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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Monday 24 October 2011

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THE PARLIAMETARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 18 MAY 2010]

SIXTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 534

TWENTY-FIFTH VOLUME OF SESSION 2010-2012

House of Commons

Monday 24 October 2011

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WORK AND PENSIONS

The Secretary of State was asked—

Youth Unemployment

1. **Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): What steps he is taking to reduce youth unemployment. [75984]
2. **Mel Stride** (Central Devon) (Con): What steps he is taking to reduce youth unemployment. [75985]
5. **Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): What his approach is to tackling youth unemployment. [75988]
13. **Karl McCartney** (Lincoln) (Con): What steps he is taking to reduce youth unemployment. [75996]

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): It is good to see so many people in the Chamber who have discovered an interest in work and pensions.

Work experience and apprenticeships are central to improving the prospects of young unemployed people. We are making up to 100,000 work experience placements

available and strengthening the links between the work experience programme and apprenticeships. We are also providing additional Jobcentre Plus help for 16 and 17-year-old jobseeker's allowance claimants and offering earlier entry into the Work programme. It is worth reminding ourselves that of the 991,000 16 to 24-year-olds who are unemployed under the International Labour Organisation measure, 270,000 are full-time students. Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Robert Halfon) will be aware that Harlow is one of the Government's new enterprise zones.

Robert Halfon: I am, of course, delighted that Harlow is an enterprise zone. Does my right hon. Friend agree that one way of cutting youth unemployment is to encourage Government contractors to hire apprentices? Figures from the House of Commons Library show that if just one apprentice was hired for every £1 million of public procurement, it would instantly create 238,000 apprenticeships and cut youth unemployment by a quarter.

Mr Duncan Smith: My hon. Friend is right. Under the new arrangements, suppliers must provide an apprenticeships and skills report within six months of the contract start date. The idea is that they will periodically show their progress towards meeting a commitment to employ 5% of apprentices in delivering the Department for Work and Pensions contract to which they are entitled. Work programme providers will be paid primarily for the results that they achieve, which means that they will be under pressure to do a similar thing.

Mel Stride: My right hon. Friend will be aware that under the previous Government, youth unemployment rose by 40%. Will he reassure the House that the measures he has just outlined will ensure that under this Government we do not have a repeat of that shameful record?

Mr Duncan Smith: My hon. Friend is right that youth unemployment rose from about 2004, regardless of a growing economy. One problem was that when the previous Government came to power, there was a guaranteed training place for all 16 to 18-year-olds,

which they scrapped. That was one of the worst, most short-sighted decisions that any Government have ever made.

Nick Smith: Youth unemployment in Blaenau Gwent grew by a massive 12.8% last year. The Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion has highlighted the benefits of the future jobs fund, which helped 500 young people in my constituency. Will the Secretary of State look at bringing back the future jobs fund, given the current crisis of youth unemployment?

Mr Duncan Smith: As the hon. Gentleman should know, we made a commitment to complete the placements that had been committed to until March. That meant that there were nearly 64,000 additional places under the future jobs fund, bringing the total to 105,000 places. We believe that the future jobs fund was an expensive way to try to get people into employment. Almost half of those who went in have ended up back on benefits.

Karl McCartney: Is my right hon. Friend aware of research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development which suggests that only 12% of employers planned to recruit school leavers aged 16 in the three months to September 2011, and that just 15% intended to recruit school leavers aged 17 to 18? That issue was raised during my visit to Lincoln college on Friday. I suspect that he is as concerned as I am by those statistics. Will he tell the House what the Government will do to encourage employers to invest further in our youth?

Mr Duncan Smith: We are talking a lot to employers about that problem. My hon. Friend is right about it. I return to the answer that I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride) about ending the training scheme. That really affected 16 to 17-year-olds. I have brought in the £30 million innovation fund to look at ways in which we can give people approaching the age of 16 better skills for the work force. Employers have told us that many people who leave school at that age are simply not ready for work. We have allowed jobcentres to work with many of those people to get them ready for work. My hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Karl McCartney) is absolutely right that this matter is a priority for us.

Mr Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): Youth unemployment is now the highest it has ever been. Does the Secretary of State agree with the Chancellor that Britain is now “a safe haven”?

