencing, criminal court proceedings, offenders brought to justice, the courts and the judiciary are maintained by the Ministry of Justice.

Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Attorney-General how many people have been (a) charged and (b) convicted under the provisions of the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006. [74072]

The Attorney-General [holding answer 13 October 2011]: The provisions of the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 amended section 29 of the Public Order Act 1986 to create offences of stirring up hatred against persons on religious grounds.

All prosecutions for offences under section 29 of the Public Order Act as amended by the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 are conducted by the Crown Prosecution Service's special crime and counter-terrorism division. Figures held by them for the last three years are summarised in the following table and refer to the year in which the prosecution was commenced.

	<i>Number charged</i>	<i>Convictions</i>
2008-09	0	0
2009-10	1	0
2010-11	3	1

JUSTICE**Public Bodies**

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice if he will place in the Library a copy of each response to his Department's consultation on the public bodies included in the provisions of the Public Bodies Bill immediately following the closure of the consultation. [73733]

Mr Djanogly: The Ministry of Justice consultation on reforms proposed in the Public Bodies Bill closed on 11 October. The Department intends to publish its response to the consultation by the end of this year. As required by the Government's Code of Practice on Consultation, the consultation response will provide a summary of who responded to the consultation exercise and a summary of the views expressed in response to each question.

In addition, section 11 of the Public Bodies Bill requires a summary of representations received in the consultation to be contained within the explanatory document that must accompany each Order laid by Ministers when using the powers provided by the Bill.

Details of the consultation can be found on the Ministry of Justice website at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/reform-public-bodies.htm>

Administration of Justice: Ex-servicemen

Mr Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice whether staff working in (a) prisons, (b) probation services and (c) the courts receive mandatory training on working with former soldiers. [75046]

Mr Blunt: Prison, probation and courts staff are trained to work effectively with offenders from all backgrounds. There is no specific mandatory training concerned with working with former soldiers.

Within the National Offender Management Service (NOMS), The Working With Veterans In Custody guidance, which was published in February 2010, provides staff with information and offers links to sources of support available to veteran offenders. This guide is currently being updated to include information for staff working with offenders in the community.

All staff working within Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) receive mandatory customer service training as part of their induction which includes material on how customers should be dealt with regardless of their background.

Civil Disorder

Paul Maynard: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice for how many and what proportion of cases involving under-18-year-olds imprisoned on remand as a result of public disorder in August 2011 was a bail package not presented to the court. [73814]

Mr Blunt: The information requested is not available as central data systems do not record this. However, youth offending teams should, as a matter of course, always provide a bail package to the court which will enable the child to be remanded on bail in cases where there is a risk that bail may be refused. Bail packages are an alternative to secure remand and ensure that the young person receives the necessary support in a community setting.

Paul Maynard: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many under-18-year-olds convicted of an offence following the public disorder in August 2011 were remanded into custody without a youth offending team officer being present in court. [73815]

Mr Blunt: The information requested is not available as it is not recorded centrally. National Standards for Youth Justice Services require youth offending teams to attend court when any under-18 is being considered for bail or remand including at weekends.

Paul Maynard: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what proportion of people aged under-18 years who were imprisoned on remand in connection with the public disorder of August 2011 had legal representation in court. [73819]

Mr Blunt: The information requested is not available as it is not recorded centrally. All under-18s are entitled to legal representation in court through the legal aid scheme if they pass the “interests of justice” test. All defendants, including under-18s in the Crown court are automatically deemed to pass the interests of justice test and, in practice, the majority of under-18s appearing before the youth or magistrates court do pass this test. For the purposes of legal representation, under-18s appearing before all criminal courts are automatically deemed to pass the means test.

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many of those arrested for offences connected with the recent public disorder had previously served a sentence of imprisonment under 12 months. [74161]

Mr Blunt: The latest published information on the criminal history of individuals appearing before the courts in relation to the public disorder of 6 to 9 August 2011 showed that 26% had at least one previous immediate custodial sentence. When looking only at sentences of less than 12 months, 22% had previously been sentenced to at least one immediate custodial sentence of less than 12 months.

Data on the criminal history of those arrested but not appearing before the courts is not available.

More detail on the criminal history of individuals appearing before the court in relation to the public disorder can be found at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/statistics-and-data/criminal-justice/public-disorder-august-11.htm>

and updated statistics will be published on 24 October 2011.

As with any large scale recording system the Police National Computer is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information is recorded by the police.

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) pursuant to the answer of 14 September 2011, *Official Report*, column 1215W, on civil disorder: compensation, for what reasons details of the compensation orders issued were not included in the statistics disclosed; and if he will make a statement; [74741]

(2) how many compensation orders were issued by courts (a) in and (b) outside London in relation to public disorder in August 2011; and what the total monetary value was of such compensation orders. [74742]

Mr Blunt: The information published on 15 September was compiled from statistics on offenders brought before the courts for offences related to the public disorder and

reported to Justice Statistics Analytical Services by midday 12 September. However, following a finding of guilt, the sentencing data reported does not go down to the level whereby defendants have also been ordered to pay compensation to their victims.

A further publication is planned for the last week of October which will cover wider socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, including ethnicity information, but will not include compensation orders.

Detail beyond the primary sentence is not available in the data being reported by the courts.

Community Orders: Drugs

Mrs Riordan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people were found to be in possession of drugs on unpaid work sites between 1 April 2010 and 31 March 2011. [73418]

Mr Blunt: The National Offender Management Service maintains a record of incidents which occur on unpaid work sites. This data is not able to identify incidents which may have involved the illegal possession of drugs. If an offender was suspected of being in possession of drugs while undertaking unpaid work the police would be asked to attend the work site.

Compensation

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice if he will assess the effects of the proposed abolition of success fees and non-recoverability of after-the-event insurance premiums on the ability of claimant law firms to take on human rights litigation against multinational companies based in the UK. [73690]

Mr Djanogly: I should clarify that claims can be brought in England and Wales alleging corporate harm in foreign jurisdictions. These are claims for damages in tort or contract, rather than claims under the Human Rights Act or European convention on human rights.

Overseas victims of alleged corporate harm by UK multinational companies are currently able to bring civil claims in the UK where appropriate, and this will continue to be the case following implementation of our reforms to civil litigation funding and costs. Conditional fees agreements (CFAs) will continue, although any success fee will no longer be recoverable from the losing party. We are also proposing to allow damage-based agreements (DBAs) in civil litigation. CFAs and DBAs will be available for claims for corporate harm. DBAs may be particularly suitable for such claims since legal representatives may recover their fees as a percentage of the damages awarded to each successful claimant.

The Government have published a final impact assessment alongside the Government response paper ‘Reforming Civil Litigation Funding and Costs in England and Wales—Implementation of Lord Justice Jackson’s Recommendations: The Government Response’, column 8041, 29 March 2011, available at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/jackson-review.htm>

This impact assessment identifies potential impacts on individuals, groups and businesses.

Coroners

James Wharton: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the composition will be of the proposed Ministerial Board to oversee non-judicial aspects of the services provided by coroners. [73168]

Mr Djanogly: The full composition of the Ministerial Board has yet to be finalised. It is likely to include representatives of those responsible for delivering coroner services, independent members and representatives of the new Bereaved Organisations Committee that will support the board.

Courts: Expenditure

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the level was of capital expenditure on magistrates' and Crown courts in (a) 1997-98 and (b) 2010-11; and how much he plans to allocate for these purposes in (i) 2011-12, (ii) 2012-13 and (iii) 2013-14. [73871]

Mr Djanogly: HMCS was formed on 1 April 2006. Prior to this magistrates courts were the responsibility of local authorities and information relating to capital expenditure is not held centrally. Capital expenditure on Crown courts for 1997-98 is not available.

In order to offer greater flexibility and improve the efficiency of the HMCTS Estate, there are numerous court buildings which are equipped to handle more than one jurisdiction. Therefore, in cases where there is more than one court located within a building, it is not possible to provide a breakdown of capital expenditure for each court.

The following table shows the 2010-11 capital expenditure for magistrates courts, Crown courts and combined courts where there is a magistrates or Crown court on site:

	2010-11 outturn (£ million)
Magistrates courts	100.1
Crown courts	25.5
Combined courts	14.7
	140.4

The following table the latest budgeted HMCTS capital spend for 2011-12:

	2011-12 budget (£ million)
Magistrates courts	64.2
Crown Courts	14.1
Combined courts	13.9
	92.2

The capital budgets for 2012-13 and 2013-14 have not yet been allocated and therefore it is not possible to provide a breakdown of proposed expenditure.

Departmental Buildings

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what (a) building and (b) refurbishment projects his Department plans in the (i) current and (ii) next financial year; and what the cost will be of each such project. [74382]

Mr Blunt: I will write to the hon. Member with the information requested as soon as possible.

Departmental ICT

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice whether any (a) Ministers, (b) officials and (c) special advisers in his Department use private e-mail accounts for the conduct of Government business. [73207]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The Ministerial Code, the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers, and the Civil Service Code set out how Ministers, officials and special advisers should conduct Government business.

Departmental Official Hospitality

Ian Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how much his Department spent on hospitality for events hosted by each Minister in his Department in each of the last 12 months. [73669]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The only expenditure incurred for events during this period was by me, as Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice on the following events:

	Event	Cost (£)
18 October 2010	Lord Mayor Elect ceremony	340.00
21 March 2011	Judiciary and European Court Justice Dinner, hosted by Lord Chancellor and Lord Chief Justice	3,213.97
3 October 2011	Lord Chancellor's breakfast—Opening of the legal year	13,597.80
Total		17,151.77

All hospitality is closely scrutinised and carefully monitored to ensure good value for taxpayers' money and that it stays within the appropriate rules and guidelines.

Departmental Press: Subscriptions

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how much his Department spent on newspapers, periodicals and trade profession magazines in 2010-11. [75004]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) subscribes to many different periodicals and professional magazines (hard copy and online via individual purchase and subscription) for both staff and the judiciary in order to keep up to date with the latest news and thinking in a wide range of professional areas, including law, corporate services and job specific roles.

Accounting systems for the MoJ, HMCS, Tribunals Service and OPG do not differentiate between soft and hard copy purchases. The same account codes also include some books and it would incur disproportionate costs to tease these separate costs out. The natural account codes for the National Offender Management Service do not differentiate between purchased publications and publications created for their organisation.

Departmental Procurement

Gordon Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of employing civil servants to undertake procurement for his Department in (a) 2008-09, (b) 2009-10 and (c) 2010-11; and what estimate he has made of the cost of (i) employing civil servants and (ii) engaging consultants to undertake procurement for his Department in 2011-12. [73186]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The cost of civil servants to undertake procurement for the Ministry of Justice is detailed in the following table. The cost shown for 2011-12 is a forecast. There are no plans to engage consultants to undertake procurement in 2011-12.

<i>Civil servants—estimated cost</i>		£
2008-09		8,270,961
2009-10		7,686,376
2010-11		8,815,756
2011-12		10,575,896

Stewart Hosie: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what contracts of a monetary value of (a) between £100,000 and £500,000, (b) between £500,000 and £1 million, (c) between £1 million and £5 million, (d) between £5 million and £10 million, (e) between £10 million and £50 million, (f) between £50 million and £100 million, (g) between £100 million and £500 million, (h) between £500 million and £1 billion, (i) between £1 billion and £5 billion and (j) over £5 billion his Department and its predecessors have entered into with private suppliers in each year since 1990. [74213]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: Details of contracts entered into by the Ministry of Justice and its predecessors going back to 1990 are not held centrally. To obtain the information in the format required would necessitate approaching a number of Departments and their agencies. We estimate that to undertake this exercise would be at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Public Expenditure

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) what savings to the public purse will be realised as a result of contracting out HM Prison (a) Featherstone II, (b) Buckley Hall, (c) Birmingham and (d) Wellingborough in each of the remaining years of the comprehensive spending review period; [73778]

(2) what estimate he has made of the cost to the public purse of indexation for the contract for running HM Prison (a) Birmingham and (b) Featherstone II in each remaining year of the comprehensive spending review period. [73779]

Mr Blunt: The information is as follows:

(1) The information requested is provided in the following table. As Featherstone II is a new build prison and therefore currently not in operation, the savings values stated are calculated as the difference between the expected price outlined in the original business case and the price submitted by the successful contractor during competition.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-2015
Birmingham	519,179	1,155,053	1,421,814	1,772,822
Buckley Hall	468,061	1,193,044	1,481,891	1,541,229
Featherstone II	—	5,396,211	12,718,071	13,046,169

The services commencement date for HMP Featherstone II is April 2012 therefore there are no savings to be reported in 2011-12.

The Ministry of Justice withdrew HMP Wellingborough from the competition in autumn 2010 therefore this portion of the parliamentary question is not applicable.

(2) The information requested is provided in the following table.

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
<i>Birmingham</i>				
Indexation	0	436,875	1,348,655	2,310,714
<i>Featherstone II</i>				
Indexation	—	0	657,474	1,345,573

Bids for the prison competition were submitted on a price year one basis and then evaluated on a net present cost basis. Indexation is included in the contract to take account of the inflationary impact upon costs. Elements of the contract are not indexed, staff costs are up-rated in line with the average weekly earnings index, and non-staff costs are up-rated in line with the retail prices index.

This indexation rate broadly reflects the inflationary pressure on public sector prisons.

The savings figures quoted for each of the prisons already take account of indexation.

The services commencement date for HMP Featherstone II is April 2012 therefore there is no cost of indexation until 2013-14.

Departmental Travel

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how much (a) his Department, (b) the Prison Service bids unit and (c) its other agencies and non-departmental bodies spent on (i) staff, (ii) travel and subsistence and (iii) other costs in respect of the competition to run HM Prison (A) Featherstone II, (B) Buckley Hall, (C) Birmingham and (D) Wellingborough. [73777]

Mr Blunt: I will write to the right hon. Member with details of actual aggregate spending relating to the competitions held for HMP Birmingham, HMP Buckley Hall, HMP Doncaster, HMP Featherstone 2 and HMP Wellingborough. The Ministry of Justice does not hold the requested information for each of the individual competitions for the five establishments.

Estimated or forecast spending on the prison competitions for HMP Birmingham, HMP Buckley Hall, HMP Doncaster, HMP Featherstone 2 and HMP

Wellingborough, together with underpinning caveats and assumptions, is detailed as follows. All costs are given to two significant figures.

(A) For their contribution to the work on the competitions for the five prisons named above, we forecast that the combined spending of Ministry of Justice Procurement and Ministry of Justice ICT will be:

- (i) £1,070,000 on staff;
- (ii) £0 on travel and subsistence; and
- (iii) £1,600,000 on other costs.

Operational input to supplier dialogue and evaluation phase have been excluded from this cost model.

(B) The overall agreed value of the Public Sector Bids Unit/Business Development Unit for prison competitions was £1,100,000.

An agreed value was used in bidding, as the cost of the Public Sector Bids Unit/Business Development Unit was not identified separately by expenditure or by Public Sector Bids Unit/Business Development Unit itself within the accounts. No local cost tracking was undertaken. Delays in the bidding process added costs to the Public Sector Bids Unit/Business Development Unit, although the work undertaken could not be directly attributed to the above bids.

Public Sector Bids Unit/Business Development Unit costs for HMP Wellingborough and HMP Doncaster ceased when MoJ Procurement stopped developing the relevant bids. Work on HMP Birmingham and HMP Featherstone 2 stopped when the announcement of contract award for these two prisons was made on 31 March 2011. Some support costs, which have not been quantified, have been incurred in the mobilisation phase at HMP Buckley Hall.

(C) For their contribution to the work on the competitions for the five prisons named above, we forecast that the combined spending of NOMS Business and Service Development Group, Estates, and NOMS ICT will be:

- (i) £1,300,000 on staff;
- (ii) £70,000 on travel and subsistence; and
- (iii) £700,000 on other costs.

Operational input to supplier dialogue and evaluation phase have been excluded from this cost model.

Some teams in NOMS were deployed to these prison competitions from other work, including during evaluation stages in the procurement phase. The Department has not accounted for this potential opportunity cost.

Driving Offences

Grahame M. Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer of 10 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 163W, on driving offences: speed limits, how many people with 12 points on their driving licence have been given exemptions from a driving ban in (a) the north-east and (b) England in the latest period for which figures are available. [74571]

Mr Blunt: Information held centrally by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) on the Court Proceedings Database does not contain information about the circumstances behind each case beyond the description provided in the statute under which proceedings are brought. Information

is not held on whether drivers incurring or exceeding 12 penalty points were given an exemption from a driving ban.

Drugs: Convictions

Nicola Blackwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer of 15 June 2011, *Official Report*, column 839W, on drugs: convictions, how many of those receiving custodial sentences for each category of offence were (a) first offenders and (b) repeat offenders. [74105]

Mr Blunt: The following table shows, for the year 2007 to 2010, for drug offences that resulted in immediate custodial sentences, the proportion of each category involving offenders with no previous criminal history and the proportion involving offenders with a record of a previous reprimand, warning, caution or conviction.

These figures have been drawn from the police's administrative IT system, the police national computer, which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures presented here are provisional and subject to change as more information is recorded by the police.

Proportion of offenders receiving an immediate custodial sentence for a drug offence who were either first time offenders or repeat offenders, 2007-10, England and Wales

Drug offence	Percentage of offenders receiving an immediate custodial sentence	
	First time offender	Repeat offender
<i>2007</i>		
Possession: class A	3.0	97.0
Possession: class B	0.0	100.0
Possession: class C	1.5	98.5
Possession: class unspecified	1—	1—
Possession: cannabis	2.1	97.9
Possession with intent to supply: class A	11.5	88.5
Possession with intent to supply: class B	6.6	93.4
Possession with intent to supply: class C	6.8	93.2
Possession with intent to supply: class unspecified	1—	1—
Possession with intent to supply: cannabis	14.3	85.7
Supply: class A	10.2	89.8
Supply: class B	1—	1—
Supply: class C	19.6	80.4
Supply: class unspecified	1—	1—
Supply: cannabis	18.2	81.8
<i>2008</i>		
Possession: class A	2.1	97.9
Possession: class B	1.6	98.4
Possession: class C	4.2	95.8
Possession: class unspecified	1—	1—
Possession: cannabis	2.1	97.9
Possession with intent to supply: class A	11.2	88.8
Possession with intent to supply: class B	3.3	96.7
Possession with intent to supply: class C	11.3	88.7

Proportion of offenders receiving an immediate custodial sentence for a drug offence who were either first time offenders or repeat offenders, 2007-10, England and Wales

<i>Drug offence</i>	<i>Percentage of offenders receiving an immediate custodial sentence</i>	
	<i>First time offender</i>	<i>Repeat offender</i>
Possession with intent to supply: class unspecified	1—	1—
Possession with intent to supply: cannabis	12.0	88.0
Supply: class A	9.6	90.4
Supply: class B	8.8	91.2
Supply: class C	18.6	81.4
Supply: class unspecified	1—	1—
Supply: cannabis	16.4	83.6
<i>2009</i>		
Possession: class A	1.6	98.4
Possession: class B	2.2	97.8
Possession: class C	8.5	91.5
Possession: class unspecified	1—	1—
Possession: cannabis	1.3	98.7
Possession with intent to supply: class A	10.6	89.4
Possession with intent to supply: class B	6.3	93.7
Possession with intent to supply: class C	3.9	96.1
Possession with intent to supply: class unspecified	1—	1—
Possession with intent to supply: cannabis	11.4	88.6
Supply: class A	8.3	91.7
Supply: class B	11.7	88.3
Supply: class C	15.3	84.7
Supply: class unspecified	1—	1—
Supply: cannabis	16.9	83.1
<i>2010</i>		
Possession: class A	1.3	98.7
Possession: class B	0.6	99.4
Possession: class C	0.0	100.0
Possession: class unspecified	1—	1—
Possession: cannabis	2.6	97.4
Possession with intent to supply: class A	10.0	90.0
Possession with intent to supply: class B	6.2	93.8
Possession with intent to supply: class C	5.7	94.3
Possession with intent to supply: class unspecified	1—	1—
Possession with intent to supply: cannabis	8.8	91.2
Supply: class A	7.9	92.1
Supply: class B	9.9	90.1
Supply: class C	18.0	82.0
Supply: class unspecified	28.3	71.7
Supply: cannabis	11.4	88.6

¹ Percentages are not shown where the total number of convictions is small (less than 50).