Mr Duncan Smith: I am not quite sure what the right hon. Gentleman's linkage is in that question. Youth unemployment is high now, which is deeply regrettable, but he needs to take some responsibility for that. We have to remember that when we came into power, after a period of growth before the recession, the level of youth unemployment was higher under the last Government than the level that they inherited back in 1997. Frankly, his lectures on youth unemployment are like crocodile tears in the desert.

Mr Byrne: Since this Government have taken office, they have closed the future jobs fund and shut down the flexible new deal, and replaced them with a youth work scheme that costs less than the Department spends on

stationery and guarantees interviews, not jobs, and with a Work programme that turns out on closer inspection to be all programme and no work. Meanwhile, youth unemployment is going through the roof.

I looked for the Department's flagship youth unemployment policy on its website this morning, and what does it say?

“Page not found. The page you are looking for may have been removed or moved to the National Archives.”

So much for the priority that the Government gave to youth employment.

The last time unemployment was this high, it was not the hon. Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Mr Brady) who was trying to bring down the Government over Europe but the Secretary of State himself, the commander-in-chief of the Maastricht rebels. Instead of today's debate, on which the Prime Minister has wasted so much time, should we not be having a debate about how we put a proper tax on bankers' bonuses to get 100,000 young people back to work?

Mr Duncan Smith: I must say, the right hon. Gentleman coming up with the wrong page suggests more about his ability to negotiate the website than about the Department.

I repeat to the right hon. Gentleman what I said before: it is time the Opposition took responsibility for the mess that they got us in before we took over. Since we walked through the door we have had in place work clubs, work experience, apprenticeship offers, sector-based work academies, the innovation fund, European social fund support, the skills offer, the access to apprenticeships programme, Work Together, the Work programme, Work Choice, mandatory work activity and Jobcentre Plus. He has to recognise that under Labour's watch, youth unemployment rose to a level higher than that at which they found it in 1997. It was a disgrace.

Multiple Sclerosis Sufferers

3. **David Morris** (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): What steps he is taking to encourage people with multiple sclerosis to return to work. [75986]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Maria Miller): The Government are committed to ensuring that individuals with conditions such as multiple sclerosis have the support that they need to find, and remain in, work. A comprehensive range of work support for individuals with serious fluctuating conditions is provided through the Work programme, Work Choice and Access to Work.

David Morris: I thank my hon. Friend for that answer. May I convey the wishes of my constituents in the local MS society for there to be better ways forward than those provided under the previous Government?

Maria Miller: I agree that the work of the Multiple Sclerosis Society is to be applauded, and I am sure that the Lancaster, Morecambe and district branch will join many other organisations in welcoming the measures in the Welfare Reform Bill, which is currently in the other place, including universal credit. Those measures will address the unacceptable imbalances inherent in the

current welfare system, to ensure that people suffering from fluctuating conditions such as MS cannot be written off to a lifetime of dependency in future.

Mrs Anne McGuire (Stirling) (Lab): Department for Work and Pensions research on disability living allowance in work has indicated that those receiving DLA are, on average, more severely impaired than others and have a greater likelihood of multiple disabilities, including mental health conditions. Additionally, they are disadvantaged in the labour market because of the types of their impairment, and carry the greatest employment disadvantage.

The new personal independence payment assessment has been criticised by 23 leading disability organisations as being too medicalised and not taking into account the social and environmental barriers that disadvantage disabled people in the jobs market. Will the Minister share with us just how many disabled people she expects to get back into work as a result of her DLA proposals, given that the only figure that we have on the record is that the Government want to make a 20% cut to the DLA budget?

Maria Miller: I am somewhat surprised that the right hon. Lady tries to link disability living allowance to returning to work, given that in the past she has held the position that I hold now. It is absolutely clear that DLA, and indeed the PIP, which will take over from it, are not linked to work. I should think we would want to make that clear to people who are listening to these questions.

Stephen Lloyd (Eastbourne) (LD): A recent report by the Work Foundation found that up to 44% of people in the UK with MS retire early due to their condition, a higher percentage than the European average of just 35%. What plans does the Minister have to support individuals with MS to stay in the work force once they are in employment?