Fines

Mr Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many fines issued in the most recent year for which figures are available were (a) paid in full within one year, (b) paid in part and (c) remain unpaid in each of the smallest geographic areas in England for which data is maintained. [74663]

Mr Djanogly: Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service systems do not currently identify how many fines that were imposed in a particular year were paid in that period or remain outstanding at the end of the year. This data could be provided only at disproportionate cost as it would require a manual search of all fine accounts.

Government Departments: Procurement

Julian Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what progress his Department has made in eliminating pre-qualification questionnaires for procurements with a value of under £100,000. [73832]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: As of September 2011 the Ministry of Justice eProcurement sourcing system has been updated to eliminate pre-qualification questions for procurements with a value of less than £100,000.

Human Trafficking: Victim Support Schemes

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the nationality was of each suspected victim of trafficking referred to the Trafficking Victim Support Scheme run by the Salvation Army between (a) 15 to 31 July and (b) 1 to 31 August 2011; in which region each of the suspected victims was found; and which agency referred each case to the scheme. [73426]

(a) 15 to 31 July 2011

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Referring Organisation</i>
Vietnamese	East Midlands	Solicitors
Lithuanian	South East	Police
Kenyan	South East	Police
Togolese	South East	Charity
Romanian	South East	Police
Romanian	South East	Charity
Nigerian	East	UKBA
Albanian	Wales	Solicitors
Nigerian	South East	HM Prison Service
Indian	West Midlands	Police
Lithuanian	South East	Police
Lithuanian	South East	Police
Romanian	South East	Police
Indonesian	West Midlands	Police

(b) 1 to 31 August 2011

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Region</i>	<i>Referring Organisation</i>
Ugandan	South East	Solicitors
Romanian	South	Police
Czech	Yorkshire	Police
Ugandan	South East	Police
Chinese	South East	Police

(b) 1 to 31 August 2011

Nationality	Region	Referring Organisation
Polish	South East	Police
Nigerian	South East	Solicitors
Nigerian	North East	Charity
Romanian	West Midlands	Charity
Romanian	West Midlands	Charity
Slovakian	Yorkshire	Charity
Slovakian	Yorkshire	Charity
Slovakian	Yorkshire	Charity
Philippine	South East	Police
Ghanaian	South East	Self-referral
Nigerian	South East	Self-referral
Thai	South East	Police
Ugandan	South East	Solicitors
Benin	West Midlands	Charity
Nigerian	South East	Solicitors
Sierra Leone	South East	Charity
Ethiopian	West Midlands	Social Services
Nigerian	South East	Charity
Nigerian	South East	Social Services
Rwandan/ Ugandan	South East	Charity
Czech	North West	Police
Czech	North West	Police
Czech	North West	Police
Hungarian	South East	Charity
Russian	South East	UKBA
Polish	Yorkshire	Charity
Indonesian	South East	UKBA
Lithuanian	North West	Police
Lithuanian	North West	Police
Romanian	South East	Police

Legal Aid Scheme

Lyn Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many claims were brought against public authorities using legal aid in each of the last five years. [73460]

Mr Djanogly: The information requested is not readily available and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Legal Aid Scheme: Greater London

Lyn Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many legal aid matter starts there were in (a) social welfare law, (b) family law, (c) clinical negligence and (d) immigration law in (i) West Ham constituency and (ii) the London borough of Newham in each of the last five years. [73457]

Mr Djanogly: The Legal Services Commission (LSC) is responsible for administering the legal aid scheme in England and Wales. Further breakdown by category of law per constituency is not available.

The following tables show the numbers of acts of assistance delivered by legal aid providers with postcodes falling within the West Ham constituency separately and in the London borough of Newham as a whole, which comprises the West Ham and East Ham

constituencies in the last four years. This information represents the nearest matches of the LSC's available data to the information requested. The figures for 2010-11 are not yet available.

West Ham constituency				
	Crime lower claims	Legal help new matter starts	Civil representation certificates issues	Crime higher cases
2006-07	7,101	4,169	519	626
2007-08	6,078	4,599	538	629
2008-09	6,749	3,480	545	723
2009-10	8,133	1,528	409	990

London borough of Newham (comprising West Ham and East Ham constituencies)				
	Crime lower claims	Legal help new matter starts	Civil representation certificates issues	Crime higher cases
2006-07	9,301	9,339	1,058	857
2007-08	8,652	9,064	1,025	877
2008-09	9,714	9,224	1,119	1,127
2009-10	9,933	6,030	1,133	1,214

Lyn Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many organisations in (a) West Ham constituency and (b) the London borough of Newham are under contract to the Legal Services Commission to provide legal aid services; how many legal aid cases those practices have taken on during the current contract period; and what the monetary value of each such contract is. [73458]

Mr Djanogly: The Legal Services Commission (LSC) is responsible for administering the legal aid scheme in England and Wales. Based on the postcode of legal aid providers recorded in the LSC's systems, there are currently 28 active civil and 22 active crime providers with offices in the West Ham and East Ham constituencies.

The information in the following table represents the nearest matches of the LSC's available data to the information requested. The figures for 2010-2011, number of cases during the current contract period and claims are not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

London borough of Newham (comprising West Ham and East Ham constituencies)				
	Crime lower claims	Legal help new matter starts	Civil representation certificates issues	Crime higher cases
2009-10	9,104	6,030	1,133	1,214

Lyn Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many claims against (a) local authorities in London and (b) Newham London borough council were brought using legal aid in each of the last five years. [73459]

Mr Djanogly: The information requested is not readily available and can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Offences Against Children

Michael Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how the implementation obligations in respect of each article of the draft EU Directive on Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children will be met by existing domestic law and practice. [73032]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The Government considered that the Council agreed text of the EU directive on combating child sexual abuse and exploitation and child pornography, which was the subject of a debate in the House on 26 April 2011, would not have required changes to existing legislation and practice in England and Wales. The final text of this directive however has still to be agreed as changes were made to the text over the course of negotiations with the European Parliament. An article-by-article account of the plans for implementation across the UK will be provided once the text is finally agreed.

Offenders: Speech Therapy

Mr Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many (a) young and (b) adult offenders are recorded as having speech language and communication needs; and at what stage in the incarceration process each category of offender is assessed for any such needs. [74627]

Mr Blunt: The number of young and adult offenders with speech, language or communication needs is not recorded.

Education providers under contract with the Young Peoples Learning Agency (YPLA) assess the learning levels and needs of young people within the first seven days of entering custody.

A health needs assessment is undertaken when individuals enter prison to assist in identifying speech, language and communications needs.

Office of the Chief Coroner

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what costs his Department has incurred in relation to the Office of the Chief Coroner in each of the last four financial years. [73689]

Mr Djanogly: The Office of Chief Coroner has not been established, therefore the Ministry of Justice incurred has incurred no costs relating to the office in any of the last four financial years.

Prison Accommodation

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many hours per week (a) young offenders and (b) adult prisoners at Parc prison, Bridgend spent in their cells in each year since 2005; and if he will make a statement. [74117]

Mr Blunt: As a measure of safety and decency in prisons, the National Offender Management Service collects data on the average hours per week day that prisoners are unlocked. By subtracting the average hours unlocked from the 24 hours in a day it is possible to

estimate hours spent locked in cell. It should be noted that the latter will include hours when prisoners are asleep.

The information is not available in the format requested. Data cannot be broken down by prisoner type for HMP and YOI Parc. Figures for time locked in cell are set out in the following table for HMP and YOI Parc for the financial years 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11.

<i>Estimated average time locked in cell</i>	
	<i>Hours per prisoner per day</i>
2005-06	13.7
2006-07	14.3
2007-08	14.1
2008-09	14.7
2009-10	14.8
2010-11	14.6

Prisoners : Education

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many hours per week (a) young offenders and (b) adult prisoners at Parc prison, Bridgend spent on (i) work-based activities and (ii) education-based activities in each year since 2005; and if he will make a statement. [74118]

Mr Blunt: The information is not available in the format requested. Data cannot be broken down by prisoner type for HMP and YOI Parc. The data available are for the whole of HMP and YOI Parc's population. The following table shows the average number of hours per week per prisoner spent on work-based and education-based activities for the financial years 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 at HMP and YOI Parc.

	<i>Education</i>	<i>Work</i>
2005-06	8.19	19.61
2006-07	7.82	20.98
2007-08	7.43	20.88
2008-09	6.64	17.58
2009-10	6.57	16.83
2010-11	7.81	15.11

Note:

These figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems, which, as with any large-scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

Prisons

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice if he will estimate the total cost to the public purse of the preparation of the competitions for (a) HMP Featherstone II, (b) Buckley Hall, (c) Birmingham and (d) Wellingborough. [74502]

Mr Blunt: It is not possible to separate the cost of preparing for the prison competitions for HMP Birmingham, HMP Buckley Hall, HMP Doncaster, HMP Featherstone 2, and HMP Wellingborough from the total costs associated with the competitions for those five prisons.

For estimates of aggregated costs associated with the above prison competitions, I refer the right hon. Member to my response to his question of today.

Estimated or forecast spending on the prison competitions for HMP Birmingham, HMP Buckley Hall, HMP Doncaster, HMP Featherstone 2 and HMP Wellingborough, together with underpinning caveats and assumptions, is detailed as follows. All costs are given to two significant figures.

(A) For their contribution to the work on the competitions for the five prisons named above, we forecast that the combined spending of Ministry of Justice Procurement and Ministry of Justice ICT will be:

- (i) £1,070,000 on staff;
- (ii) £0 on travel and subsistence; and
- (iii) £1,600,000 on other costs.

Operational input to supplier dialogue and evaluation phase have been excluded from this cost model.

(B) The overall agreed value of the Public Sector Bids Unit/Business Development Unit for prison competitions was £1,100,000.

An agreed value was used in bidding, as the cost of the Public Sector Bids Unit/Business Development Unit was not identified separately by expenditure or by Public Sector Bids Unit/Business Development Unit itself within the accounts. No local cost tracking was undertaken. Delays in the bidding process added costs to the Public Sector Bids Unit/Business Development Unit, although the work undertaken could not be directly attributed to the above bids.

Public Sector Bids Unit/Business Development Unit costs for HMP Wellingborough and HMP Doncaster ceased when MoJ Procurement stopped developing the relevant bids. Work on HMP Birmingham and HMP Featherstone 2 stopped when the announcement of contract award for these two prisons was made on 31 March 2011. Some support costs, which have not been quantified, have been incurred in the mobilisation phase at HMP Buckley Hall.

(C) For their contribution to the work on the competitions for the five prisons named above, we forecast that the combined spending of NOMS Business and Service Development Group, Estates, and NOMS ICT will be:

- (i) £1,300,000 on staff;
- (ii) £70,000 on travel and subsistence;
- (iii) £700,000 on other costs.

Operational input to supplier dialogue and evaluation phase have been excluded from this cost model.

Some teams in NOMS were deployed to these prison competitions from other work, including during evaluation stages in the procurement phase. The Department has not accounted for this potential opportunity cost.

Prisons: Manpower

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the ratio of prison officers to (a) young offenders and (b) adult prisoners was in each year since 2005; and if he will make a statement. [74119]

Mr Blunt: Information on the ratio of officers to young offenders and officers to adult prisoners since 31 March 2005 is provided in the following table. The ratios are calculated as the number of prisoners to each officer.

It is not possible to disaggregate staffing information for sites that hold both young offenders and adults. For the purposes of calculating the ratios such sites are allocated as either young offender or adult depending on largest number of prisoners of each type held.

	Ratio of prisoners to officers, end of March 2005 to 2011	
	Young offenders	Adult prisoners
2005	2.1	2.9
2006	2.2	3.0
2007	2.2	3.0
2008	2.1	3.1
2009	2.0	3.1
2010	2.1	3.2
2011	2.1	3.3

Note:

1. Staffing information includes prison officers, senior officers and principal officers and their equivalent in private sector establishments.
2. Staffing information was not available for Ashfield, Doncaster, Dovegate, Forest Bank and Lowdham Grange prior to 2008. These establishments have been excluded from ratio calculations prior to 2008.

Prisons: Private Sector

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) whether operational staff in private sector prisons are barred from taking strike action under section 127 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994; whether such staff have access to the Prison Service Pay Review Body; and whether any other compensatory measure is available to prison staff in the private sector;

[73769]

(2) whether staff in prisons operated by the private sector have a right to strike; and what arrangements are in place to operate such prisons in the event of such industrial action. [73846]

Mr Blunt: The restrictions placed on industrial action by prison officers by section 127 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (as amended) apply in both public sector and privately contracted prisons. This means that prison custody officers in private sector prisons are unable to take strike action.

The Prison Service Pay Review Body makes recommendations to the Government for the pay of a defined group of public sector prison service staff. Private contractors have separate pay determination processes for their staff. Any compensatory measures for the restriction of staff's ability to strike would be at the discretion of the private contractor.

Contingency arrangements for operating privately-run prisons in the event of unlawful industrial action are the responsibility of the private contractor.

Probation: Finance

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the budget was of each probation trust in (a) 2007-08, (b) 2008-09, (c) 2009-10 and (d) 2010-11; and what budget he has set for (i) 2011-12, (ii) 2012-13 and (iii) 2013-14. [73870]

Mr Blunt: Probation Trusts were put in place between 2008 and 2010, following the implementation of the Offender Management Act 2007 and replaced the former Probation Boards. Financial year 2007-08 falls prior to the existence of Trusts. Figures for Boards and Trusts in financial years prior to April 2010 are not directly comparable.

Figures compiled from annual net operating costs reported in the NOMS Agency annual accounts and supporting data for Probation Boards and those Trusts set up in 2008-09, show total spend of £897 million (of which £112 million relates to Trusts), and for 2009-10 total spend of £899 million (of which £194 million relates to Trusts).

Financial years 2010-11 and 2011-12

The overall budget for Probation was £864 million in 2010-11 and £820 million in 2011-12. The following table sets out budget allocations for each Probation Trust in 2010-11 and contract values for financial year 2011-12 as agreed with each Probation Trust. It should be noted that, in addition to these amounts, some funds were held centrally for specific offender related initiatives. These are not embedded in the budget and contract values and therefore excluded from the table. Individual amounts may vary throughout the year, but are shown as at the start of the financial year. Probation Trusts may also receive income from elsewhere. Figures are rounded to the nearest £ million.

<i>Probation Trust</i>	<i>2010-11</i>	<i>£ million</i> <i>2011-12</i>
Avon and Somerset	20	19
Bedfordshire	9	9
Cambridgeshire	10	9
Cheshire	15	14
Cumbria	8	8
Derbyshire	14	13
Devon and Cornwall	19	18
Dorset	9	8
Durham and Teeside	23	22
Essex	19	19
Gloucestershire	8	7
Greater Manchester	50	48
Hampshire	24	23
Hertfordshire	11	11
Humberside	16	16
Kent	21	19
Lancashire	24	23
Leicestershire	15	14

The estimated number and percentage of adults¹ remanded in custody² who were subsequently acquitted³ or received a non-custodial sentence⁴ at magistrates courts and the Crown court, England and Wales 2008 to 2010

<i>Final outcome</i>	<i>Adult defendants</i>		
	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>
<i>Number</i>			
<i>Magistrates courts⁵</i>			
Acquitted	6,802	4,768	6,582
Immediate custody	11,535	11,665	8,008
Non-custodial	15,271	11,549	10,098
<i>Of which</i>			
Community sentence	5,203	3,763	3,235
<i>Crown court</i>			
Acquitted	3,800	4,160	4,523
Immediate custody	29,687	30,033	30,792
Non-custodial	6,032	5,986	6,439
<i>Of which</i>			
Community sentence	2,319	2,304	2,583

<i>Probation Trust</i>	<i>2010-11</i>	<i>£ million</i> <i>2011-12</i>
Lincolnshire	9	9
London	146	138
Merseyside	31	29
Norfolk and Suffolk	20	19
North Yorkshire	10	9
Northamptonshire	9	9
Northumbria	28	28
Nottinghamshire	19	18
South Yorkshire	25	24
Staffs/West Mids	72	69
Surrey and Sussex	27	25
Thames Valley	26	25
Wales	55	52
Warwickshire	7	7
West Mercia	15	14
West Yorkshire	40	38
Wiltshire	7	7

Budgets for periods 2012-13 and 2013-14

Given the demanding settlement the Department received in the 2010 spending review we are continuing to finalise our savings plans for the remainder of the SR period, and as a result detailed budgets for individual trusts are not yet available.

Remand in Custody

Paul Maynard: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many and what proportion of adults remanded in custody were subsequently (a) acquitted and (b) given a community sentence in the last three years for which figures are available. [73761]

Mr Blunt: The number and proportion of adults remanded in custody at magistrates courts and the Crown court in England and Wales who were subsequently acquitted or went on to receive a community sentence between 2008 to 2010 (latest currently available) can be viewed in the table.

Court proceedings data for 2011 are planned for publication in the spring, 2012.

The estimated number and percentage of adults¹ remanded in custody² who were subsequently acquitted³ or received a non-custodial sentence⁴ at magistrates courts and the Crown court, England and Wales 2008 to 2010

Final outcome	Adult defendants		
	2008	2009	2010
<i>Percentage⁵</i>			
<i>Magistrates courts⁶</i>			
Acquitted	20	17	27
Immediate custody	34	42	32
Non-custodial	45	41	41
<i>Of which</i>			
Community sentence	15	13	13
<i>Crown court</i>			
Acquitted	10	10	11
Immediate custody	75	75	74
Non-custodial	15	15	15
<i>Of which</i>			
Community sentence	6	6	6

¹ Defined as being aged 18 or over at the date of appearance in court.

² Includes those remanded in custody at any stage of proceedings at magistrates and the Crown court who may also have been given bail at some stage of those proceedings.

³ Acquitted includes proceedings discontinued, discharged, withdrawn and dismissed at magistrates courts and acquitted and not tried at the Crown court.

⁴ Non-custodial sentences include discharges, fines, community sentences, and a number of other sentences that do not involve incarceration.

⁵ Percentages presented here represent the proportions of all adults who were remanded in custody, excluding those who failed to appear and where the magistrates court committed the defendant for trial or sentence to the Crown court.

⁶ Magistrates courts' figures exclude those committed for trial or sentence at the Crown court and those who failed to appear. Also excluded are data for Cardiff magistrates court for April, July and August 2008.

Notes:

1. 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.

2. Some percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

Source:

Prepared by Justice Statistics Analytical Services within the Ministry of Justice.

Reoffenders

Gareth Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many convictions for repeat offenders there were in (a) the south-east, (b) Kent and (c) Dartford constituency in each of the last 10 years. [74755]

Mr Blunt: The following table shows the number of offenders sentenced for indictable offences by area and criminal history, 2001-10. These figures relate to separate sentencing occasions and therefore an offender may be included on more than one occasion, either within an area, across areas, or across time. These figures are a further breakdown of table Q7.5 in 'Criminal Justice

Statistics Quarterly Update to December 2010' which was published on 26 May 2011.

Sentencing occasions have been allocated to a location on the basis of the police force that processed the offence, or in the case of Dartford the offender's address at the time of conviction. Repeat offenders are those with a previous conviction or caution anywhere in England or Wales.

These figures have been drawn from the police's administrative IT system, the police national computer, which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information is recorded by the police.

Number of convictions for repeat offenders dealt with in the Dartford constituency, by Kent police and police forces in South East region, 2001-10^{1,2}

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Sentencing occasions	
									2009	2010
<i>Dartford constituency</i>										
All offenders	295	255	295	285	261	355	389	430	408	491
Repeat offenders	259	233	262	238	229	318	359	381	364	440
Percentage	87.8	91.4	88.8	83.5	87.7	89.6	92.3	88.6	89.2	89.6
<i>Kent police force</i>										
All offenders	7,957	8,202	8,386	7,517	6,973	6,713	7,143	7,664	7,835	8,239
Repeat offenders	6,948	7,273	7,243	6,597	6,173	5,929	6,328	6,783	6,967	7,370
Percentage	87.3	88.7	86.4	87.8	88.5	88.3	88.6	88.5	88.9	89.5

Number of convictions for repeat offenders dealt with in the Dartford constituency, by Kent police and police forces in South East region, 2001-10^{1,2}

	Sentencing occasions									
	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<i>Police forces in south-east region</i>										
All offenders	34,571	35,404	35,497	34,495	34,846	34,196	35,958	38,681	38,578	39,921
Repeat offenders	30,320	31,515	31,465	30,656	31,144	30,438	32,106	34,714	34,712	35,900
Percentage	87.7	89.0	88.6	88.9	89.4	89.0	89.3	89.7	90.0	89.9

¹ Repeat offenders are those who had at least one previous caution or conviction.

² Figures are counts of sentencing occasions.

Restraining Orders

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people breached restraining orders issued under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 on (a) one, (b) two, (c) three and (d) four or more occasions. [72997]

Mr Blunt: The figures requested are provided in the following table. These figures have been drawn from the police's administrative IT system, the police national computer, which, as with any large scale recording system, is subject to possible errors with data entry and processing. The figures are provisional and subject to change as more information is recorded by the police.

Offenders recorded on the police national computer in England and Wales as having been convicted of breaching a restraining order on one or more occasions between 1997 and 2011

Number of occasions involving a conviction for breach of a restraining order	Number
1	8,146
2	2,046
3	719
4 or more	486
Total	11,397

Suspended Supervision Orders

Mrs Riordan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many suspended supervision orders were made in 2010-11; and how many were breached. [73416]

Mr Blunt: Suspended sentence supervision orders (under sections 122-124 of the Powers of Criminal Courts (Sentencing) Act 2000) were repealed by the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and none were imposed in 2010-11. They were replaced by suspended sentence orders, introduced in the Criminal Justice Act 2003, which enable the court to suspend a prison sentence of 12 months or less while ordering the offenders to undertake one or more requirements in the community, including supervision.

The total number of suspended sentences handed down at all courts for 2010 in England and Wales was 48,118 for all offences.

Information on the number of suspended supervision orders breached is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

TREASURY

Air Passenger Duty

Mr Hanson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what (a) projections of numbers of flights and (b) economic data he used to inform his decision to reduce the rate of air passenger duty in Northern Ireland; [72987]

(2) what his policy is on devolving air passenger duty to the Scottish Parliament; [72994]

(3) whether he plans to alter the air passenger duty rates for passengers travelling in premium economy class on flights from airports in Northern Ireland; [73076]

(4) whether he plans to introduce any exemptions to standard rates of air passenger duty other than for long haul flights from Northern Ireland; [73085]

(5) which year's figures for the potential number of flights from UK airports his Department used as a basis for the Air Passenger Duty revenue forecasts announced in the 2011 Budget; and whether his Department plans to update the revenue projections for each financial year up to 2015-16 to take account of the latest forecasts from the Department for Transport. [74008]

Miss Chloe Smith: Northern Ireland's airports operate in unique circumstances within the UK. The decision to reduce air passenger duty (APD) was made in order to ensure that local airports remain competitive. The reduction also applies to premium economy passengers.

On the broader reform of APD, including consideration of devolution of APD to other parts of the UK, HM Treasury will publish a full response later in the autumn.

The APD forecast published at Budget 2011 used air passenger numbers up to and including 2010 Q4. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) published the forecast of passenger numbers at:

[http://budgetresponsibility.independent.gov.uk/wordpress/docs/APD%20\(3\).pdf](http://budgetresponsibility.independent.gov.uk/wordpress/docs/APD%20(3).pdf)

The revenue forecasts will be updated in the OBR's economic and fiscal outlook on 29 November, alongside the autumn statement.

Bank Services: Switzerland

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his Department has assessed whether a one-off deduction of between 19 per cent. and 34 per cent. of funds held by UK taxpayers in Swiss bank accounts would be sufficient to settle past tax liabilities. [70436]

Mr Gauke: The agreement with Switzerland on co-operation in tax matters provides for a significant deduction from Swiss accounts to settle past tax liabilities. In considering the level of the deduction, HM Revenue and Customs reviewed a number of settled tax investigations involving assets held offshore.

The level of deduction provided for in the agreement is in line with the outcomes of the reviewed investigations.

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what his policy is on full tax disclosure by UK taxpayers with Swiss bank accounts other than to the Swiss authorities; [70437]

(2) what his policy is on the disclosure of the identities of UK taxpayers who will be affected by the proposed UK-Swiss tax agreement; and if he will make a statement. [70439]

Mr Gauke: It is the Government's policy that taxpayers should make a full account of their tax affairs to HM Revenue and Customs.

Mr Hanson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the yield to the Exchequer in tax revenue attributable to the agreement with Switzerland on offshore tax evasion in (a) 2012, (b) 2013, (c) 2014 and (d) 2015. [71196]

Mr Gauke: The UK expects to receive billions of pounds as a result of this historic agreement with Switzerland.

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what assessment his Department has made of the effects of the tax withholding rate to be applied to the accounts of UK taxpayers holding bank accounts in Switzerland being lower than their UK marginal tax rate; and if he will make a statement; [70404]

(2) what analysis his Department undertook in reaching its determination that a withholding tax rate of 48% on investment income and 27% on gains will ensure the effective future taxation of UK residents with funds in Swiss bank accounts. [71360]

Mr Gauke: Without knowledge of the worldwide tax positions of individuals with assets in Switzerland, it is not possible to determine the correct marginal rate of taxation. For this reason, the rates of withholding tax provided for by the agreement between the UK and Switzerland on co-operation in tax matters are set very close to the top rates of UK tax.

The small difference between the top UK rates and the rates in the agreement with Switzerland reflects a timing advantage to the UK from the new withholding tax: the tax will be collected at source, and will reach the UK authorities significantly earlier than it would under self-assessment.

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the application of the proposed UK-Swiss tax agreement to (a) trusts and (b) limited companies (i) established, owned, or settled by UK resident people and (ii) of which UK resident people might be beneficiaries; by what mechanisms it is proposed to verify whether taxation is applied to them in all reasonably foreseeable situations; and if he will make a statement. [70438]

Mr Gauke: The agreement with Switzerland was signed on 6 October. It contains a requirement for Swiss banks to look through complicated structures such as trusts and companies to identify whether the beneficial owner is a UK resident taxpayer. The full text of the agreement is available on the HMRC website at:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxtreaties/ukswiss.htm>

Child Benefit

Chris Leslie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 15 September 2011, *Official Report*, column 1268W, on child benefit, (1) by what means a higher rate taxpayer who is not currently obliged to complete a tax return will be required to inform HM Revenue and Customs of their household child benefit status; [73602]

(2) by what means a higher rate taxpayer will be able to inform HM Revenue and Customs if their household is in receipt of child benefit if they are not required to complete a tax return. [74653]

Mr Gauke: The changes to child benefit will be administered through the tax system. People will be able to either contact HMRC to stop receiving child benefit or have it recovered through the PAYE or self-assessment systems. The withdrawal will be implemented through existing systems and processes. Further details of the changes to child benefit will be announced in due course.

Children: Day Care

Philip Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the costs and benefits of allowing child care costs to be tax deductible. [73938]

Mr Gauke: The tax relief and associated NICs disregards for employer-supported child care were introduced to advance the Government's strategy of encouraging parents into work by promoting safe, good quality child care and providing incentives and wider options to encourage more employers to support child care provisions for their staff.

Income tax and NICs forgone on employer-supported child care are estimated to cost the Exchequer £600 million in 2011-12.

Climate Change

Mark Lazarowicz: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he plans to take to ensure that progress is made on the developed world's climate finance responsibilities when he meets his G20 counterparts in October 2011. [74795]

Miss Chloe Smith: The Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), has been actively involved in discussions with international and European counterparts, including G20 Finance Ministers, on international climate finance. As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government's practice to provide details of all such discussions.

Credit: Low Incomes

Mr Bain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with high street banks on making affordable credit available to those on low and minimum incomes. [73382]

Mr Hoban: Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors as part of the process of policy development and delivery. As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government's practice to provide details of all such meetings.

Departmental Billing

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of invoices from suppliers his Department paid within 10 days of receipt in July and August 2010. [74375]

Miss Chloe Smith: The Department's aim is to pay suppliers within five working days. Details of our payment performance are published monthly on the Treasury website at:

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/group_payment_performance.htm

Departmental Buildings

Andrew George: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent estimate he has made of the (a) monetary value of his Department's maintenance backlog and (b) time required to complete such maintenance. [74196]

Miss Chloe Smith: The management of maintenance and other building facilities is included in the contract HM Treasury has for its building at 1 Horse Guards road in London, details of which are available in Note 23.2 on page 160 of the HM Treasury Annual Report and Accounts 2010-11 (HC 984).

Other buildings are occupied by HM Treasury under agreement with other Government Departments who are responsible for maintenance arrangements in those buildings.

Departmental Consultants

David Simpson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what procedures his Department uses when engaging external consultants. [73103]

Miss Chloe Smith: HM Treasury operates a business case approval process for the procurement of consultancy services. In addition to the departmental approval process, Cabinet Office approval is sought where:

- contracts are expected to last longer than nine months;
- pre-existing contracts when extended take the total life of the contract to beyond nine months; and
- spend is over £20,000 on procurement-related consultancy.

The process for engaging advisers follows the departmental procurement process and is dependent on the level of spend and the availability and suitability of pan-Government framework agreements.

Departmental Fines

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many transport-related fines his Department has settled on behalf of its staff; and at what cost in each year since 2007. [74377]

Miss Chloe Smith: For the period 2007-08 to 2009-10 I refer the hon. Member to the answer given on 15 September 2010, *Official Report*, column 1044W, to the hon. Member for Dundee East (Stewart Hosie). In 2010-11 one transport-related fine was paid at a cost of £60.

Departmental Flags

Ian Austin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 14 June 2010, *Official Report*, column 274W, on departmental flags, whether his Department has flown the Union flag at the official buildings for which his Department is responsible on each day of the year since June 2010. [73691]

Miss Chloe Smith: Yes.

Departmental Legal Opinion

Angela Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the average hourly rate paid was to external (a) solicitors and (b) barristers engaged by his Departments in 2010-11; what guidance his Departments uses in commissioning external legal advice; and if he will publish (i) the names of each external (A) solicitor and (B) barrister engaged by his Departments in 2010-11 and (ii) the sums paid in each case. [72576]

Justine Greening: This answer relates to HM Treasury spend only.

The Treasury Solicitor's Department (Tsol) provides legal services to the Treasury. It has published its hourly rates for 2011-12, which offer a 5% discount on the previous year. Further information is available on:

http://www.tsol.gov.uk/Publications/Scheme_Publications/business_plan.pdf

The Treasury engages external solicitors firms to advise in specialist areas using the Government Procurement Services Buying Solutions lists of approved legal suppliers. The specific rates for senior and junior solicitors are negotiated by central Government although better rates may be agreed during the contractual tender process. Further information is available at the following web address:

<http://www.buyingsolutions.gov.uk/services/Legal/>

In relation to direct instruction of barristers by the Treasury, and by the Treasury Solicitor's Department on behalf of the Treasury, the guidance issued by the Attorney-General and Tsol is followed:

http://www.tsol.gov.uk/PanelCounsel/appointments_to_panel.htm

The hourly rates for advocates on the Attorney-General's Panels of Counsel who are approved to undertake Government work are shown in the following table. The panel system is supplemented by the retention of two First Treasury Counsel to advise and represent Government in particularly complex and sensitive matters. Their hourly rate is also shown in the table.

<i>Level of experience</i>	<i>Hourly rate (£)</i>
Panel A (over 10 years)	120
Panel B (between five and 10 years)	100
Panel C (between two and five years)	¹ 60
	² 80
Regional Panel	¹ 60
	³ 90
	⁴ 110
First Treasury Counsel	220

¹ Under five years' experience

² Over five years' experience

³ Five to 10 years' experience

⁴ Over 10 years' experience

The Treasury is required to seek the Attorney-General's nomination in any case in which it wishes to choose advocates who are not on the panel (for example, to use leading counsel). Fees in these cases are individually set but the nomination process ensures that a strong business case must be made for the engagement of higher charging counsel. QCs are instructed in line with the guidance published by the Attorney-General's Office, i.e. negotiated at between £180 and £250 per hour. Guidance on this is available at:

http://www.tsol.gov.uk/PanelCounsel/work_outside_panel.htm

The following list shows the external barristers and solicitors who have undertaken work for HM Treasury in 2010-11. Except where otherwise shown the amount paid in 2010-11 was less than £25,000.

Counsel engaged for HM Treasury:

Mr Jonathan Charles Ashley-Norman
 Mr Daniel Awrey
 Mr Daniel Beard
 Miss Catherine Callaghan
 Mr. Martin Chamberlain
 Mr Richard Craven
 Mr Jonathan Crow QC
 Mr Alan Dashwood QC
 Mr Jonathan Davey
 Malcolm Davis-White QC
 Mr James Eadie QC (£30,000 to £35,000)
 Mr Tim Eicke
 Miss Shaheed Fatima
 Mr David Friedman QC
 Mr Andreas Gledhill
 Mr Martin Goudie
 Mr Steven Gray
 Mr Andrew Henshaw
 Mr Javan Herberg
 Mr Raymond Hill
 Mr Andrew Hogan
 Mr Ben Jaffey
 Mr Ian Jobling
 Mr Tristan Jones
 Mr Paul Lasok QC
 Ms Sara Lee
 Ms Maya Lester
 Mr Clive Lewis QC

Mr Angus McCullough
 Mr James Maurici
 Mr Julian Milford
 Mr Paul Newman QC
 Mr Paul Nicholls
 Mr Andrew O'Connor
 Mr Ben Olbourne
 Miss Carys Owen
 Miss Naina Patel
 Mr George Peretz QC
 Mr Ben Pilling
 Ms Melanie Plimmer
 Mr Simon Pritchard
 Miss Shaheen Rahman
 Miss Deok-Joo Rhee
 Mr Clive Sheldon QC
 Mr Sharif Shivji
 Miss Kassie Smith
 Mr Richard Snowden QC
 Ms Jemima Stratford QC
 Mr Jonathan Swift QC (£85,000 to £90,000)
 Mr David Thomas
 Mr Robert Wastell
 Sir Michael Wood
 Samuel Wordsworth
 Brick Court
 HMRC (Fawcett JR)
 Monkton Chambers
 Wordwave International Ltd

Solicitors engaged for HM Treasury:

Clyde and Co
 Field Fisher Waterhouse
 Irwin Mitchell
 Linklaters LLP
 Sharpe Pritchard
 Slaughter and May (£260,000 to £265,000)¹

¹ These figures relate to work instructed upon in the previous financial year.

Departmental Procurement

Julian Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress his Department has made in eliminating pre-qualification questionnaires for procurements with a value of under £100,000. [73836]

Miss Chloe Smith: HM Treasury has eliminated pre-qualification questionnaires for procurements with a value under £100,000.

Stewart Hosie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what contracts of a monetary value of (a) between £100,000 and £500,000, (b) between £500,000 and £1 million, (c) between £1 million and £5 million, (d) between £5 million and £10 million, (e) between £10 million and £50 million, (f) between £50 million and £100 million, (g) between £100 million and £500 million, (h) between £500 million and £1 billion, (i) between £1 billion and £5 billion and (j) over £5 billion his Department has entered into with private suppliers in each year since 1990. [74201]

Miss Chloe Smith: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Public Expenditure

David Simpson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much his Department spent on new furnishings in the last year. [73124]

Miss Chloe Smith: Details of the Treasury Group's spending on furniture and equipment in 2010-11 is shown in the Department's 2010-11 annual report and accounts (HC 984), table 13.1 on page 141. A copy of the report is available at:

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/annual_report_accounts140711.pdf

Departmental Sick Leave

Mike Freer: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for how many days on average his Department's staff in each pay grade were absent from work as a result of ill health in 2010-11. [75015]

Miss Chloe Smith: The following table lists the average working days lost per grade for HM Treasury employees due to sick absence from April 2010 to March 2011.

Grade	Average working days lost per employee
B	8.0
C	6.2
D	2.3
E	2.8
SCS	1.0
Combined staff grades	3.4

Departmental Training

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many external training courses staff of his Department attended in the last 12 months; and what the cost to the public purse was of each course. [74376]

Miss Chloe Smith: I refer the hon. Member to the written answer given to the hon. Member for Dundee East (Stewart Hosie), on 13 September 2010, *Official Report*, column 788W.

Duchy of Cornwall

Andrew George: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) which (a) organisations and (b) individuals in Cornwall have been consulted on the proposals in respect of the Duchy of Cornwall contained in the Sovereign Grant Bill; [75241]

(2) if he will take steps to ensure that the people of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are fully consulted on the proposed future arrangements for the support of the Duke of Cornwall and related matters as contained in the provisions of the Sovereign Grant Bill. [75243]

Miss Chloe Smith: The Sovereign Grant Bill sets out how support for certain future Dukes of Cornwall is to be arranged if the heir to the throne is not the adult first

son of the monarch. These arrangements do not affect any person or organisation in Cornwall.

The Treasury consulted the Royal Household about the content of the Sovereign Grant Bill.

The Sovereign Grant Bill allows no discretion about how support for the Duke of Cornwall is to be provided. Therefore no consultation is envisaged should these provisions ever be used.

Economic Situation

Alison McGovern: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the oral answer of 10 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 51, on the Eurozone, if he will place in the Library a copy of any economic modelling his Department has undertaken to project the effects of the latest round of quantitative easing on inflation in (a) 2011-12, (b) 2012-13, (c) 2013-14 and (d) 2014-15. [74561]

Miss Chloe Smith: The Office for Budget Responsibility's forecast, including a forecast for inflation, set out in its Economic and Fiscal Outlook (EFO), is the official UK forecast. The next EFO will be published on 29 November 2011.

The independent Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Bank of England's forecasts of inflation take into account the monetary policy stance. The most recent MPC forecasts can be found in the August 2011 Inflation Report which is published on the Bank of England website. The next quarterly Inflation Report will be published on 16 November 2011.