Maria Miller: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. I know that he does a lot of work in this area, and I welcome his contribution. He will be aware that through the Sayce recommendations, we are specifically considering how we can increase the role of Access to Work. That could have a particularly positive impact on people with MS. We already have a budget of some £105 million supporting about 35,000 people through Access to Work, and the Sayce recommendations indicate that the number could be doubled if there is a reprioritisation of how Government money is used.

Work Programme

4. **Dame Anne Begg (Aberdeen South) (Lab):** If he will publish monthly information on the number of people successfully placed in jobs by Work programme contractors and the cost per job outcome. [75987]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Chris Grayling): We are working to guidelines set by the UK Statistics Authority to ensure we publish statistics that meet high-quality standards at the earliest opportunity. Statistics on referrals and attachments to the Work programme will be published from spring 2012 and job outcome data from autumn 2012. We will also publish

the average cost per job outcome for claimants who have been on the programme for 24 months as part of our transparency indicators.

Dame Anne Begg: I have to say that I am very, very disappointed with that reply. I cannot understand why it will be more than 12 months before the Government produce statistics on job outcomes and the cost per job. After eight months of the future jobs fund, we had the statistics on job outcomes for the first four months of the scheme. I cannot see why the Government should take any longer than that. What do they have to hide?

Chris Grayling: I have the utmost respect for the hon. Lady, but she needs to look again at how the Work programme works. We are not making an outcome payment to providers for six months. That is a really good deal for the taxpayer, because before providers can receive payment, they must ensure not simply that that have got somebody into work for a week to boost statistics, but that they keep them in work for a sustained period. The Government cannot produce robust statistics under the guidance produced by the UK Statistics Authority if we try to do so earlier.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): Is not the key point about the Work programme that payment by results and packages tailored to individual needs are likely to make the cost per successful job outcome lower, and the number of jobs achieved higher?

Chris Grayling: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The whole point of the Work programme is real investment in the long-term unemployed. Providers will take the requisite time to get them into work, but the Government will pay the bill only when people are successfully in long-term employment. That is a much better deal than under previous schemes from the previous Government. He is right that the Work programme is a much better deal for the taxpayer.

Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab): The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General says that openness and transparency on public services data will be a

“core part of every bit of government business”,

so why not this bit of Government business? Why is the Minister not only refusing to publish performance data but banning Work programme providers from publishing their own data, as many did under the new deal and would like to do now? He is threatening to withdraw their contracts if they publish that data. What is he trying to hide, and will he at least lift that ban?

Chris Grayling: The right hon. Gentleman clearly was not listening to the answer I gave a moment ago, but he would also do well to remember that his Government set up the current rules on national statistics. He would surely want statistics to be published properly and in an appropriate time frame, under the guidance of the UK Statistics Authority. I do not believe in giving information out haphazardly. Let us do it properly, according to the guidance and process he set up when he was in government.

Credit Unions

6. **Jesse Norman** (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to support access to lending from credit unions. [75989]

10. **Jeremy Lefroy** (Stafford) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to support access to lending from credit unions. [75993]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Steve Webb): Since 2006, the Department has spent more than £100 million through its growth fund to encourage credit unions. In addition, since March this year, a further £11.8 million has been invested. The Department is now conducting a study into how best we can support credit unions and will report shortly.

Jesse Norman: Only 2% of people in this country are members of credit unions such as the excellent Money Box in my constituency, compared with 44% of people in the United States. What role can Jobcentre Plus play in helping credit unions to reach more people?

Steve Webb: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for his involvement with the all-party group on credit unions and his commitment to the cause. Jobcentre Plus is keen to work closely with credit unions, and we are currently piloting a scheme in Manchester and Newcastle in which jobcentres share office space to see whether they can assist credit unions at a local level.

Jeremy Lefroy: I declare an interest as a member of the Staffordshire credit union. For more lending, we need more saving. What steps are the Government taking to encourage payroll saving in credit unions?

Steve Webb: The process of long-term saving through auto-enrolment in workplace pensions is imminent, but there has been a big growth in workplace coverage of occupational workplace individual savings accounts, which is an encouraging development. We are looking to see what more we can do to encourage that trend.

Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op): Many who use credit unions also need help to access credit advice. What is the Minister doing to help those who will lose out when he scraps the £27 million financial inclusion fund from next March?

Steve Webb: One of the things we are looking at as part of our feasibility study on the future of credit unions is their crucial role in supporting people who need financial advice and assistance. That work will report back to the Department next month.

Mrs Madeleine Moon (Bridgend) (Lab): I declare an interest as one of the almost 3,000 members of the Bridgend Lifesavers credit union, which has loans of more than £500,000 but savings of £1 million and is keeping people out of the hands of doorstep loan sharks and the sadly growing numbers of pawnbrokers on our high streets. What can we do to ensure that people see credit unions, rather than doorstep loan sharks, as the way to save and borrow?

Steve Webb: I welcome the hon. Lady's endorsement of credit unions, and I am pleased to say that, last week, the House of Lords approved the legislative reform order that will pave the way for credit unions to expand. My hon. Friend the Member for Hereford and South Herefordshire (Jesse Norman) asked about the difference between the USA and the UK. One of those differences is that many of our credit unions are small and have not been able to stand on their own two feet and become viable. We are determined to enable them to become viable so that they can perform the functions that she set out.

Work Capability Assessment

7. **Mrs Mary Glindon** (North Tyneside) (Lab): When he plans to bring forward new work capability assessment descriptors for mental health and fluctuating conditions. [75990]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Chris Grayling): We have received suggested descriptors for mental, cognitive and intellectual function from Professor Harrington's working group. Given that they represent a substantial departure from how the current assessment works, we are considering what impact they will have and will come forward with proposals soon. We have not yet received any recommendations from Professor Harrington's separate working group on fluctuating conditions.

Mrs Glindon: In July the Minister received recommendations for changes to the mental health descriptors from Mind, the National Autistic Society and Mencap, and although he says that the Government will be bringing forward proposals shortly, will he specify when those changes will be implemented?

Chris Grayling: The challenge facing us is that the recommendations will involve a complete change of the work capability assessment, not simply for mental health issues, but for physical issues, and is therefore a multi-year project. We are considering whether we can incorporate elements of the recommendations into the current approach much more quickly. I am concerned to ensure that we do the right thing by people with mental health conditions, and I want to ensure that we take any sensible steps as quickly as possible.

Tony Baldry (Banbury) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that our approach should focus on what can be done to help people back into the world of work and on helping them with what they can do, rather than on any scintilla of a suggestion of people being punished for what they cannot do?

Chris Grayling: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is a crucial point. We are not trying to do people down, but looking to help those with the potential to make more of their lives to do so. The assessment is all about working out who has the potential to get back into the workplace, and through the Work programme, we can deliver the specialist support that they need to do so.

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): This morning I met members of Headway East London concerned about the impact of this situation on people who are looking for work but feel that they

are being penalised when they find it and then cannot cope with it. They talked about the chaos of the benefits system. When will the Minister be coming forward with these proposals and reassuring my constituents that they will be in a better position?

Chris Grayling: We are taking significant steps to sort out the problems to which the hon. Lady refers. The introduction of the universal credit in 2013 will completely transform how our benefits system works. It will be much easier for people with disabilities to move back into work step by step—initially, perhaps, by doing a few hours' work and then by entering part-time and then full-time employment. It will transform their prospects.

Jenny Willott (Cardiff Central) (LD): Given Atos Healthcare's past performance, no one has faith in the ability of the current work capability assessment or Atos fairly to assess fluctuating conditions in particular. Will the Minister work with Atos to ensure that the new descriptors are implemented as soon as possible and that Atos staff receive additional training to improve their performance and restore the faith of claimants and the general public in the assessment process?

Chris Grayling: I will have to wait and see what the recommendations are, but as a result of Professor Harrington's first report, it is now decision makers in Jobcentre Plus who take the decision about an individual. I have told charitable groups representing people with a variety of conditions that the door is open to them to brief, train and discuss with those decision makers the issues facing such people so that they are as well informed as possible.

Dr Eilidh Whiteford (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Last week I met representatives of the Royal National Institute of Blind People, who expressed concerns about the descriptors attached to vision. Will the Minister meet the RNIB and other representatives of blind and partially sighted people to address those concerns so that we have vision descriptors that are fit for purpose?