The Bank of England has stated in its Quarterly Bulletin published in September 2011 that quantitative easing (QE) carried out between March 2009 and January 2010 raised UK inflation by around ¾ to 1½ percentage points and increased real GDP by around 1½% to 2%.

Enterprise Zones: Lancashire

Graham Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions (a) he and (b) his officials have had with their counterparts in the Department for Business, Skills and Innovation on the enterprise zone bid for Lancashire. [73794]

Miss Chloe Smith: HM Treasury, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Department for Communities and Local Government are in regular contact with the Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership, on enterprise zone policy.

Equitable Life Assurance Society: Compensation

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with former investors in Equitable Life on the length of the compensation scheme. [74593]

Mr Hoban: In accordance with the 2010 spending review, and the Equitable Life Payment Scheme Design published in June this year, the scheme intends to make all payments it can to non-with profits annuity policyholders—including estates—by April 2014.

It is intended that the scheme will remain open to make ongoing payments to eligible with profits annuity policyholders beyond this point.

Glenda Jackson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) whether payments to Equitable Life policyholders under the 9 June 2011 scheme are being prioritised by (a) age, (b) years of investment or (c) any other criteria; and how many payments have been made to date; [74282]

(2) how many Equitable Life policyholders qualified to receive re-imburement under the scheme introduced in June 2011 have received (a) full, (b) partial and (c) no payment to date; and if he will make a statement. [74147]

Mr Hoban: Payments under the Equitable Life Payment Scheme, which began on 30 June 2011, are being made in accordance with the payments criteria set out in the scheme rules, available at:

http://equitablelifepaymentscheme.independent.gov.uk/docs/pdfs/elps_main_doc_final.pdf

Hundreds of payments have been made to date. Payment volumes will continue to be ramped up over the coming months as the schemes complex payment processes are refined further.

European Central Bank

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what timetable he has set for his challenge to the European Central Bank Eurosystem Oversight Framework policy. [73531]

Mr Hoban: On 15 September 2011, the UK Government submitted a challenge to the European Central Bank's Eurosystem Oversight Policy Framework (5 July 2011), in so far as it sets out a location policy to be applied to financial market infrastructure such as central clearing counterparties. The timetable for this case is determined by provisions of the treaty on the functioning of the European Union and by the General Court of the Court of Justice of the European Union, in accordance with its rules of procedure.

Excise Duties: Biofuels

Thomas Docherty: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps his Department plans to take to address duty avoidance in the production of biodiesel. [73968]

Justine Greening: The Government are aware of several cases where producers have tried to avoid registering to pay biofuels duty. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) strongly defend the position that suppliers are liable to account for the duty if they produce 2,500 litres or more and supply the oil for fuel production.

A small producers' biofuel duty exemption was introduced in 2007 and continues to offer effective tax relief to low volume biofuel producers, who are also asked to keep sufficient records of their production under 2,500 litres per year.

To assist members of the public in reporting cases of concern, HMRC have developed an email template, which is available online at:

https://online.hmrc.gov.uk/shortforms/form/AAG_TAI

Excise Duties: Gaming Machines

Mr Sanders: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the effect of machine games duty on British seaside (a) businesses, (b) employment and (c) tourism; and if he will make a statement. [74133]

Miss Chloe Smith: Treasury Ministers and officials meet with, and receive representations from, a wide range of organisations and individuals in the public and private sectors as part of the usual policymaking process. As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government's practice to provide details of all such representations.

Excise Duties: Motor Vehicles

Jonathan Edwards: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much vehicle excise duty was collected in (a) Wales, (b) England, (c) Scotland and (d) Northern Ireland in each of the last five years. [73386]

Miss Chloe Smith: Disaggregated national receipts data is not held and could be produced only at disproportionate cost. Information on overall UK vehicle excise duty receipts is published annually in the Budget.

Excise Duties: Petrol

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the tax payable on the average pump price of a litre of unleaded petrol was on 30 September 2011. [74038]

Miss Chloe Smith: The average pump price for petrol on 3 October, the nearest published date to that requested, was 135.02 pence per litre. The price includes fuel duty paid by fuel producers at 57.95 pence per litre and VAT paid by consumers at 20% or 22.50 pence per litre in this example. Published energy price statistics can be found on the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) website at:

www.decc.gov.uk

Financial Services Authority: Government Procurement Card

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the (a) date of purchase, (b) amount, (c) supplier and (d) level 3 or enhanced transaction entry was of each transaction undertaken by the Financial Services Authority using the Government Procurement Card in (i) 2007-08, (ii) 2008-09 and (iii) 2009-10. [73492]

Mr Hoban: The Financial Services Authority does not use Government Procurement Cards.

Financial Services: Taxation

Mr Bain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his policy is on the adoption of a financial transactions tax by the (a) G20 and (b) G77. [73687]

Mr Hoban: The Government believes that any financial transaction tax would have to apply globally to avoid transactions simply relocating to those countries not applying the tax.

Gold and Foreign Exchange Reserves

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his policy is on the future level of UK gold reserves. [74482]

Miss Chloe Smith: The UK Government have no plans to purchase or sell holdings of gold from their reserves.

Government Procurement Card

John Glen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish the (a) purchase date, (b) transaction amount, (c) supplier and (d) level 3 or enhanced transaction entry if held for each individual transaction undertaken by HM Revenue and Customs using the Government Procurement Card in (i) 2008-09 and (ii) 2009-10. [71395]

Mr Gauke [holding answer 14 September 2011]: Information to the level of detail requested is not available except at disproportionate cost. HMRC have available the posting date, category and amount spent via Government Procurement Card (GPC) for transactions over £500, shown in the following tables.

Information for the whole of the first year (2008-09) and part of the second year (2009-10) includes GPC used by staff prior to their transfer to UKBA under the relevant machinery of government changes.

HMRC apply tight restrictions to both provision of GPC cards and their use.

In support of the Government's transparency agenda all Departments will publish GPC transactional level data on their own departmental website, posting a link on:

www.data.gov.uk

Publishing data will bring visibility to the use of payment cards and is a proactive step to evidence control and compliance within a payment card programme.

<i>(i) 2008-09</i>		
<i>Posting date</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Amount GBP (£)</i>
<i>2008</i>		
8 April	Hotels and accommodation	840.22
8 April	Hotels and accommodation	741.65
10 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
10 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
10 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
15 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
18 April	Hotels and accommodation	584.67
18 April	Hotels and accommodation	1,005.32
29 April	Hotels and accommodation	1,314.94
1 May	Hotels and accommodation	675.00
6 May	Statutory bodies	595.00
6 May	Statutory bodies	595.00
12 May	Statutory bodies	595.00
14 May	Travel—air/rail/road	533.84
19 May	Hotels and accommodation	688.16
21 May	Statutory bodies	595.00
22 May	Hotels and accommodation	786.34

<i>(i) 2008-09</i>		
<i>Posting date</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Amount GBP (£)</i>
22-May	Hotels and accommodation	786.34
27 May	Statutory bodies	595.00
11 June	Hotels and accommodation	692.30
11 June	Hotels and accommodation	1,550.67
11 June	Hotels and accommodation	692.30
11 June	Hotels and accommodation	1,550.67
13 June	Print and advertising	703.83
13 June	Print and advertising	703.83
13 June	Print and advertising	703.83
23 June	Hotels and accommodation	730.34
1 July	Hotels and accommodation	1,163.64
1 July	Auto rental	524.79
1 July	Hotels and accommodation	1,163.64
3 July	Travel—air/rail/road	574.26
4 July	Hotels and accommodation	595.02
4 July	Restaurants and bars	1,010.00
7 July	Statutory bodies	595.00
9 July	Travel—air/rail/road	1,941.37
10 July	Statutory bodies	595.00
11 July	Hotels and accommodation	668.43
15 July	Statutory bodies	595.00
16 July	Statutory bodies	595.00
28 July	General retail and wholesale	854.46
1 August	Statutory bodies	595.00
4 August	Miscellaneous industrial/ commercial supplies	969.87
13 August	Travel—air/rail/road	592.22
18 August	Hotels and accommodation	4,354.40
19 August	Statutory bodies	595.00
22 August	Vehicles, servicing and spares	756.14
26 August	Hotels and accommodation	4,197.00
1 September	Hotels and accommodation	4,004.05
2 September	Telecommunication services	701.74
3 September	Office stationery, equipment and supplies	604.89
4 September	Statutory bodies	595.00
4 September	Statutory bodies	595.00
4 September	Utilities and non-automotive fuel	608.54
5 September	Telecommunication services	505.83
8 September	Hotels and accommodation	580.95
9 September	Hotels and accommodation	528.05
9 September	Hotels and accommodation	528.05
11 September	Miscellaneous industrial/ commercial supplies	573.60
12 September	Travel—air/rail/road	516.28
12 September	Travel—air/rail/road	516.28
19 September	Auto rental	600.00
22 September	Hotels and accommodation	1,805.88
1 October	Hotels and accommodation	1,866.76
1 October	Statutory bodies	595.00
2 October	Hotels and accommodation	554.00
3 October	Print and advertising	1,184.40
7 October	Hotels and accommodation	507.80
20 October	Hotels and accommodation	1,329.45
20 October	Hotels and accommodation	829.89
20 October	Hotels and accommodation	651.70
22 October	Hotels and accommodation	3,662.75
22 October	Hotels and accommodation	3,593.47
31 October	Mail order/direct selling	1,820.21
3 November	Hotels and accommodation	756.30
6 November	Statutory bodies	595.00
7 November	Hotels and accommodation	598.31
10 November	Hotels and accommodation	1,077.95
10 November	Statutory bodies	595.00

<i>(i) 2008-09</i>		
<i>Posting date</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Amount GBP (£)</i>
10 November	Hotels and accommodation	1,156.64
10 November	Travel—air/rail/road	1,133.34
10 November	Hotels and accommodation	1,445.80
11 November	Hotels and accommodation	659.64
12 November	Hotels and accommodation	667.52
12 November	Restaurants and bars	509.36
14 November	Hotels and accommodation	1,870.69
17 November	Hotels and accommodation	2,319.93
20 November	Statutory bodies	595.00
28 November	Marine supplies	631.10
2 December	Hotels and accommodation	873.16
2 December	Hotels and accommodation	873.16
3 December	Hotels and accommodation	2,009.59
3 December	Hotels and accommodation	2,147.27
4 December	Travel—air/rail/road	518.21
8 December	Statutory bodies	595.00
9 December	Statutory bodies	595.00
10 December	Travel—air/rail/road	741.60
11 December	General retail and wholesale	2,517.22
18 December	Statutory bodies	595.00
18 December	Statutory bodies	595.00
18 December	Statutory bodies	595.00
22 December	Hotels and accommodation	£629.71
23 December	Statutory bodies	595.00
23 December	Statutory bodies	595.00
<i>2009</i>		
19 January	Hotels and accommodation	1,015.20
20 January	Travel—air/rail/road	600.08
20 January	Travel—air/rail/road	600.08
29 January	Hotels and accommodation	545.12
30 January	Hotels and accommodation	786.25
23 February	Hotels and accommodation	1,009.50
9 March	Hotels and accommodation	958.00
13 March	Auto rental	822.91
16 March	Hotels and accommodation	749.64
16 March	Hotels and accommodation	749.64
30 March	Auto rental	598.85
1 April	Hotels and accommodation	663.70
2 April	Hotels and accommodation	3,409.64
2 April	Hotels and accommodation	3,478.69
Total (over £500)		118,507.86

(ii) 2009-10

<i>Posting date</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Amount GBP (£)</i>
<i>2009</i>		
9 April	Telecommunication services	598.89
14 April	Travel—air/rail/road	550.30
27 April	Hotels and accommodation	632.14
1 May	Hotels and accommodation	1,531.82
5 May	Hotels and accommodation	516.49
27 May	Hotels and accommodation	648.93
29 May	Hotels and accommodation	667.72
15 June	Hotels and accommodation	838.50
16 June	Print and advertising	1,699.41
19 June	Hotels and accommodation	648.78
23 June	Hotels and accommodation	1,584.94
24 June	Hotels and accommodation	522.00
25 June	Hotels and accommodation	980.00
24 August	Travel—air/rail/road	529.08
24 August	Travel—air/rail/road	529.08
28 September	Hotels and accommodation	1,289.81
28 September	Hotels and accommodation	1,289.81
1 October	Auto rental	971.01

<i>(ii) 2009-10</i>		
<i>Posting date</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Amount GBP (£)</i>
5 October	Auto rental	766.44
16 October	Training schools	643.99
21 October	Hotels and accommodation	3,216.96
21 October	Hotels and accommodation	3,233.49
29 October	Hotels and accommodation	934.44
29 October	Miscellaneous industrial/ commercial supplies	857.92
19 November	Statutory bodies	1,317.90
25 November	Hotels and accommodation	2,069.87
16 December	Hotels and accommodation	1,016.13
<i>2010</i>		
15 January	Hotels and accommodation	695.60
1 February	Travel—air/rail/road	532.56
8 February	Hardware equipment and supplies	523.24
8 February	Travel—air/rail/road	527.28
22 February	Statutory bodies	688.77
1 March	Hotels and accommodation	1,057.30
3 March	Auto rental	1,204.62
10 March	Hotels and accommodation	535.09
12 March	Hotels and accommodation	1,007.89
23 March	Hotels and accommodation	3,595.22
26 March	Miscellaneous industrial/ commercial supplies	767.28
29 March	Miscellaneous industrial/ commercial supplies	729.68
Total (over £500)		42,537.45

Note:

Many of the entries relate to hotels and accommodation bookings and are for multiple rather than single travellers, mainly overseas, where it is necessary to deliver the Department's objectives, including fiscal fraud enforcement, enforcement of prohibition and restrictions, and the provision of mutual administrative assistance.

Chris Kelly: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Government Procurement Card transactions were made by his Department's officials withdrawing cash from automated teller machines from 2006-07 to 2009-10; at what cost; and on which dates. [73716]

Miss Chloe Smith: Cash withdrawal transactions using Government Procurement Cards held by Treasury staff are automatically blocked by the card issuer.

Housing: Sales

Joseph Johnson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of homes in each price band in (a) London, (b) England and (c) the UK that were sold in the last (i) 12, (ii) 24, (iii) 36 and (iv) 48 months were bought or sold by or traded between offshore companies. [74311]

Miss Chloe Smith: It is estimated that during 2009-10, around 1% of UK land and property transactions valued at over £40,000 were to a purchaser with a foreign address. With a total of 990,000 transactions during that period, this suggests that around 10,000 were bought by a foreign purchaser.

This estimate includes both residential and non-residential transactions.

More detailed information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Income Tax

Mr Mark Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people liable for the highest rate of income tax have ceased paying income tax in the UK since the introduction of the 50 pence income tax rate. [73228]

Mr Gauke: This information is not available.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, the right hon. Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), has asked HM Revenue and Customs to assess the revenue from the 50% rate of income tax. As I outlined in debates on the 2011 Finance Bill, HMRC will consider all available evidence around the impact of the 50% rate including data from the 2010-11 self-assessment returns which will become available next year. Until then it is not possible to assess the impact of the introduction of the additional rate on taxpayer numbers.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer also made clear in his Budget 2011 speech that the 50% rate is a temporary measure. In an age when businesses, capital and people are increasingly mobile, high tax rates send a negative signal to those looking to work and invest in the UK.

National Insurance Contributions

Gloria De Piero: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many businesses in Ashfield constituency have participated in the national insurance holiday scheme. [73449]

Eric Ollerenshaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many businesses in Lancaster and Fleetwood constituency have participated in the national insurance contributions holiday since the scheme came into effect. [73452]

Mr Gauke: A breakdown of successful applications for the NICs holiday by constituency will be published in the NICs holiday factsheet in the House of Commons Library in the autumn.

Natural Gas: Exploration

James Wharton: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent estimate he has made of tax revenues from fracking. [73169]

Miss Chloe Smith: There is currently no commercial shale gas production in the UK. The Treasury has made no recent estimate of potential tax revenues from fracking.

North Sea Oil: Tax Yields

Damian Hinds: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the proportion of tax revenue which would have come from green taxes if he had not introduced the carbon price floor or the increase in the North sea oil supplementary charge in each of the next four years. [73126]

Miss Chloe Smith: The Government are currently finalising their definition of environmental taxes. This will establish a baseline against which the Government's commitment to increase the proportion of revenue from environmental taxes can be measured.

North sea oil taxes are not environmental taxes and have never been classified as such. The revenue forecast from the change in the supplementary charge was published in table 2.1 on page 42 of Budget 2011.

Office of Government Commerce: Government Procurement Card

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the (a) date of purchase, (b) amount, (c) supplier and (d) level 3 or enhanced transaction entry was of each transaction undertaken by the Office of Government Commerce using the Government Procurement Card in (i) 2007-08, (ii) 2008-09 and (iii) 2009-10. [73494]

Miss Chloe Smith: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Central Government Departments plan to begin publishing Government Procurement Card transactions over £500 on their websites, starting with 2011-12 Quarter 1 (April to June) data at the end of October and then on a monthly basis.

PAYE: Administration

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many incorrect PAYE codes have been issued by HM Revenue and Customs to taxpayers in the last 12 months, and what estimate he has made on the amount of tax (a) overcharged and (b) undercharged as a result of tax code errors in that period. [74041]

Mr Gauke: The exact percentage of incorrect coding notices issued is not known. In any year a small percentage of codes are always incorrect as they do not reflect changes in an individual's circumstances. That is why HMRC send out coding notices well in advance of the start of the new tax year so that customers can review them and report any changes to HMRC.

The overwhelming majority of PAYE cases (more than 40 million) are correct, so most people have paid the right amount of tax.

Revenue and Customs

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he plans to publish the Government's response to the Treasury Select Committee's Sixteenth Report of the session 2010-12, on the Administration and Effectiveness of HM Revenue and Customs; and if he will make a statement. [72988]

Mr Gauke: The Government's response to the Treasury Select Committee's Sixteenth Report of the current session on the Administration and Effectiveness of HM Revenue and Customs was sent to the Committee on 30 September 2011. The Committee are now considering the response and will formally publish it in due course.

Revenue and Customs: Closures

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received on the planned closure of HM Revenue and Customs offices; and if he will make a statement. [73331]

Mr Gauke: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has announced that it will be taking forward 14 office closures in 2012-13, including five offices already announced for closure as part of an earlier review. No representations have been received about these closures since the decisions were announced on 14 September.

On the same day, HMRC announced the office closure proposals under consideration for 2013-14. Eight offices are proposed for closure in 2013-14 and since the proposals were announced HMRC has received letters about two of them, Redhill and Stockport, each from an MP in a neighbouring constituency.

Feasibility on these proposals is under way and will inform the decisions to be announced in January 2012.

Revenue and Customs: Correspondence

Mr Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to allowing small businesses to communicate with HM Revenue and Customs by email; and if he will make a statement.

[73066]

Mr Gauke: HMRC is responding to customer requests for more e-mail contact by providing a wide range of structured and secure electronic contact services including e-mail. E-mail is now being used successfully in our day to day processes with our large and complex customers and HMRC are looking at how we can expand this to include small and medium enterprises and agents. HMRC are currently consulting:

<http://hmrc.gov.uk/consultations/>

on making an e-mail address a required element of a business's designatory data with a view to gaining greater understanding of, and being able to respond to, customer demands. We want to analyse responses (closing date 31 October) before taking consideration further. Electronic contact solutions are only introduced where HMRC is certain about the authenticity of the person sending the e-mail and where there are strong controls around the data, being sent.