Chris Grayling: I have regular meetings with groups representing not just blind people, but those with various disabilities, and I will continue to do so. The object of the exercise is to help those who are blind or visually impaired back into work. Surely it is much better to find them a place in the workplace than leave them on benefits for the rest of their lives.

Unemployment

8. **Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab):** What assessment he has made of the factors underlying recent trends in the level of unemployment. [75991]

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): Although unemployment is up by about 79,000 since the election, employment is slightly higher, at 29.1 million, and International Labour Organisation unemployment slightly lower, at 2.56 million, than the Office for Budget Responsibility thought it would be at this point. The total number claiming one of the main out-of-work benefits fell by about 25,000 over the last

year to August. The number claiming incapacity benefit or lone parent benefits fell by nearly 140,000, while the number claiming jobseeker's allowance rose by 115,000 over the same period. Jobcentre Plus has taken 1 million new vacancies in the last three months and there are 460,000 unfilled vacancies at the moment, up 1,000 this quarter and 5,000 on the year.

Bill Esterson: The question was about unemployment, which is at its highest since the last Tory Government lost power. We have no growth, and we need it to cut unemployment and the deficit. Will the Secretary of State support measures such as a temporary VAT cut on home improvements, which is supported by 49 business organisations, including the Federation of Master Builders and the Federation of Small Businesses, and would create jobs in small businesses in the construction industry?

Mr Duncan Smith: I felt that I answered the question. The hon. Gentleman might not have liked the answer, but I none the less answered it.

We do not agree with the Opposition's suggestion of a VAT cut. It is also worth gently reminding the hon. Gentleman that he is part of a party that in government saw a huge rise in unemployment and stagnation of the economy, so before we get lessons and lectures from the Opposition, it would be nice for them to say, "We're sorry for the mess we left things in."

State Pension (Women)

9. **Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con):** What steps he is taking to help women who are most affected by the state pension age proposals contained in the Pensions Bill. [75992]

16. **Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con):** What steps he is taking to help women who are most affected by the state pension age proposals contained in the Pensions Bill. [75999]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Steve Webb): We have amended the Pensions Bill so that women with the largest delay in receiving their state pension will find this delay reduced by six months.

Fiona Bruce: I thank the Minister for that reply, but what support is the Department offering to those who will have to work longer as a result of the revised state pension age timetable?

Steve Webb: Now that we will hopefully have certainty about the dates next week—subject to their lordships' approval—we will want to ensure that people know exactly when their retirement date is. We will write to 750,000 people shortly, so that they know where they stand, and all the services of Jobcentre Plus and the Work programme will be available to those who become long-term unemployed later in life.

Andrea Leadsom: I congratulate those on the Front Bench on changing their minds on this issue. A number of female constituents have written to me expressing enormous gratitude for the fact that we have changed

the position for the better. Does the Minister agree that this shows that we care about women in particular and, even more so, that Labour left us with such a mess that we are having to sort it out now and do things that we are not necessarily happy with?

Steve Webb: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The change that we made—a commitment to ensuring that the changes are fair as they affect women—cost £1.1 billion. The difference between us and the Opposition is that their policy cost ten times as much and they had no idea where the money would come from.

Gregg McClymont (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (Lab): The Minister knows how important auto-enrolment is to ensuring that future generations retire on a decent pension, but the Government's Beecroft report on deregulation looms large on the horizon. Can the Minister reassure the House that whatever Beecroft recommends, no business large or small will be allowed to opt out from auto-enrolment?

Steve Webb: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his new role in the House. I much enjoyed his attempt to persuade the House last week that £11 billion was not very much if we divided it by 10 and by the national debt. In answer to his question about auto-enrolment, I can assure him that 2012 goes ahead as planned, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said at the Dispatch Box last week.

Harrington Review

11. **Tom Greatrex** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): What assessment he has made of progress towards implementation of the recommendations of the Harrington review of the work capability assessment. [75994]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Chris Grayling): We took steps earlier this year to ensure that all the recommendations in Professor Harrington's first report were implemented in time for the start of the national migration from incapacity benefit. I expect to receive Professor Harrington's second report, telling us how well he thinks we are doing on that front, shortly.

Tom Greatrex: Given the Minister's earlier comments, I am sure that he is well aware of the progressive and incurable nature of Parkinson's disease. A constituent of mine with Parkinson's has been called for his third work capability assessment, despite appealing the previous two incorrect decisions by Atos and the decision makers. Will the Minister undertake to meet me and Parkinson's UK, so that he can understand better how in practice the work capability assessment, rather than helping people who can work, too often hounds those who will not get better?

Chris Grayling: The hon. Gentleman has to understand that one of the great failings of our welfare state over the past decade has been that we have left people on the sidelines year after year without checking to see what their condition is or what the potential alternatives are. I am very happy to meet Parkinson's UK and the hon. Gentleman. I well understand the challenges that the

disease presents for those who are unfortunate enough to suffer from it, but we cannot simply go back to a situation in which we leave people year after year without even checking what their condition is.

Right to Reside Test

12. **Priti Patel** (Witham) (Con): What assessment he has made of the potential effects on the payment of benefits of the reasoned opinion from the European Commission on the UK's right to reside test. [75995]

19. **Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): What assessment he has made of the potential effects on the payment of benefits of the reasoned opinion from the European Commission on the UK's right to reside test. [76002]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Chris Grayling): We accept our responsibility in supporting EU citizens who work here and pay their tax and national insurance, but it is clearly completely unacceptable that we should be asked to open our welfare system to people who have never worked in or contributed to the United Kingdom and who have no intention of doing so. We are considering all the details of the Commission's reasoned opinion, but we are absolutely committed to ensuring that the UK retains control of its welfare policies.

Priti Patel: I thank my right hon. Friend for his robust remarks. What steps is he taking to ensure that the UK is not burdened further by benefit tourism?

Chris Grayling: The best way for us to get the message across to the Commission about the need for change is to demonstrate that this is not a matter for the UK alone. I am therefore forging partnerships with my counterparts in other member states, most of whom have the same concerns. We have to make the Commission recognise that this kind of land grab of an area that should be a national competence is unacceptable. It has all kinds of political connotations, and the Commission must change its view.

Henry Smith: I thank my right hon. Friend for his previous answer. Can he tell us what steps his Department will be taking to monitor foreign nationals who are receiving UK benefits?

Chris Grayling: I can indeed. One of the things that surprised me most on taking office was the fact that the previous Administration had made no attempt whatever to identify how many people from overseas were receiving benefits. We are now doing that work. We aim to publish the results in the next few weeks, and we will aim to learn lessons from what we find.

Personal Independence Payments

14. **Simon Hughes** (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (LD): What recent discussions he has had with organisations representing disabled people about the face-to-face assessment process for personal independence payments. [75997]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Maria Miller): Officials and I have met a broad range of disability organisations in relation to our proposals for the personal independence payment. We have also set up a dedicated group specifically to involve disabled people and their organisations in the design and operation of the new PIP process.

Simon Hughes: Two organisations representing blind people—Action for Blind People and Blind Aid—are based in my borough. One of the concerns that has come to the fore recently is that people who are registered blind, who are clearly blind and have been so for some time, should not have to present themselves to be checked when being assessed for their disability benefits. Can the Minister confirm that, where there is a clear, settled condition, there will be no need for people to be unsettled by having to prove again what is obvious to everyone?

Maria Miller: Although face-to-face consultations will be an important part of the personal independence payment for most people, I have made it clear throughout all the debates that they might not be appropriate for everyone, especially when there is sufficient evidence on which to make an assessment. It is important, however, to treat everyone as an individual, because there is a coincidence of multiple disability for many individuals.

Unemployment

15. **Ann Coffey** (Stockport) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the level of unemployment. [75998]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Chris Grayling): The latest figures published by the Office for National Statistics show 2.6 million unemployed, on the International Labour Organisation measure—a rate of 8.1% of the labour force.

Ann Coffey: The latest unemployment figures show that 35% of all jobseeker's allowance claimants in Stockport are from the most disadvantaged area in my constituency. Unemployed people from disadvantaged areas are likely to remain unemployed for longer, so what steps will the Minister take to ensure that disadvantage does not become further embedded in our community?