Mr Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to ensuring that small businesses have a named officer in HM Revenue and Customs with whom they deal.

[73067]

Mr Gauke: HM Revenue and Customs assigns a designated member of staff to those businesses whose size or complexity mean they need a relationship with HMRC involving regular, ongoing discussion on a range of issues. The level of tax at risk and the complexity involved make this the most cost-effective way of improving both tax compliance and the customer experience.

HMRC's 4.8 million small and medium sized enterprise (SME) customers tend not to have as complex affairs as those in the large business group, nor have the same need for regular discussion on an ongoing basis.

The cost of extending the relationship managed service to small businesses is not affordable, nor would it be practical given the needs of these customers.

Instead, HMRC aims to make it as easy as possible for compliant customers to self-serve with certainty, while providing additional help to those that need it.

Revenue and Customs: Finance

Vernon Coaker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what meetings he has had with trade unions to discuss the effect of the comprehensive spending review on HM Revenue and Customs.

[73330]

Mr Gauke: Treasury Ministers and officials meet with a wide range of organisations and individuals in the public and private sectors as part of the usual policymaking process. As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government's practice to provide details of all such meetings.

Revenue and Customs: Government Procurement Card

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the (a) date of purchase, (b) amount, (c) supplier and (d) level 3 or enhanced transaction entry was of each transaction undertaken by HM Revenue and Customs using the Government Procurement Card in (i) 2007-08, (ii) 2008-09 and (iii) 2009-10.

[73493]

Mr Gauke: Information to the level of detail requested is not available except at disproportionate cost. HMRC has available the posting date, category and amount spent via Government Procurement Card for transactions over £500, shown in the following tables.

HMRC are not responsible for how the card supplier/merchant categorise goods/services and some descriptions may be misleading, e.g. Catering and Catering Supplies in 2007 was for accommodation; Restaurant and Bars relates in most cases to international business hospitality. Further investigation can be undertaken for specific items where required but not across the whole of the reported spend due to the disproportionate cost of doing so.

Many of the entries relate to hotels and accommodation bookings and in most cases are for multiple rather than single travellers, mainly overseas, where it is necessary to deliver the Department's objectives, including fiscal fraud enforcement, enforcement of prohibition and restrictions, and the provision of mutual administrative assistance.

Information for the whole of the 2007-08, 2008-09 and part of 2009-10 includes GPC use by staff prior to their transfer to UKBA under the relevant machinery of government changes.

HMRC applies tight restrictions to both provision of GPC cards and their use and spend is tightly controlled and strictly follows the rules and standards of Government Accounting.

(i) 2007-08		
Posting date	Category	Amount (£)
2007		
10 April	Hotels and Accommodation	700.81
11 April	Travel—air/rail/road	694.20
11 April	Travel—air/rail/road	694.20
11 April	Hotels and Accommodation	1,093.55
13 April	Professional services	1,403.00
20 April	Travel—air/rail/road	2,539.80
23 April	Travel—air/rail/road	500.00
23 April	Hotels and Accommodation	966.11
24 April	Hotels and Accommodation	666.31

<i>(i) 2007-08</i>			<i>(i) 2007-08</i>		
<i>Posting date</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Amount (£)</i>	<i>Posting date</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Amount (£)</i>
24 April	Hotels and Accommodation	705.51	23 August	Travel—air/rail/road	992.01
26 April	Travel—air/rail/road	570.00	24 August	Hotels and Accommodation	630.00
26 April	Travel—air/rail/road	709.86	29 August	Travel—air/rail/road	502.43
27 April	Hotels and Accommodation	812.40	29 August	Hotels and Accommodation	2,703.50
27 April	Hotels and Accommodation	1,471.40	31 August	Books and Periodicals	649.60
30 April	Travel—air/rail/road	508.80	6 September	Hotels and Accommodation	719.29
30 April	Travel—air/rail/road	695.40	7 September	Hotels and Accommodation	1,744.88
1 May	Travel—air/rail/road	942.59	12 September	Hotels and Accommodation,	697.50
4 May	Hotels and Accommodation	592.31	24 September	Hotels and Accommodation	855.54
4 May	Hotels and Accommodation	592.31	24 September	Hotels and Accommodation	855.54
9 May	Hotels and Accommodation	900.00	5 October	Restaurants and Bars	514.15
14 May	Hotels and Accommodation	1,735.53	8 October	Hotels and Accommodation	503.76
15 May	Hotels and Accommodation	500.00	8 October	Hotels and Accommodation	503.76
15 May	Restaurants and Bars	702.73	11 October	Travel—air/rail/road	575.65
17 May	Restaurants and Bars	560.00	12 October	Medical Supplies and Services	2,661.38
17 May	Hotels and Accommodation	910.00	17 October	Travel—air/rail/road	527.88
21 May	Hotels and Accommodation	557.50	24 October	Hotels and Accommodation	801.90
21 May	Travel—air/rail/road	615.92	29 October	Hotels and Accommodation	1,682.48
23 May	General Retail and Wholesale	700.74	8 November	Travel—air/rail/road	561.30
24 May	Professional services	671.53	8 November	Travel—air/rail/road	2,336.50
24 May	General Retail and Wholesale	2,076.66	13 November	Medical Supplies and Services	574.69
29 May	Computer Equipment and Services	597.00	13 November	Hotels and Accommodation	580.95
29 May	Hotels and Accommodation	879.07	23 November	Hotels and Accommodation	597.82
1 June	Hotels and Accommodation	2,376.00	26 November	Hotels and Accommodation	1,372.73
5 June	Hotels and Accommodation	588.42	30 November	Travel—air/rail/road	700.60
6 June	Hotels and Accommodation	896.00	5 December	Hotels and Accommodation	1,148.87
7 June	Hotels and Accommodation	1,018.73	5 December	Hotels and Accommodation	1,358.65
7 June	Hotels and Accommodation	1,018.73	5 December	Hotels and Accommodation	1,428.32
8 June	Hotels and Accommodation	1,437.08	6 December	Travel—air/rail/road	741.69
14 June	Hotels and Accommodation	500.00	7 December	Hotels and Accommodation	804.87
18 June	Travel—air/rail/road	2,211.39	12 December	Hotels and Accommodation	822.05
18 June	Travel—air/rail/road	2,211.39	18 December	Restaurants and Bars	559.60
19 June	Travel—air/rail/road	563.40	31 December	Travel—air/rail/road	992.30
19 June	Travel—air/rail/road	754.70			
20 June	Travel—air/rail/road	555.84	2008		
21 June	Hotels and Accommodation	641.79	14 February	Miscellaneous industrial/commercial supplies	699.13
21 June	Hotels and Accommodation	1,124.40	15 February	Hotels and Accommodation	611.05
22 June	Hotels and Accommodation	822.00	21 February	Auto rental	1,099.42
25 June	Travel—air/rail/road	1,044.40	21 February	Hotels and Accommodation	1,114.57
27 June	Hotels and Accommodation	540.00	22 February	Hotels and Accommodation	1,104.11
27 June	Hotels and Accommodation	1,439.79	25 February	Auto rental	534.71
27 June	Hotels and Accommodation	1,799.75	28 February	Travel—air/rail/road	769.54
28 June	Hotels and Accommodation	4,190.00	28 February	Travel—air/rail/road	1,444.91
29 June	Computer Equipment and Services	515.00	29 February	Hotels and Accommodation	549.29
2 July	Catering and Catering Supplies	639.60	3 March	Hotels and Accommodation	717.07
2 July	Hotels and Accommodation	2,325.02	3 March	Travel—air/rail/road	1,526.64
16 July	Restaurants and Bars	575.35	7 March	Hotels and Accommodation	594.18
16 July	Hotels and Accommodation	750.00	18 March	Travel—air/rail/road	555.53
16 July	Hotels and Accommodation	5,116.09	26 March	Hotels and Accommodation	722.89
17 July	Hotels and Accommodation	537.28	4 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
17 July	Miscellaneous industrial/commercial supplies	681.03	4 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
18 July	Hotels and Accommodation	600.00			
23 July	Hotels and Accommodation	529.48			
23 July	Travel—air/rail/road	560.20			
23 July	Travel—air/rail/road	945.63			
23 July	Travel—air/rail/road	945.63			
23 July	Travel—air/rail/road	953.31			
23 July	Hotels and Accommodation	1,345.88	8 April	Hotels and accommodation	840.22
24 July	Hotels and Accommodation	4,445.75	8 April	Hotels and accommodation	741.65
3 August	Hotels and Accommodation †	2,160.00	10 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
6 August	General Retail and Wholesale	3,724.75	10 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
7 August	Professional services	686.93	10 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
14 August	Books and Periodicals	1,159.05	15 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
20 August	Travel—air/rail/road	632.88	18 April	Hotels and accommodation	584.67
			18 April	Hotels and accommodation	1,005.32

(ii) 2008-09

<i>Posting date</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Amount (£)</i>
2008		
8 April	Hotels and accommodation	840.22
8 April	Hotels and accommodation	741.65
10 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
10 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
10 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
15 April	Statutory bodies	595.00
18 April	Hotels and accommodation	584.67
18 April	Hotels and accommodation	1,005.32

(ii) 2009-10

Posting date	Category	Amount (£)
24 June	Hotels and accommodation	522.00
25 June	Hotels and accommodation	980.00
24 August	Travel—air/rail/road	529.08
24 August	Travel—air/rail/road	529.08
28 September	Hotels and accommodation	1,289.81
28 September.	Hotels and accommodation	1,289.81
1 October	Auto rental	971.01
5 October	Auto rental	766.44
16 October	Training schools	643.99
21 October	Hotels and accommodation	3,216.96
21 October	Hotels and accommodation	3,233.49
29 October	Hotels and accommodation	934.44
29 October	Miscellaneous industrial/commercial supplies	857.92
19 November	Statutory bodies	1,317.90
25 November	Hotels and accommodation	2,069.87
16 December	Hotels and accommodation	1,016.13
15 January	Hotels and accommodation	695.60
01 February	Travel—air/rail/road	532.56
08 February	Hardware equipment and supplies	523.24
08 February	Travel—air/rail/road	527.28
22 February	Statutory bodies	688.77
2010		
1 March	Hotels and accommodation	1,057.30
3 March	Auto rental	1,204.62
10 March	Hotels and accommodation	535.09
12 March	Hotels and accommodation	1,007.89
23 March	Hotels and accommodation	3,595.22
26 March	Miscellaneous industrial/commercial supplies	587.07
29 March	Miscellaneous industrial/commercial supplies	767.28
29 March	Miscellaneous industrial/commercial supplies	729.68

Revenue and Customs: Manpower

Mr Mike Hancock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects the first 100 of the new anti-evasion and avoidance officers in HM Revenue and Customs to be in post. [72999]

Mr Gauke: The first 100 of the anti-evasion and avoidance officers are already in post and operational.

Mr Mike Hancock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of the proposed new anti-evasion and avoidance officers he expects to be redeployed from existing posts in HM Revenue and Customs. [73000]

Mr Gauke: There are currently no plans to use any external recruitment other than the annual recruitment of graduates. All of the new anti-evasion and avoidance officers will therefore be redeployed from elsewhere in HMRC or from other Government Departments.

Mr Mike Hancock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the cost to HM Revenue and Customs of employing the proposed new anti-evasion and avoidance officers. [73001]

Mr Gauke: These new posts are part of the reinvestment of £917 million over four years, announced in the 2010 spending review. This will see a redeployment of 2,250 staff this year. The annual costs of all the staff being redeployed and recruited in 2011-12 will be about £101 million.

Shipping: Carbon Emissions

Gavin Shaker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his negotiating position is for the G20 Finance Ministers October 2011 meeting on proposals for an international levy on shipping to cut carbon emissions and raise climate change finance. [74669]

Miss Chloe Smith: The UK Government believe a global emissions trading system would be the best way of reducing international shipping emissions effectively and efficiently and has submitted a proposal on such a system to the International Maritime Organization. The UK has also committed to spend £2.9 billion of international climate finance over the spending review period.

Social Lending

Mr Bain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what support his Department plans to provide for social lending through credit unions and community-based initiatives in each of the next four financial years. [73247]

Mr Hoban: The Government announced in July the establishment of Big Society Capital, the new operating name for the "Big Society Bank". This will play a critical role in accelerating the growth of social investment in the UK by investing in social finance intermediaries, including community development finance institutions (CDFIs). This initiative is being funded by dormant accounts as well as by a £200 million investment from the four main UK banks under Project Merlin.

Since 2006 the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has been investing in the capacity of credit unions and other community providers to offer access to savings, banking, budgeting and affordable credit services. Credit unions and other community providers are well placed to serve people who traditionally find it difficult use mainstream financial services. The service offers a real alternative to licensed high cost home credit and other lenders, and to illegal loan sharks.

Subject to the findings of a feasibility study, DWP has proposed a new modernisation and expansion fund of up to £73 million over the next four years to support credit unions that are ready and willing to make the changes required to expand their services to many more people at sustainable operating costs.

Stocks and Shares

Mr Bain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment his Department has made of the effect on speculative activity of introducing higher capital requirements for financial institutions engaged in proprietary trading in derivatives. [73135]

Mr Hoban: A package of reforms designed to strengthen the safety of trading book activities were agreed by the Basel committee in July 2009. These reforms will increase the amount of capital that banks are required to hold against their trading book by two to three times and will significantly enhance the prudential safety of trading activities. These reforms will be implemented in the EU though the capital requirements directive 3, which will come into force by the end of 2011.

Tax Allowances

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to ensure that (a) employers and (b) employees have access to accurate and up-to-date information on types of tax relief available. [74032]

Mr Gauke: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) provide comprehensive help and guidance to employers and employees on its website which is regularly reviewed and updated:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/index.htm>

Reliefs available to individuals and employees are also detailed in the self-assessment tax return and accompanying guidance notes.

Tax Allowances: Commuters

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent assessment his Department has made of the potential use of incentives in the tax system to encourage employees to use more environmentally friendly means of transport to travel to and from their place of work. [74033]

Miss Chloe Smith: A range of incentives are in place to encourage more environmentally friendly means of travel, such as the Cycle to Work scheme and employer-subsidised local bus services. Electric vehicles are not subject to fuel duty and are exempt from vehicle excise duty (VED) and company car tax (CCT). Fuel duty, VED and CCT also support the take-up of fuel efficient vehicles.

Tax Avoidance: Internet

Priti Patel: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many incidents of illegal avoidance of tax, VAT and import duty in relation to the selling of products through online (a) businesses and (b) auction sites have been recorded in each of the last five years; and for which countries of origin. [73425]

Mr Gauke: The information requested can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Tax Evasion

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many (a) individuals and (b) organisations have been (i) investigated by HM Revenue and Customs for tax evasion and (ii) prosecuted for such offences since May 2010. [74040]

Mr Gauke: HMRC does not hesitate to pursue a prosecution; however, cost-effective civil settlement procedures are used in the majority of evasion cases. This represents excellent value for the Exchequer, as all undeclared tax is repaid and they also pay a penalty which can be up to 100% of the tax evaded. Every year HMRC collects millions of pounds of evaded tax using these well-established methods.

A disaggregated breakdown of HMRC's interventions between individuals and organisations is available only at a disproportionate cost.

Details of the number of cases prosecuted for income tax, corporation tax, VAT and excise evasion are:

1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011: 385

1 April 2011 to 31 August 2011: 123.

Tax Yields: Environment Protection

Damian Hinds: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the proportion of tax revenue which will come from green taxes in each of the next four years resulting from measures introduced (a) since and (b) before May 2010. [73445]

Miss Chloe Smith: The Government are currently finalising their definition of environmental taxes. This will establish a baseline against which the Government's commitment to increase the proportion of revenue from environmental taxes can be measured:

The estimated total percentage of revenue raised by environment taxes, as a proportion of all taxes in the March 2010 Budget was forecast as being 0.4%. The previous Government defined, the following as environmental taxes: landfill tax, aggregates levy, climate change levy and the EU Emissions Trading Scheme.

Damian Hinds: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of tax revenue came from green taxes in each year since 1997. [73453]

Miss Chloe Smith: The Government are currently finalising their definition of environmental taxes. This will establish a baseline against which the Government's commitment to increase the proportion of revenue from environmental taxes can be measured.

The previous Government included the following taxes as environmental taxes: landfill tax, climate change levy, aggregates levy and EU Emissions Trading Scheme. The information requested is set out in the following table:

	<i>Environmental taxes as percentage of total tax revenues</i>
1997	0.1
1998	0.1
1999	0.1
2000	0.1
2001	0.3
2002	0.4
2003	0.4
2004	0.4
2005	0.4
2006	0.4
2007-08	0.4
2008-09	0.4
2009-10	0.4

Taxation: Accountability

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with his international counterparts on steps to increase global tax transparency. [74031]

Mr Gauke: Recent discussions of global tax transparency have taken place in the context of G20 meetings. The UK supports G20 work on promoting the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information, which is carrying out a rigorous programme of peer reviews to encourage all countries to meet international standards of tax transparency.

Taxation: Carers

Gordon Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes affecting kinship carers he has made to the tax system since 6 April 2011. [74533]

Mr Gauke: No changes specific to kinship carers have been made to the tax system since 6 April 2011. However, extra-statutory simplified tax arrangements previously available to certain carers ended on 5 April 2011 after the Government introduced qualifying care relief. This new relief extended foster care relief to certain other carers, including those providing kinship care under specified social care schemes, who share their homes and daily family life with an adult or child placed with them.

Taxation: Environment Protection

Dr Whitehead: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received from the European Commission on the carbon floor price. [73806]

Miss Chloe Smith: The Treasury has not received any representations from the European Commission about the carbon price floor.

The Government continue to engage with the European Commission on a wide range of issues including as part of our overall policy development related to the electricity market reform proposals.

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the likely combined revenue to the Exchequer from the carbon price floor and the EU Emissions Trading System up to 2015-16. [74160]

Miss Chloe Smith: Budget 2011 set out the estimated revenue from the carbon price floor and the EU Emissions Trading System up to 2015-16. The combined revenue is estimated to be £2,740 million in 2013-14; £3,170 million in 2014-15; and £3,610 million in 2015-16.

Taxation: Football

Mr Foster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the sum owed to the Exchequer by football clubs in the Premier League and Football League (a) at the end of each of the previous five tax years and (b) on the most recent date for which figures are available. [72970]

Mr Gauke: The Government do not hold data prior to the year ended March 2009. Neither do we collate these data at the exact year end. We have provided the March figures for each of the past three years.

	Premier League	Football League	Total
Current	0	187,466	187,466
29 March 2011	0	732,517	732,517
5 March 2010	14,407,054	777,825	15,184,879
6 March 2009	16,773,867	8,205,111	24,978,978

These totals only include PAYE/NIC and VAT and are only a snapshot, valid only on the date taken and, as with any snapshot, the amounts are likely to have been significantly different if taken on a different day as liabilities can become due and payments can be made on a daily basis.

Mr Foster: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the monetary value of tax receipts from income tax received from professional footballers in each of the last 10 financial years. [72985]

Mr Gauke: The information requested is not available specifically for association football players.

Third Sector

Mr Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much direct funding his Department provided to each civil society organisation it funded in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12, (c) 2012-13, (d) 2013-14 and (e) 2014-15; and if he will make a statement. [74814]

Miss Chloe Smith: The Treasury does not directly fund any civil society organisations.

VAT

Pauline Latham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what impact assessment his Department undertook on the likely effect on the express and mail industries of the reduction of low value consignment relief for goods from the Channel Islands and third countries; and if he will publish any such impact assessment. [73230]

Mr Gauke: A tax information and impact assessment was published alongside the 2011 Finance Bill last spring. Officials maintain a regular dialogue with both Royal Mail and the fast parcel industry about the impact of possible future changes to LVCR on their businesses and their views will be taken into account in deciding how to prevent LVCR being exploited.

Robert Halfon: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent estimate he has made of the administrative cost to businesses of charging and claiming back VAT between VAT-registered firms. [73961]

Mr Gauke: HMRC has made no assessment of the administrative costs that businesses specifically incur in charging and claiming VAT between VAT-registered businesses.

VAT: Exemptions

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to extending exemptions from VAT. [74039]

Mr Gauke: All taxes, including VAT and the scope of its exemptions, are kept under review.

VAT: Housing Improvement

Bill Esterson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will assess the (a) likely effect on the availability of housing and (b) the number of jobs which would be created by reducing the rate of VAT on renovation and refurbishment of property to 5% over (i) one year, (ii) five years and (iii) 10 years; [74622]

(2) what assessment he has made of the likely effects of a reduction in the rate of VAT applied to property renovation and refurbishment on the amount of VAT collected in the (a) first, (b) fifth and (c) 10th year following such a reduction. [74765]

Mr Gauke: The Exchequer cost, in the absence of behavioural change, of reducing the rate of VAT applied to residential property renovation and refurbishment is estimated at (a) £2.2 billion in the first year, (b) £2.4 billion in the fifth year and (c) £2.9 billion in the 10th year.

The cost of the relief would have to be met from additional taxation elsewhere, which would lead to job losses that would offset any job gains in the building sector, or through additional borrowing, which would risk increasing interest rates. Higher interest rates would have an adverse impact on families and small businesses, including businesses in the building sector.

VAT: Tourism

Mr Ivan Lewis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the effect on the tourism industry of the increase in the rate of VAT. [73177]

Mr Gauke: No specific assessment has been made of the economic impact of the VAT rate increase on the tourism industry. The impact assessment published with the Budget in June 2010 provides information on the compliance costs to business overall of the VAT rate increase, but not at sector level.

Working Tax Credit

Mr Hanson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what methodology he used to calculate the estimated savings to the public purse which he expects to arise from changes to the working tax credit; and if he will place in the Library a copy of these calculations. [73014]

Mr Gauke: The methodology used to calculate savings to the Exchequer from changes to tax credits at Budget 2010 and spending review 2010 can be found in the accompanying policy costings documents: "Budget 2010 policy costings" is available at:

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/d/junebudget_costings.pdf

"Spending Review 2010 policy costings" is available at:
http://cdn.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sr2010_policycostings.pdf

Written Questions: Government Responses

Chris Leslie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he plans to answer Question (a) 68073, (b) 68074 and (c) 68075, tabled on 19 July 2011 for answer on 5 September 2011. [74718]

Miss Chloe Smith: The Treasury has replied to the hon. Member's questions.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER**Electoral Register**

Fiona Mactaggart: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what estimate he has made of the effects of his legislative proposals on the number of people on the electoral register; and if he will make a statement. [74974]

Mr Harper: The Government are funding research to understand the current state of the electoral register which will help us to better understand the way in which the move to individual registration will have an impact.

The Government will do everything they can to maintain the completeness of the electoral register. This includes phasing in the move to Individual Registration over two years so that people on the register who do not apply under the new system do not lose their vote at the 2015 General Election. Every eligible elector will be asked in 2014 to register under the new system: this will include personal invites to people on the register, inquiries to households where no one is registered or people have moved, reminder letters and face-to-face doorstep canvassers. There will also be a publicity campaign run by the Electoral Commission and we are testing data matching to identify people missing from the register and looking at how we can increase the choices people have over how to register, including greater use of online registration.

Electoral Registration

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what the evidential basis is for his proposals on future requirements for people to co-operate with electoral registration officers compiling a register of electors. [74151]

Mr Harper: It is currently not compulsory to be registered to vote and this will not change under the Government's individual electoral registration (IER) proposals. It is an offence at present for anyone not to provide information when required to do so by an electoral registration officer (ERO), for example, in response to the household canvass form. The Government propose to retain this offence under the new system, however, it is not proposed to create a new offence for an individual failing to respond to an invitation to register. We believe that the act of registering is one of personal responsibility, and as such there should be no compulsion for an individual to make an application to register to vote.

E-mail

Jack Dromey: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether any (a) Ministers, (b) officials and (c) special advisers in his office use private e-mail accounts for the conduct of Government business. [73216]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I and the officials and special advisers in my office conduct Government business in accordance with the Ministerial Code, the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers and the Civil Service Code.

Hillsborough Stadium

Steve Rotheram: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the Prime Minister since his appointment on the unredacted release of the Hillsborough Cabinet minutes. [74300]

The Deputy Prime Minister: The Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), and I agree on the need to provide full transparency about the Hillsborough disaster through full public disclosure. All the Cabinet Office papers have been shared with the Hillsborough Independent Panel and the Government are happy for all the papers to be released as soon as the panel so decides, in consultation with the families. The Prime Minister, Home Secretary and I expect them to be shared with the Hillsborough families first and then with the wider public.

House of Lords: Elections

Miss McIntosh: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what timetable he expects to set is for the introduction of elections to the House of Lords; and if he will make a statement. [74294]

Mr Harper: A Joint Committee of both Houses is undertaking pre-legislative scrutiny of the Government's draft House of Lords Reform Bill and it is due to report by 29 February 2012. A Government Bill will be introduced in the next session of Parliament. The Government hope that the first elections to the reformed House of Lords will take place on 7 May 2015.

Prisoners

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister which categories of prisoners he expects to be enfranchised. [73965]

Mr Harper: The European Court of Human Rights has granted an extension to the deadline for implementing prisoner voting rights that was set in the Greens and MT judgment against the UK.

This is because the court is considering an Italian prisoner voting rights case—*Scoppola v. Italy*.

It is right to consider the final *Scoppola* judgment and the wider legal context before setting out next steps on prisoner voting.

The Government will express their views on the principles raised in that case, and we will be arguing that it is for Parliament to decide the way forward on this issue.

CABINET OFFICE**Big Lottery Fund: Manpower**

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many members of staff worked for the Big Lottery Fund in (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12; how many will work for the fund in each of the next three years; and if he will make a statement. [74769]

Mr Hurd: The number of staff that worked for the Big Lottery Fund during 2010-11 and 2011-12 are set out in the following table:

	<i>Number of staff (FTE)</i>
2010-11	982
2011-12 ¹	986

¹ Figures for this year are an estimate based on the year to date.

The figures exclude non-executives as well as those employed by the national lottery promotions unit. The Big Lottery Fund does not hold staff figures for future years.

Big Society Capital

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what representations he received on the Big Society Bank in each month since June 2010; and if he will make a statement. [74801]

Mr Hurd: I have received numerous representations in relation to the Big Society Bank since June 2010 including correspondence, meetings and parliamentary business. Ministers are actively engaging with civil society organisations across England through a programme of regional events, as well as working closely with the devolved Administrations to develop policy on the Big Society Bank.

Progress on the Big Society Bank is published on the Cabinet Office website:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/big-society-capital>

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many representations he has received on Big Society Capital in each month since June 2010; and if he will make a statement. [75102]

Mr Hurd: As Minister for Civil Society, I have received numerous representations in relation to the Big Society Capital since June 2010 including correspondence, meetings and parliamentary business.

Ministers are actively engaging with civil society organisations across England through a programme of regional events, as well as working closely with the devolved Administrations to develop policy on the Big Society Capital.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will publish the (a) business plan and (b) accounts and (c) minutes of each board meeting of Big Society Capital since its establishment; and if he will make a statement. [75103]

Mr Hurd: Big Society Capital is a private company and so it is not for Government to publish its business plan, accounts and board minutes.

The outline proposal for Big Society Capital submitted by Sir Ronald Cohen and Nick O'Donohoe, and endorsed by Cabinet Office Ministers, states that transparency will be one of Big Society Capital's guiding principles, and commits to clear reporting of its financial results and social impact of its investments.

The Government publish progress on establishing the Big Society Bank on the Cabinet Office website:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/big-society-capital>

Charitable Donations: Business

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what estimate he has made of the level of charitable giving (a) in total, (b) by UK-owned businesses and (c) by businesses based in the UK in each of the last three years. [74771]

Mr Hurd: The Cabinet Office collated existing evidence on levels of giving which was published in the Giving Green Paper in December last year. Figures from the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) and the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) estimated that in 2009-10, 28.4 million adults (56%) donated to charity in a typical month accounting for £10.6 billion of total annual charitable donations. This represented a rise of over £400 million from its 2008-09 level of £10.2 billion.

The Cabinet Office does not produce any estimates for donations by UK-owned businesses. Official estimates available from HMRC only account for a subset of total donations through gift aid and covenants.

In 2009, the total value of worldwide community investment including cash, time, and in-kind donations of the largest 300 UK corporate donors was £1.9 billion—the highest figure reported to date.

Charities

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many investigations into the activities of UK registered charities were launched by the Charity Commission in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [75455]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Charity Commission. I have asked the Commission's chief executive to reply.

Letter from Sam Younger, dated 17 October 2011:

I have been asked to respond to your written Parliamentary Question on how many investigations into the activities of UK registered charities were launched by the Charity Commission in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement [75455].

When concerns are reported to us, we assess them against our published risk and proportionality framework and decide on the most appropriate action to take. When serious concerns are reported, we may open an investigation or, in the most serious cases, a statutory inquiry under s. 8 of the Charities Act 2006.

The number of investigations opened in each year is as follows:

	Number
2010-11	144
2009-10	180
2008-09	168
2007-08	170
2006-07	303

The number of statutory inquiries opened in each year is as follows:

	Number
2010-11	3
2009-10	9
2008-09	19
2007-08	19
2006-07	26

I hope this information is helpful.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many investigations into the activities of UK registered charities the Charity Commission has planned for as part of its budgetary process in (a) 2011-12, (b) 2012-13, (c) 2013-14 and (d) 2014-15; and if he will make a statement. [75456]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Charity Commission. I have asked the Commission's chief executive to reply.

Letter from Sam Younger, dated 17 October 2011:

I have been asked to respond to your written Parliamentary Question on how many investigations into the activities of UK registered charities the Charity Commission has planned for as part of its budgetary process in (a) 2011-12, (b) 2012-13, (c) 2013-14 and (d) 2014-15; and if he will make a statement [75456].

The Charity Commission does not set quotas or have numerical limits for how many investigations it carries out, or for its other work related to investigations. All cases of concerns are, and will continue to be, examined against our risk framework to determine the most appropriate and proportionate course of action, which may in some cases include an investigation.

I hope this information is helpful.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many charities that were investigated by the Charity Commission closed voluntarily or were shut down (a) within 12 months and (b) within six months of the investigation completing in each year since 2007-08; and if he will make a statement. [75457]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Charity Commission. I have asked the commission's chief executive to reply.

Letter from Sam Younger, dated 17 October 2011:

I have been asked to respond to your written Parliamentary Question on how many charities that were investigated by the Charity Commission closed voluntarily or were shut down (a) within 12 months and (b) within six months of the investigation completing in each year since 2007-08; and if he will make a statement [75457].

We do not monitor these statistics. Where we know that a charity has wound up or been taken off the Register of Charities, we will refer to this in our inquiry reports.

I hope this information is helpful.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many public benefit assessments the Charity Commission undertook in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11; how many it expects to undertake in each year of the comprehensive spending review period; and if he will make a statement. [75459]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Charity Commission. I have asked the Commission's Head of Corporate Services to reply.

Letter from Sam Younger, dated 17 October 2011:

I have been asked to respond to your written Parliamentary Question on how many public benefit assessments the Charity Commission undertook in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11; how many it expects to undertake in each year of the Comprehensive Spending Review period; and if he will make a statement [75459].

The Commission carried out 12 public benefit assessments in 2009/10 and 8 assessments in 2010/11. No further public benefit assessments are planned.

I hope this information is helpful.

Charity Commission

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the priorities were of the Charity Commission in (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12; and if he will make a statement. [75107]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Charity Commission, have asked the Commission's Head of Corporate Services to reply.

Letter from Nick Allaway, dated 14 October 2011:

I have been asked to respond to your written Parliamentary Question on what the priorities were of the Charity Commission in (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12 [75107].

Our priorities for 2010-11 were set out in our strategic plan for 2008-11. During this period, we were committed to achieving the following strategic priorities:

- continuing our commitment to modern, risk-based regulation;
- delivering organisational change and valuing our people;
- independent, objective decision-making and leadership;
- driving the accountability of charities to the public;
- delivering faster, more efficient services to our customers; and
- completing the implementation of the Charities Act 2006.

Delivering against these has enabled the Commission to achieve the five statutory objectives set out in the Charities Act 2006.

Following a reduction to our budget of 33% in real terms in the last spending review, the Commission has embarked on a fundamental review of our activities. We are currently in the process of finalising a strategic plan to cover the period 2012-15, which will be made publicly available in due course.

I hope this information is helpful.

Charity Commission: Manpower

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many full-time equivalent staff the Charity Commission employed in (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12; how many employees he expects the Commission to employ in each of the next three years; and if he will make a statement. [75108]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Charity Commission. I have asked the Commission's head of corporate services to reply.

Letter from Nick Allaway, dated 14 October 2011:

I have been asked to respond to your written Parliamentary Question on how many full-time equivalent staff the Charity Commission employed in (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12; and how many employees he expects the Commission to employ in each of the next three years [75108].

The number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff employed by the Charity Commission in 2010/11 was 404 staff (as at 31 March 2011). For the current year, 2011/12, it is expected that the Commission will employ 343 FTE staff by 31 March 2012.

For the remaining three years of the current spending review period the FTE staff numbers at the Charity Commission are planned to be:

	Staff
2012-13	290
2013-14	288
2014-15	287

I hope this information is helpful.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many staff the Charity Commission employed to investigate complaints against UK registered charities in each year since 2007-08; how many it expects to employ in each year of the comprehensive spending review period; and if he will make a statement. [75458]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the Charity Commission. I have asked the Commission's chief executive to reply.

Letter from Sam Younger, dated 17 October 2011:

I have been asked to respond to your written Parliamentary Question on how many staff the Charity Commission employed to investigate complaints against UK registered charities in each year since 2007-08; how many it expects to employ in each year of the Comprehensive Spending Review period; and if he will make a statement [75458].

Since 2007, our investigations work was contained in our Compliance area in three Compliance Investigation teams. There were between 30 and 35 people in total in those teams with FTE each year as follows: 2007/08 31; 2008/09 34.2; 2009/10 32.4; and 2010/11 29.6.

In future, we will not be organising our work and structures in the same way therefore it is not possible to make a direct comparison on staffing figures. The Investigations and Enforcement area will carry out the Commission's investigations and is expected to have around 30 staff, although not all of these will be conducting investigations.

In addition, some of the work previously carried out as formal investigations will still be conducted, and the regulatory issues dealt with, in four Operations Units, one in each of our offices. In total there are 52 people in these teams. They will also be carrying out permissions and consents cases as well as other regulatory work.

I hope this information is helpful.

Civil Service: Trade Unions

Guto Bebb: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office when he expects to announce a consultation on ending the practice of civil servants working full-time on trade union activities. [73851]

Mr Maude: We are immediately reviewing trade union facility time across the civil service. Once the review is complete, we will start the consultation with trade unions.

Communities First Fund

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much funding the Community First Fund was allocated in (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12; how much it will receive in each of the next three years; and if he will make a statement. [74788]

Mr Hurd: The Community First programme has a budget of up to £80 million, to be spent between April 2011 and March 2015. A breakdown of annual funding is provided as follows:

	<i>Community First Funding</i>	<i>£ million Endowment Match Challenge</i>
2010-2011	0	0
2011-2012	5	10
2012-2013	7.5	15
2013-2014	7.5	15
2014-2015	10	10
Total	30	50

Further information on the allocation of funds to individual wards can be found on the Community Development Foundation's website:

<http://www.cdf.org.uk/web/guest/community-first>

Communities First Fund: Oxfordshire

Tony Baldry: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office for what reasons (a) Grimsbury, (b) Neithrop and (c) Ruscote ward within Cherwell district council does not qualify for Community First funding. [74725]

Mr Hurd: The aim of the Community First programme is to encourage more social action in neighbourhoods with significant deprivation and low social capital. It aims to encourage people to help others and themselves to improve the quality of life locally.

The eligible wards for Community First were selected using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, cross-cut with significant jobseeker's allowance (JSA) claimant increases at top tier local authority level. In Oxfordshire, the eligible wards are Blackbird Leys and Rose Hill, and Iffley. They will both receive £33,910 of match funding over four years.

Departmental Billing

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what proportion of invoices from suppliers to (a) his Department and (b) 10 Downing street his Department paid within 10 days of receipt in July and August 2010. [74395]

Mr Maude: 10 Downing street is an integral part of the Cabinet Office and this answer covers the Department as a whole.

The percentage of invoices from suppliers paid within 10 days of receipt in July and August 2010 are shown in the following table.

	<i>Percentage</i>
July 2010	96.3
August 2010	96.3

Departmental Buildings

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what (a) building and (b) refurbishment projects in respect of (i) the Cabinet Office, (ii) 10 Downing street and (iii) the office of the Deputy Prime Minister his Department plans in (A) 2011-12 and (B) 2012-13; and what the cost of each such project will be. [74394]

Mr Maude: 10 Downing street and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister are an integral part of the Cabinet Office.

The Cabinet Office is undertaking building and refurbishment projects and details of costs can be found at the Cabinet Office transparency website.

<http://data.gov.uk/dataset/financial-transactions-data-co>

There are no current plans for any project work during 2012-13.

Departmental Consultants

David Simpson: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what procedures his Department uses when engaging external consultants. [73096]

Mr Maude: The use of external resources (including consultants) is subject to the scrutiny of the Cabinet Office Approvals Board, which is chaired by myself. Approved engagements are made in line with the Department's procurement policy.

Departmental Correspondence

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what representations he has received on (a) the Big Society Bank, (b) the Work programme and (c) volunteering in each month since June 2011; and if he will make a statement. [75097]

Mr Hurd: As Minister for Civil Society, I have received numerous representations in relation to Big Society Capital, volunteering and the Work programme (which is being taken forward by the Department for Work and Pensions) since June 2011, including correspondence, meetings and parliamentary business.

Departmental Official Hospitality

Ian Austin: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much his Department spent on hospitality for events hosted by each Minister in his Department in each of the last 12 months. [73670]

Mr Maude: For the period October 2010 to September 2011, Cabinet Office Ministers spent £768 on hospitality for ministerial events, excluding de minimus expenditure for teas and coffee.

Departmental Pensions

Mr Spellar: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the (a) retirement age, (b) payment on retirement and (c) other terms are of the pension provided to the Cabinet Secretary. [74807]

Mr Maude: The information requested can be found in the Remuneration Report contained in the Cabinet Office Annual Report and Accounts 2010-11 [HC 999].

Departmental Procurement

Julian Smith: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what progress his Department has made in eliminating pre-qualification questionnaires for procurements with a value of under £100,000. [73843]

Mr Maude: 15 out of 17 Departments have confirmed that they have eliminated the use of pre-qualification questionnaires for procurements below £100,000. Work is under way with the two remaining Departments, which have additional security requirements to consider, to implement necessary changes to their pre qualification processes.