Chris Grayling: The structure of the Work programme will mean that, for the first time, we will be paying a higher rate for the help provided to those who come from more challenged backgrounds, in order to encourage providers to make an investment in helping them. That will be an important part of getting them back into the workplace. Under the previous Government's schemes, there was one flat rate for everyone, but our pricing structure reflects the real need to focus on people who are struggling in life.

Amber Rudd (Hastings and Rye) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the ways to reduce unemployment is to make sure that people set up new businesses? Does he agree that the new enterprise allowance, which we in Hastings and Rye welcome, should also be directed at both disadvantaged people and young people, to make sure that the widest possible number of people are able to set up in business?

Chris Grayling: I agree, and it is very much my hope that the new enterprise allowance will generate a significant boost to new enterprise, small businesses and self-employment in this country. In the way that it is structured, it is aimed at those who have been out of work for more than six months, so I hope it will deliver exactly what my hon. Friend hopes for, which is to support people who have potential but who face the greatest challenges in getting back into the workplace.

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): Young and disabled people are more likely to rely on public transport to get to work, yet the right hon. Gentleman's Government's policies are leading to cuts in bus services and unaffordable fare rises. How is that helping to get unemployment down?

Chris Grayling: When I listen to Labour Members bemoan the cutbacks, I am always astonished that they seem to fail to understand that it is down to the mismanagement of the previous Government that we are having to take these difficult decisions—and we are having to take many such decisions. They should be looking in the mirror in the morning and saying, "Whose fault is this really?"

Social Fund

17. **Ann McKeichin** (Glasgow North) (Lab): What discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the replacement of the social fund. [76000]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Steve Webb): In addition to general discussions on welfare reform between Scottish Government Ministers and the Department, both Lord Freud and I have corresponded directly with Scottish Government Ministers about the planned social fund reforms.

Ann McKeichin: I am grateful for the lack of information in that response. [Laughter.] The Minister will be aware that there is every possibility that the legislative consent motion relating to the Welfare Reform Bill, which includes the reform of the social fund, will not be granted consent by the Scottish Parliament. Will the Minister tell us what is his plan B to ensure that vulnerable people in communities in Scotland receive the crisis loans that they require?

Steve Webb: Let me point out that the bulk of crisis loans will remain available under a UK-wide scheme. The devolution of the social fund relates principally to community care grants and a small amount of crisis loans. In our view, that money is better handled locally, close to the communities in question, and we hope that the Scottish Parliament will take the opportunity to have the money that is available and to spend it in Scotland, which is what it always tells us it wants.

Jobcentre Plus

18. **Katy Clark** (North Ayrshire and Arran) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the capacity of the Jobcentre Plus network to administer the benefits system during periods of rising unemployment. [76001]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Chris Grayling): The Department for Work and Pensions reviews work loads and staffing regularly to ensure that there is capacity to pay benefits and help people find work. On average, the DWP aims to clear jobseeker's allowance claims within 10 days. It is currently clearing them in 9.6 days, nearly five days faster than five years ago.

Katy Clark: I thank the Minister for that answer. Twenty-two jobcentres and 17 benefit processing centres are due to close. While I understand that the Government are saying that they are going to try to avoid compulsory redundancies, there is no doubt that staff will be forced out of their jobs. Overall, the unemployment figures are reaching 3 million. In my constituency, the claimant count went up by 10% in the year to September. Surely we are going to see a worse service provided to claimants. Will the Minister undertake to provide regular performance statistics to this House?

Chris Grayling: What the hon. Lady does not understand is that we inherited a network of half-empty buildings. I am sure she would agree that it makes no sense to fund, for example, three or two jobcentres within a mile of each other in a city centre. Rather than cutting back—the hon. Member for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood) mentioned bus services—I would like to protect the services that we can possibly protect, and making our network of jobcentres and benefit delivery centres operate more efficiently and effectively seems a very good way of trying to ensure that we protect front-line services.

Housing Benefit

20. **Heidi Alexander** (Lewisham East) (Lab): What estimate he has made of the potential number of tenants who could accrue rent arrears as a result of implementation of his proposals to restrict housing benefit for social tenants in accordance with household size. [76003]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Steve Webb): We have made no estimates of the number of tenants who would get into rent arrears as a direct result of implementing our proposal, as it is not possible to predict exactly how people will respond to the change or what choices they might make in response to a potential shortfall.