The Cabinet office is monitoring compliance with Departments.

Mike Weatherley: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether he plans to consult on procurement policy action note 3/11, issued on 31 January 2011. [74548]

Mr Maude: There are no plans to formally consult on procurement policy action note 3/11. In February, the UK Government Open Standards Survey included an opportunity to provide feedback on the criteria to define an open standard, which was included in action note 3/11. Cabinet Office is considering this feedback and has been informally consulting with industry bodies and suppliers on revisions to the definition and the action note. Updated guidance on the specification of open standards in Government IT procurement will be published shortly.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many contracts his Department has awarded directly to third sector organisations in each month since May 2010; what the value was of such contracts; and if he will make a statement. [75110]

Mr Hurd: The information requested is not held centrally, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Contracts awarded by the Cabinet Office are now publicly available on Contracts finder at:

www.contractsfinder.businesslink.gov.uk

Departmental Public Expenditure

David Simpson: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much his Department spent on new furnishings in the last year. [73117]

Mr Maude: The Cabinet Office has incurred expenditure of this nature during the last financial year, primarily in relation to the 70 Whitehall refurbishment project. However, this expenditure is not identified separately on the Department's financial systems and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

E-mail

Jack Dromey: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether any (a) Ministers, (b) officials and (c) special advisers in his Department use private e-mail accounts for the conduct of government business. [73220]

Mr Maude: The Ministerial Code, the Code of Conduct for Special Advisers, and the Civil Service Code set out how Ministers, officials and special advisers should conduct Government business.

Hillsborough Stadium

Steve Rotheram: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what discussions he has had with the Prime Minister on the unredacted release of the Hillsborough Cabinet minutes since his appointment. [74297]

Mr Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) on 13 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 506W.

Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office pursuant to his answer of 16 June 2011, *Official Report*, column 943W, on Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA), for what reasons the Government does not wish to bring IPSA within the ambit of the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967. [73654]

Mr Maude: The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration was primarily set up to deal with complaints by members of the public, therefore the Government believe that the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) should not be brought within the ombudsman's remit. Any Member who is dissatisfied with the way in which the IPSA has determined a claim may refer the matter to the statutory compliance officer.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Lindsay Roy: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people in (a) Glenrothes, (b) Fife, (c) Scotland and (d) each region in England were claiming jobseeker's allowance in the latest period for which figures are available. [74760]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated October 2011:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking how many people in (a) Glenrothes, (b) Fife, (c) Scotland and (d) each region in England were claiming Jobseeker's allowance in the latest period for which figure were available. (74760)

Table 1 shows the number of persons claiming Jobseeker's Allowance for the requested areas for September 2011, which is the latest period for which figures are available.

National and local area estimates for many labour market statistics, including employment, unemployment and claimant count are available on the NOMIS website at:

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

Table 1: Number of persons resident in (a) Glenrothes, (b) Fife, (c) Scotland and (d) each region in England claiming jobseeker's allowance, September 2011

	<i>Not seasonally adjusted</i>
	<i>Number</i>
Glenrothes	3,363
Fife	10,950
Scotland	140,010
North East	88,155
North West	198,614
Yorkshire and the Humber	158,386
East Midlands	106,242
West Midlands	169,060
East of England	114,370
London	237,384
South East	140,405
South West	87,712

Source:

Jobcentre Plus administrative system

Office for Civil Society: Finance

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the budget of the Office for Civil Society was for (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12; what budget he has set for each of the next three years; and if he will make a statement. [74793]

Mr Hurd: The Office for Civil Society budget is published annually in the Main Estimates and updated in the Supplementary Estimates, available at:

www.hm-treasury.gov.uk

Future budgets have been published in the Cabinet Office Annual Report and Accounts 2010-11, available at:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk

Office for Civil Society: Manpower

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many staff were working for the Office for Civil Society in each month since 1 May 2010; how many he expects to be employed in each of the next three years; and if he will make a statement. [74792]

Mr Hurd: The Office for Civil Society is part of the Efficiency and Reform Group which is staffed from a flexible resource pool. This allows staff to be deployed flexibly as priorities change and, as such, we do not keep monthly figures for projects within ERG. At the end of 2010-11, the Office for Civil Society had an agreed headcount of up to 115 and in 2011-12, 86 assignments have been agreed. Projections for future years will be based on the annual business planning cycle.

Official Gifts

Mr Sanders: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will bring forward proposals to prevent former ministers from accepting gifts, donations, or

offers of consultancy or employment from any company associated with healthcare provision for a period of five years after they have ceased to hold ministerial office.

[74274]

Mr Maude: The Ministerial Code sets out the requirements on former Ministers after leaving office.

Public Sector: Mutual Societies

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) how many new public service mutuals have been created (a) in total and (b) in each region in each month since June 2010; and if he will make a statement;

[74802]

(2) what estimate he has made of the number of new members of public service mutuals (a) in each region and (b) in total in each month since June 2010. [74805]

Mr Hurd: As part of the Government's commitment to support the innovation and entrepreneurialism of front-line staff, the Government launched Mutual Pathfinders to be led by public sector staff who wanted to take control of their own services. They are trailblazers for the rest of the public sector helping Government understand, by learning from the front line, what type of support and structures will best enable the development of employee-led mutuals on an ongoing basis. Twenty-one Pathfinders have been announced.

Twelve Pathfinders were announced in August 2010, one in November 2010 and a further eight in February 2011.

Ten Pathfinders are based in London, five in the north-west, two in the East Midlands, one in South-West England, and two in the East of England. The final Pathfinder is a nationwide organisation.

A further organisation, which forms part of the Department for Education's Social Work Practice Pilots, is also participating in the scheme, although it is not formally a Mutual Pathfinder. This organisation is based in the West Midlands and was already in operation at the time that the first Pathfinders were announced.

The Cabinet Office does not hold information on every new public service mutual that has been created across the country, as these are decisions which are taken by a wide variety of public sector employees and public sector bodies, including local authorities.

The Cabinet Office will launch the Mutuals Information Service and Mutual Support Programme in autumn 2011. These services will give the Government greater oversight of mutuals and their development.

Public Sector: Trade Unions

Mr Offord: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps he is taking to reduce the cost to the public purse of full-time trade union officials employed by public bodies. [74178]

Mr Maude: We are immediately reviewing trade union facility time across the civil service. Once the review is complete, we will start the consultation with the trade unions.

Social Security Benefits

Mr Laws: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many long-term recipients of jobseeker's allowance moved off benefits in each month from January 2006 to September 2011; and if he will make a statement.

[75249]

Mr Hurd: The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

Letter from Stephen Penneck, dated October 2011:

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking how many long-term recipients of jobseeker's allowance moved off benefit in each month from January 2006 to September 2011; and if he will make a statement. (75249)

Table 1 shows the number of people who had flowed off Jobseeker's Allowance after claiming for over 12 months, resident in the UK, in each month from January 2006 to September 2011.

National and local area estimates for many labour market statistics, including employment, unemployment and claimant count are available on the NOMIS website at

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

Table 1: Number of people¹ who flowed off jobseeker's allowance after claiming for more than 12 months.

	Number
2006	
January	8,622
February	13,091
March	13,210
April	12,488
May	12,259
June	13,670
July	14,130
August	16,067
September	16,017
October	18,591
November	18,180
December	16,267
2007	
January	12,893
February	18,853
March	18,621
April	17,649
May	17,743
June	18,150
July	18,605
August	17,464
September	17,691
October	19,185
November	18,570
December	16,214
2008	
January	11,294
February	17,086
March	15,433
April	13,729
May	13,713
June	13,503
July	13,546
August	12,175

Table 1: Number of people¹ who flowed off jobseeker's allowance after claiming for more than 12 months.

	Number
September	12,181
October	12,773
November	12,157
December	10,508
2009	
January	7,795
February	11,963
March	11,837
April	11,670
May	11,572
June	13,412
July	14,231
August	12,531
September	14,231
October	16,412
November	17,899
December	19,259
2010	
January	15,830
February	25,862
March	27,034
April	26,759
May	28,693
June	31,135
July	31,853
August	29,926
September	32,319
October	35,099
November	34,171
December	31,602
2011	
January	22,773
February	31,330
March	30,144
April	26,750
May	22,705
June	24,092
July	19,046
August	18,107
September	19,536

¹ The flow figures are collected for four or five-week periods between count dates; the figures are then standardised to a 4 1/3 week month.

Source:

Jobcentre Plus Administrative System

Third Sector

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office from which organisations he received responses to his Department's consultation paper on Modernising Commissioning in December 2010 and January 2011; and if he will make a statement. [74770]

Mr Hurd: The Cabinet Office received 181 written responses to the Modernising Commissioning Green Paper, as listed. They represented a broad range of voluntary sector organisations, including front line and umbrella organisations, as well as local authorities and academic institutions.

In total, approximately 400 organisations responded through a mixture of written responses and consultation events. These feed into the Open Public Services White Paper.

3SC
 A4E
 Acceptcare
 Acevo
 Action for Advocacy
 Action for Children
 Addiction Dependency Solutions
 Advice UK
 Age UK
 Anthony Collis Solicitors
 APSE
 Arts Council
 Association of Charitable Foundation
 Barnado's
 Bassac
 Bath and North East Somerset Council
 Becksley Voluntary Service Council
 Big Society Network
 Birmingham County Council
 Bournemouth CVS
 Bradford CVS
 Brighton and Hove City Council
 Bristol City Council
 British Heart Foundation
 BTCV
 Burnley Pendle and Rossingdale CVS
 Camden Community Empowerment Network
 Caritas Social Action Network
 Charities Aid
 Charity Finance Directors Group
 Charity Tax Group
 Cheshire and Warrington Change Up
 Chester le street and District Council for Voluntary service and
 Volunteer Bureau
 Children England
 Churches Legislation Advisory Service
 CIPFA
 Citizens Advice Bureau
 Citizens Advice UK
 City of Bradford Metropolitan district Council
 Clinks
 Commissioning Support Programme
 Community Barnet
 Community Matters
 Community Transport Association UK
 Consortium
 Co-Operatives UK
 Cornwall Council
 COVER
 Crisis
 Cross Government Commissioning Learning and Development
 Group
 Cruse Bereavement Care
 CVI
 Disability Lib
 Durham County Council

East Sussex County Council
 ECDP
 Essex County Council
 Faith Based Regeneration Network
 Fellows Associates
 Foundation Trust Network
 Fusion 21
 Gateshead Council
 Gateshead Voluntary Organisation Council
 GIRES
 GMCVO
 Green Space
 Guide Dogs UK
 Hampshire County Council
 Haringey Council
 Havco Haringey
 Helix Arts
 Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust
 Herefordshire Public Services
 HM Partnerships
 Home Group
 Home Start UK
 Impetus
 IPPR
 Isle of Wight Council
 Kent County Council
 Lancashire County Council
 Learning Together Cheshire and Warrington
 Leeds City Council
 Legal Services Commission
 Leonard Cheshire Disability
 Lesbian and Gay Foundation
 LGIE
 Liverpool Charity and Voluntary Services
 Liverpool John Moores University
 Local Government Group
 London South Bank University
 London Voluntary Service Council
 London Wildlife Trust
 MOTIVCIC
 Naaps
 Nacro
 National Children's Bureau
 National Centre for Independent Living
 National Youth Advocacy Service
 NAVCA
 NCVO
 Ncvys
 Nesta
 Newcastle City Council
 Newcastle CVS
 North East Social Enterprise Partnership
 North West BME Voluntary and Community Sector Network
 Northampton Borough Council
 Northamptonshire County Council
 One East Midlands
 Ormiston
 Parents and Children Together
 Participatory Budgeting Unit

Phoenix Futures
 Pre-School Learning Alliance
 RAISE
 RAWM
 Realliance
 Refuge
 Registry Trust Limited
 ruid
 Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea
 Rural Action East
 Social Development Agency
 Social Enterprise Coalition
 Social Enterprise Works
 Social Firms UK
 Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
 South East Rural Community Councils
 Southwark Habitat for Humanity
 Sporta
 St Edmundsbury Council
 St Giles Trust
 St Mungos
 Staffordshire County Council
 Stockon on Tees Borough Council
 Stonewall
 Suffolk County Council
 Surrey County Council
 SUSTAIN
 Sutton Centre for the Voluntary Sector
 SWAN Network
 Swanswell
 Tees Valley County Council
 The Adsetts Partnership
 The Brunswick Centre
 The Business Services Association
 The Camden Society
 The Capability Company
 The Guild
 The Media Trust
 The National Care Forum
 The Social Investment Business
 The South West Forum
 The Stroke Association
 The Survivor Trust
 The Zebra Collective
 Timebank
 TUC
 Turning Point
 UK Council of Deafness
 Unison
 Unlimited Potential
 Vassall Centre
 Victims Support
 Voluntary Action North Lincolnshire
 Voluntary Action Oldham
 Voluntary Action Sheffield
 Voluntary and Community Action Wirral
 Voluntary sector chief officers group Stoke on Trent
 Voluntary Sector North West
 VONNE

Wales Council for Voluntary Action
 Westminster City Council
 Wildlife Trust
 Women's Aid
 Women's Resource Centre
 Workwise
 WRVS
 Yorkshire and Humber Forum
 Young Lancashire.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what plans he has to make it easier to establish a charity, social enterprise or voluntary organisation; and if he will make a statement. [74803]

Mr Hurd: The Government are keen to make it easier to run a voluntary group, charity or social enterprise. For example the recently released Unshackling Good Neighbours report by Lord Hodgson has put forward a raft of recommendations to address the level of bureaucracy that civil society organisations and volunteers face. The £30 million Community First programme aims to encourage more social action in neighbourhoods with significant deprivation and low social capital. It will look to help start more neighbourhood groups and revitalise existing groups and be a catalyst for community action. In July we launched the £30 million Transforming Local Infrastructure programme which aims to transform the support provided to frontline civil society organisations by mainly supporting local infrastructure and volunteering infrastructure organisations to rationalise and transform.

We are also working on a completely new legal structure for charities—the first incorporated legal structure designed specifically with the needs of charities in mind. Called Charitable Incorporated Organisation, it will contribute to the Government's aim of making it easier to set up and run a charity, voluntary group or social enterprise.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps he plans to take to make it easier for civil society organisations to work with the Government; and if he will make a statement. [74804]

Mr Hurd: The Government are committed to making it easier for civil society organisations to do business with the state. For example the recently announced Open Public Services White Paper sets out our intention to make it easier for charities and social enterprises to compete for public sector contracts by opening up public services. Our approach will be guided by applying five key principles:

- Choice—Wherever possible we will increase choice.
- Decentralisation—Power should be decentralised to the lowest appropriate level.
- Diversity—Public services should be open to a range of providers.
- Fairness—We will ensure fair access to public services.
- Accountability—Public services should be accountable to users and taxpayers.

There is also the £10 million Investment and Contract Readiness Fund to transform the support provided to frontline civil society organisations to help them develop the skills and infrastructure to win more capital investment and public service contracts. At the same time the Department for Communities and Local Government published the Best Value Guidance recently. The guidance

makes it clear that councils should consider overall value—including social value—when considering service provision. This guidance sets out our desire that public agencies and civil society collaborate more in the running of public services.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much direct funding his Department provided to each civil society organisation it funded in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12, (c) 2012-13, (d) 2013-14 and (e) 2014-15; and if he will make a statement.

[74840]

Mr Hurd: A list of direct grant funding awards to civil society organisations in 2010-11 is provided below (not including funds passed to arm's length bodies to distribute as grant funding on behalf of the Cabinet Office).

Information for funding for 2011-12 onwards can only be provided at the end of each financial year as funding awards are finalised throughout the year.

<i>Civil society organisation</i>	<i>Grant amount in 2010-11 (£)</i>
Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations	210,125
Action with Communities in Rural England	210,125
Association of Charitable Foundations	126,000
British Association of Settlements and Social Action Centres	155,006
Bolton Lads and Girls Club	72,176
British Youth Council	94,600
Bridges Ventures Ltd	448,391
British Trust for Conservation Volunteers	331,200
Catch 22	298,503
Council of Ethnic Minority Voluntary Sector Organisations	275,953
Charities Aid Foundation	1,147,226
Charities Evaluation Service	154,812
Charity Trustee Networks	94,556
Church Urban Fund	90,538
Citizenship Foundation	700,600
Consortium of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Voluntary and Community Organisations	94,556
Coming of Age Partnership	500
Community Action Network	123,711
Community Development Exchange	252,602
Community Foundation Network	210,100
Community Matters	261,603
Connexions Cumbria Ltd	51,092
Co-ops UK	103,000
Community Service Volunteers	1,103,800
Development Trusts Association	445,624
East Midlands Regional External Relations Team	1,000
Field Studies Council	83,386
Football League (Community) Ltd	191,258
Foyer Federation	118,195
Futurebuilders England	36,125,093
Innovation Unit	200,000
Institute of Fundraising	579,300
Lincolnshire and Rutland Education Business Partnership	20,473
Media Trust	600,000
MENTER (Voice4Change England)	275,953

<i>Civil society organisation</i>	<i>Grant amount in 2010-11 (£)</i>
Mentoring and Befriending Foundation	1,050,600
National Youth Agency	323,100
National Association of Voluntary and Community Action	424,753
National Council for Voluntary Organisations	1,397,887
National Council for Voluntary Youth Services	242,143
National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts	250,000
Plunkett	65,000
Safe in Tees Valley Ltd	67,192
School for Social Entrepreneur	74,000
Social Enterprise Coalition	622,696
Social Enterprise London	90,000
Social Enterprise Mark CIC	150,000
Social Firms	124,000
The Challenge Network	1,236,000
The Norfolk NCS Consortium (Norwich City)	82,692
The Prince's Trust	50,138
Third Sector European Network	84,313
TimeBank	525,300
Urban Forum	96,132
v	47,628,676
Volunteering England	1,655,700
Women's Resource Centre	196,993
Young Devon and South West Consortia	39,820
Young Foundation	50,000
Youth Action Network	157,600
Youthnet	1,284,600

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what estimate he has made of the number of third sector organisations that had an income of (a) 1 million euros or more, (b) 100,000 euros or more and (c) 10,000 euros or more in (i) 2010-11 and (ii) 2011-12; and what estimate he has made of the number of third sector organisations with (A) 25 or more full-time equivalent employees, (B) five or more full-time equivalent employees and (C) one or more full-time equivalent employee in each year; and if he will make a statement. [75106]

Mr Hurd: The Cabinet Office does not produce or collate any statistics on the income of third sector organisations. However, the most recent figures collated by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) estimated that in 2007-08:

(a) Over 4,500 charities had an average income of one million pounds or more.

(b) Over 26,000 charities had an average income of over £100,000 or more.

(c) Over 80,000 Charities had an average income of over £10,000 or more.

Estimated income figures are not currently available for:

(i) 2010-11

(ii) 2011-12.

NCVO's report did not have exact breakdowns of the number of charities and the sizes of their work force. However, voluntary sector organisations were classified into five categories representing the size of the organisations

and the report provided an estimate of the percentage of voluntary sector organisations that employ staff in 2007-08, these were:

1% of micro organisations employed staff, there were approximately 91,000 in the

UK according in 2007-08;

31% of small organisations, of which there were approximately 54,000 in 2007-08;

73% of medium organisations, of which there were approximately 21,500 in 2007-08;

89% of large organisations, of which there were approximately 4,100 in 2007-08; and

93% of major organisations, of which there were approximately 400 in 2007-08.

Figures are only available for 2007-08.

Third Sector: Employment Schemes

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what discussions he has had with Ministers in the Department for Work and Pensions about the role of the third sector in the Work programme; and if he will make a statement. [75104]

Mr Hurd: There have been a number of discussions with the Minister for Employment, Department for Work and Pensions, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling), in regard to the Work programme. At official level the Department for Work and Pensions and the Cabinet Office are working closely together to connect the experience of voluntary organisations on the ground with the policy intentions of the programme.

Third Sector: Finance

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much each beneficiary organisation has received from the Transition Fund since its inception; and if he will make a statement. [74794]

Mr Hurd: All of the awards for the Transition Fund and the amounts awarded are listed on the Big Lottery Fund website which can be found at:

<http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/transitionfund>

Voluntary Work: Administration

Gordon Henderson: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps he is taking to reduce the burden of administration associated with volunteering. [73936]

Mr Hurd: We are determined to reduce the red tape that prevents people from acting to improve their communities.

The Government commissioned an investigation into what stops us all giving more time and money to charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises, and what stops the sector from growing. In May, Lord Hodgson published his taskforce's report, which contained a total of 17 recommendations on these topics. Work is already underway to implement the recommendations and progress will be assessed in May 2012.

The Government have also set up a broader Red Tape Challenge with the aim of reducing burdens on business and civil society, supporting growth and reducing state intrusion into personal freedoms. It is the result of a commitment to review the entire existing stock of more than 21,000 regulations

The Home Office has set out proposals to reform the current CRB checks system through the Protection of Freedoms Bill. Many of these reforms, providing the Bill receives Royal Assent, will reduce the bureaucracy facing volunteers and civil society organisations.

Voluntary Work: Young People

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much funding the National Citizen Service was allocated in (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12; how much he has allocated in each of the next three years; and if he will make a statement. [74789]

Mr Hurd: National Citizen Service (NCS) is a personal and social development programme that provides 16-year-olds with the opportunity to take on new challenges, meet people from different backgrounds and make a difference in their communities. NCS pilots ran during the summer of 2011 and further pilots are planned in 2012.

£2,562,256 was allocated to National Citizen Service pilot projects in FY2010-11. £12,340,231 was allocated in FY2011-12. These amounts were for the delivery of NCS pilots in summer 2011. Additionally £428,563 was allocated to the external evaluation of NCS in FY2011-12.

The Cabinet Office is currently running a commissioning process for NCS places in 2012, for which part of the funding will be allocated from FY2011-12 budgets and part from FY2012-13 budgets. The Cabinet Office will be in a position to confirm the funding allocated for NCS places in 2012 once the commissioning process has concluded.

Funding for NCS in the years after FY2012-13 will be a matter for the Department for Education.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what funding he allocated to each of the pilots for the National Citizen Service in (a) 2010-11 and (b) 2011-12; and how much he has allocated for each of the next three years. [74790]

Mr Hurd: The total amounts allocated to each of the 12 National Citizen Service pilots taking place in summer 2011 across the two financial years are shown in the table.

The Cabinet Office is currently running a commissioning process for NCS places in 2012, for which part of the funding will be allocated from FY 2011-12 budgets and part from FY 2012-13 budgets. The Cabinet Office will be in a position to confirm the funding allocated for NCS places in 2012 once the commissioning process has concluded. Funding for NCS in the years after FY 2012-13 will be a matter for the Department for Education.

Pilot lead organisation name	Financial year		£
	2010-11 allocation	2011-12 allocation	
Bolton Lads and Girls Club	72,176	269,618	
Catch 22	298,503	1,811,005	
The Challenge Network	1,236,000	2,972,352	
Connexions Cumbria Ltd	51,092	632,976	
Field Studies Council	83,386	697,907	
Football League Trust	191,258	1,016,817	
Lincolnshire and Rutland Education Business Partnership	20,473	80,191	
Norwich City Community Sports Foundation	82,692	489,845	
Safe in Tees Valley Ltd	67,192	998,628	
The Prince's Trust	50,138	1,072,371	
V-The National Young Volunteers' Service and Dame Kelly Holmes Legacy Trust consortium	369,526	1,217,621	
Young Devon, leading the South West Consortium	39,820	1,080,900	
Total	2,562,256	12,340,231	

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people started a National Citizen Service project in each month since November 2010; and how many were still involved in those projects (a) one month, (b) three months and (c) six months after starting the project. [74791]

Mr Hurd: National Citizen Service (NCS) pilot projects take place during the summer. The independent evaluation of the first pilots is currently examining the number of participants on this summer's pilots and the numbers retained throughout the projects. The Cabinet Office will be in a position to provide those details once they are available later in the autumn. We estimate that up to 8,500 young people took part in NCS this summer.

NCS pilot projects typically run for four to eight weeks in total. Three weeks require full-time commitment from participants; participants then complete a social action project in their communities on a part-time basis, with a total time commitment of approximately 30 hours.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

British Coal Utilisation Research Association

Martin Horwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what the status was of the British Coal Utilisation Research Association as a subsidiary of the British Coal Corporation during the legislative process between 1994 and 1995. [74976]

Charles Hendry: British Coal Utilisation Research Association (BCURA) ceased to be a wholly owned subsidiary of the British Coal Corporation (BCC) sometime in the early 1970's and acquired a charitable status. At the time of the BCC privatisation, BCURA was not a wholly owned subsidiary of BCC. The Department has no further information about BCURA's status at that time.

Martin Horwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change which body is responsible for former British Coal Corporation liabilities to the British Coal Utilisation Research Association which were not transferred to his Department. [74977]

Charles Hendry: The Department's understanding is that the liabilities prior to British Coal Utilisation Research Association (BCURA) joining the British Coal Corporation (BCC) family on 1 April 1969 rest with BCURA. BCURA liabilities were not assumed by BCC. The liabilities arising whilst they were within the BCC family are the responsibility of DECC, while the liabilities post 'privatisation' are with BCURA.

Departmental Billing

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what proportion of invoices from suppliers his Department paid within 10 days of receipt in July and August 2010. [74461]

Gregory Barker: Since May 2010 the Department of Energy and Climate change has measured prompt payment performance against the Whitehall prompt payment target of five days. The percentage of invoices paid within five days of receipt for July 2010 was 93.8% and for August 2010 93.2%.

Monthly prompt payment performance is published on the departmental website.

Departmental Buildings

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what (a) building and (b) refurbishment projects his Department plans in (i) 2011-12 and (ii) 2012-13; and what the cost of each such project will be. [74460]

Gregory Barker: The Department has no plans for any building and refurbishment projects on its estate in either the current or next financial year.

Departmental Location

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many civil servants in his Department have been (a) relocated and (b) agreed for relocation in the last 12 months; and to which areas of the UK. [74907]

Gregory Barker: The Department for Energy and Climate Change has not (a) relocated or (b) agreed to relocate any of its civil servants in the last 12 months.

Departmental Pay

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change if he will estimate the total monetary value of London weightings and London living allowances for staff in his Department. [74908]

Gregory Barker: The estimated value of the difference between London and national pay scales for my Department is £3.9 million for the financial year 2010-11.

Departmental Procurement

Gordon Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the cost of employing civil servants to undertake procurement for his Department in (a) 2008-09, (b) 2009-10 and (c) 2010-11; and what estimate he has made of the cost of (i) employing civil servants and (ii) engaging consultants to undertake procurement for his Department in 2011-12. [73196]

Gregory Barker: The Department of Energy and Climate Change estimate the cost of employing civil servants to undertake procurement for his Department in 2009-10 at £250,000 and 2010-11 at £238,053. Figures for 2008-09 are not available because of the mid-year creation of the Department.

The estimate for the cost of (i) employing civil servants in 2011-12 is £287,509 and (ii) engaging consultants to undertake procurement for his Department in 2011-12 is £56,000.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many contracts his Department has awarded directly to third sector organisations in each month since May 2010; what the value was of such contracts; and if he will make a statement. [75130]

Gregory Barker: The Department of Energy and Climate Change has not awarded any contracts directly to third sector organisations since May 2010.

Departmental Sick Leave

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change for how many days on average his Department's staff in each pay grade were absent from work as a result of ill health in 2010-11. [75013]

Gregory Barker: The answer is shown in the following table:

Pay grade	Average working days lost
AO	7.1
EO	7.2
HEO (including Faststream)	3.2
SEO	4.5
Grade 7	2.8
Grade 6	2.4
SCS	0.6
DECC total	3.6

Departmental Training

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many external training courses staff of his Department attended in the last 12 months; and what the cost to the public purse was of each course. [74462]

Gregory Barker: The number of events that people attended outside of DECC is not centrally recorded and is approved by individual line managers so the gathering of this information would be a disproportionate cost to DECC.

The total spend on training for the Department of Energy and Climate change from September 2010 to August 2011 was £833,423.91. This includes all of the courses that DECC paid people to deliver—whether that was for staff attending training at a training providers premises or for a training provider delivering training to DECC staff as part of our internal training programme.

Fuel Poverty

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many (a) written, (b) email and (c) telephone representations he has received in each month since May 2010 about (i) his plans to alleviate fuel poverty in the private rented sector, (ii) the operation of the Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act 2000 and (iii) the disconnection of (A) gas and (B) electricity supplies; how many such representations were from (1) individuals and (2) organisations; if he will place in the Library copies of responses sent to such representations; and if he will make a statement. [R] [74711]

Gregory Barker: The following table provides information as to the volume of correspondence received by DECC regarding fuel poverty in each month since May 2010.

	Correspondence from individuals	Correspondence from organisations (including charities and companies)
May 2010	29	0
June 2010	111	7
July 2010	111	6
August 2010	110	3
September 2010	76	2
October 2010	265	8
November 2010	217	18
December 2010	156	13
January 2011	180	11
February 2011	113	9
March 2011	178	11
April 2011	215	5
May 2011	156	10
June 2011	127	11
July 2011	163	5
August 2011	114	9
September 2011	153	3
October 2011 ¹	56	5
Total	2,530	136

¹ Up to 13 October 2011.

In addition, during the period requested DECC received: 10 pieces of correspondence regarding gas disconnection, four pieces of correspondence regarding electricity disconnection, and two relating to gas and electricity disconnection.

It would not be appropriate to provide the Library with copies of correspondence relating to individuals for data protection reasons.

Green Deal

Mr Spencer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what steps his Department is taking to promote the uptake of the Green Deal; and what information and advice will be provided to customers to encourage them to take up the Green Deal. [75355]

Gregory Barker: The Green Deal will be market-driven so we expect the private sector to develop innovative approaches to creating demand for their Green Deal offers. Government are collaborating with a number of companies to trial the impact of a range of incentives. The Government are committed to the success of the Green Deal and the 2011 Budget confirmed the Government would act to encourage and incentivise take-up ahead of its launch in 2012. An independent telephone and web advice service will also be commissioned to help support potential Green Deal customers.

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (1) what estimate he has made of the likely number of privately-rented properties which will be involved in the Green Deal in year (a) one, (b) two, (c) three, (d) four and (e) five; [74601]

(2) what estimate he has made of the likely number of social housing properties which will be involved in the Green Deal in the (a) first, (b) second, (c) third, (d) fourth and (e) fifth year of the scheme; [74602]

(3) what estimate he has made of the likely number of privately-owned properties which will be involved in the Green Deal in year (a) one, (b) two, (c) three, (d) four and (e) five. [74630]

Gregory Barker: Further details on the estimated take up of Green Deal across private rented, social rented and owner occupied sectors will be published in the Green Deal Impact Assessment accompanying our consultation later this year.

Mining: South Wales

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what assessment he has made of the implications of (a) geology and (b) redundant mine-workings in the South Wales coalfields for potential shale gas exploration and hydraulic fracturing. [74023]

Charles Hendry: The implications of geology and, where appropriate, redundant mine workings are duly considered during the assessment of individual proposals for shale gas exploration and hydraulic fracturing, before the Department gives consent.

Mixed Oxide Fuel: Sellafield

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change whether he has any plans for the construction of a new mixed-oxide fuel plant. [75277]

Charles Hendry: In our recent consultation on long-term plutonium management, the Government's preliminary policy view was that plutonium should be reused as MOX fuel. In order to implement this option we recognised that a new mixed oxide fuel plant would be required. The other options considered were continued long-term storage and immobilisation followed by disposal.

Government will shortly publish its response to that consultation which will set out how we intend to take forward plutonium management.

Nuclear Power Stations: Plutonium

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many tonnes of plutonium he estimates are awaiting disposal at UK nuclear sites. [75278]

Charles Hendry: The Office for Nuclear Regulation publish annually the UK's holdings of civil plutonium. The figures as of December 2010 show the UK is holding 114.8 tonnes of which 28.0 tonnes belong to overseas reprocessing customers.

These figures can be found at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/nuclear/safeguards/civilplut10.htm>

Oil: Imports

Mr Bain: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what his policy is on the import into the EU of oil extracted from tar sands. [73132]

Charles Hendry: The European Commission has recently brought forward proposals to reflect the carbon emissions associated with the production of refined oil products under the terms of the Fuel Quality Directive. Discussion of the proposals within the European Parliament and Council has yet to begin. One of our objectives in these negotiations (with DFT being the lead Department) will be to ensure that oil from all sources is treated in proportion to its emissions levels so that the directive is effective in reducing total emissions.

Oil: Israel

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what steps he is taking to encourage the sale of (a) oil, (b) petroleum and (c) electricity to Israel; what recent representations he has received in support of such steps; what response he gave in each case; and if he will make a statement. [R] [74709]

Charles Hendry: The Department makes no special provision to encourage such sales, nor has it received any such representations.

Renewables Obligation: Biofuels

Thomas Docherty: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what recent assessment he has made of grandfathering support for bioliquids made from waste and used cooking oil under the renewables obligation. [73969]

Gregory Barker [*holding answer 13 October 2011*]: DECC commenced a scheduled banding review of RO support levels in October 2010. Banding reviews ensure that as market conditions and innovation within sectors change and evolve, developers continue to receive the appropriate level of support necessary to maintaining investment in the renewables industry.

We intend to publish a consultation on the proposed new bands shortly. This will include our proposed policy on levels of support and grandfathering for bioliquids.

Warm Front Scheme

Lindsay Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change for what reasons the Warm Front scheme is being phased out; and if he will make a statement. [74762]

Gregory Barker: As part of the spending review 2010, the Government announced funding for the Warm Front scheme to deliver heating and insulation measures to vulnerable households until March 2013. In late 2012 the Green Deal, accompanied by an energy company obligation (ECO), will begin. The ECO will provide assistance to low income and vulnerable households, enabling them to access heating and energy efficiency measures to heat their homes more affordably.

Wind Power

Glyn Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the average annual load factors achieved by wind power installations derived from Renewable Energy Guarantee of Origin data for installations with a capacity of (a) less than and (b) more than 100 kW prior to December 2010. [73024]

Charles Hendry: DECC does not produce annual load factors split by size of installation. However, in 2010, the onshore wind load factor was 21.5% and the offshore wind load factor was 29.6%.

Source:

Table DUKES 7.4—load factors on an unchanged configuration basis, available at:

http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/statistics/energy_stats/source/renewables/renewables.aspx

For (a), most sub-100 kW installations are covered by the Feed in Tariff (FIT) scheme. However, generation data for this are not yet available, so actual load factors cannot be calculated. DECC estimates that load factors will be in the range of 15% to 20% depending on installation size. This assumes an average wind speed of 6.5 m/s, and excludes load factors for sub-1.5 kW installations, on the basis that nearly no projects of this type have thus far been registered under FITs.

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much public subsidy was paid to onshore wind farm companies for periods when it was too windy for the turbines to produce energy in the last year. [73077]

Charles Hendry: The renewables obligation is a generation-based subsidy meaning support is granted for each MWh of electricity actually generated. Wind farm companies will, therefore, only receive support when they generate.

Payments will also be made by National Grid (in its role as National Electricity Transmission System Operator) to generators of all types to alter their output in order

to balance energy supply and demand. However, these payments are not a public subsidy. The costs will be recovered by National Grid through charges paid equally by generators and supply companies, based on their energy taken from, or supplied to, the network.

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what discussions his Department has had with the Department for Communities and Local Government on planning regulations for onshore wind turbines. [73255]

Charles Hendry: DECC Ministers and officials regularly discuss issues relating to the construction of wind farms in the UK with counterparts in the Department for Communities and Local Government.

Wind Power: Energy Supply

Chris Heaton-Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what the average cost to the public purse in subsidies was of each megawatt of electricity produced by (a) onshore wind generation and (b) each other source of energy for which his Department holds information in each of the last 12 months. [73250]

Charles Hendry: The renewables obligation (RO) is currently the Government's main mechanism for incentivising the deployment of large-scale renewable electricity deployment. Generators are issued renewables obligation certificates (ROCs) for every megawatt-hour (MWh) of eligible electricity they generate which can then be sold to suppliers, allowing them to receive a premium in addition to the wholesale price of their electricity.

The RO is a market-based support mechanism, rather than a direct public subsidy, and ROCs are trade-able commodities which have no fixed price. The amount a supplier pays for a ROC is dependent on bi-lateral negotiations between supplier and generator. The nominal value of a ROC in any given year is equal to the buy-out price (the amount a supplier must pay for every ROC they do not present to Ofgem in order to comply with their obligation) + recycle value (the amount re-distributed to suppliers from the buy-out fund on a pro-rata basis depending on how many ROCs they presented to Ofgem) for that year. The nominal value represents the maximum worth of a ROC to a generator but is not necessarily the amount paid by a supplier. The nominal value of a ROC in 2009-10 was £52.36.

The following table sets out the number of ROCs issued for each MWh generated under the RO for onshore wind generation and other sources of renewable energy across the UK. Similar support mechanisms are not available to other generators of electricity.

Eligible generators can also claim levy exemption certificates (LECs) which are also trade-able. The levy is currently set at £4.85/MWh.

RO banding levels

	<i>ROCs per MWh</i>		
	<i>England and Wales</i>	<i>Scotland</i>	<i>Northern Ireland</i>
Onshore wind	1	1	<=250kw 4 >250kw 1

	RO banding levels		
	England and Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
			ROCs per MWh
Hydroelectric	1	1	<=20kw 4 >20kw-<=250kw 3 >250kw-<=1MW 2 >1MW 1
Co-firing of energy crops	1	1	1
Co-firing of biomass with combined heat and power (CHP)	1	1	1
Energy from waste with CHP	1	1	1
Geopressure	1	1	1
Standard gasification or pyrolysis	1	1	1
Offshore wind	2	2	n/a
Co-firing of energy crops with CHP	1.5	1.5	1.5
Dedicated biomass	1.5	1.5	1.5
Wave	2	5	2
Tidal	2	3	2
Advanced gasification or pyrolysis	2	2	2
Energy crops (with or without CHP)	2	2	2
Dedicated biomass with CHP	2	2	2
Anaerobic Digestion	2	2	<=500kw 4 >500kw-<=5MW 3 >5MW 2
Solar PV	2	2	<=50kw 4 >50kw 2
Geothermal	2	2	2
Tidal impoundment <1GW	2	2	2
Microgeneration	2	2	2

Wind Power: Scotland

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what the monetary value was of constraint payments paid to onshore wind farm operators in Scotland in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2009-10, (c) 2008-09 and (d) 2007-08. [73406]

Charles Hendry: Constraint payments of £176,788 were made to onshore wind farm operators in Scotland

in 2010-11, compared to total constraint payments to generators of all types of £170 million over that period. No payments were made to onshore wind farm operators in Scotland in previous years.

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