Heidi Alexander: The Minister says he has made no such assessment, but the Housing Futures Network estimates that eight out of 10 tenants will struggle to make up the shortfall in lost benefits as a result of these proposed changes, with a third likely to go into rent arrears. That will increase the level of bad debt of housing providers and is likely to mean less investment in new affordable homes. Is the Minister concerned about that?

Steve Webb: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for drawing our attention to the Housing Futures Network research. What she did not quote was the fact that a quarter of respondents said that they were likely to downsize, which presumably means making better use of the housing stock, while 29% said that they would be either quite likely or very likely to move into work or

increase their hours, which is a positive response. There are real issues about rent arrears; we are working closely with social landlords to assist, but there will be positive impacts from these policies, which also need to be borne in mind.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Hard-working families in my constituency often see families on housing benefit receiving more than they themselves receive as a result of going out to work. Can my hon. Friend confirm that as a result of the new measures it will always pay to work?

Steve Webb: My hon. Friend will be aware that we have a range of policies to ensure that it pays to work, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's universal credit being central among them. The caps on housing benefit and the limit to the 30th percentile in the private sector are also designed to level the playing field between those in low-paid work and those on benefit.

Employment and Support Allowance

21. **Gemma Doyle** (West Dunbartonshire) (Lab/Co-op): What the average length of time was for an appeal in respect of a decision on a claim for employment and support allowance in the latest period for which figures are available. [76004]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Chris Grayling): In the current year, the average actual clearance time between the Department's receiving an appeal and its being lodged with Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service was 35.2 days. That, of course, includes the time allowed for individuals to produce new evidence about their circumstances. The average time taken from receipt of an appeal at HMCTS to the date of the first appeal hearing was 23.2 weeks. That information covers 1 April to 31 August 2011, the latest period for which figures are available.

Gemma Doyle: I thank the Minister for his detailed answer. Will he take this opportunity to refute press reports that he will cut the ESA of people who appeal against assessment decisions, especially in the light of the information that 40% of cases are being won on appeal?

Chris Grayling: What I expect to see as a result of the changes following Professor Harrington's review in the summer is a significant reduction in the number of cases that go to appeal when the Department's initial review and the reconsideration are upheld. In order to ease pressure on individuals, we have tried to ensure that there is a proper reconsideration service in Jobcentre Plus, so that they can produce new evidence at that stage and need not use the Courts Service at all.

Mark Lazarowicz (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Minister look into the delays and difficulties experienced by visually impaired claimants who are being transferred from incapacity benefit to the ESA? I have no time to go into the details of this case today, but after more than four months a constituent of mine is still unable to submit a claim because of a lack of support and assistance, and she is not the only

person in those circumstances. Will the Minister look into the difficulties experienced by this very vulnerable group?

Chris Grayling: It is difficult for me to comment on an individual case, but we certainly do not want to see people in difficulties. If the hon. Gentleman will write to me with details of the case, we will look into it for him.

Child Care Costs

22. **Tony Lloyd** (Manchester Central) (Lab): What estimate he has made of the potential effect on the number of women leaving work of his planned reduction in refundable child care costs. [76005]

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): We are not planning any reductions in support for child care. In fact, as the hon. Gentleman will have noted, we recently committed ourselves to investing £300 million more in child care support under universal credit, on top of the £2 billion already spent on child care support. As a result of that support, some 80,000 more households will be eligible for child care, which must be welcome.

Tony Lloyd: I am not sure that the Secretary of State's message has been conveyed to the public. Many working families are very concerned both about the high price of child care and about the fact that it is rising, and believe that they will be worse off as a consequence of the changes that are being made. How does the Secretary of State propose to ensure that his message gets across, to Labour Members as well as those on the Government Benches?

Mr Duncan Smith: I know that the hon. Gentleman holds genuine views on these matters. Obviously we must ensure that we listen more to people, and explain to them the changes that universal credit will bring. The end of the 16-hour rule and the provision of child care for those working fewer than 16 hours a week will be of major benefit, particularly to lone parents. Under the present system, some 100,000 people do not take up the child care support element of working tax credit to which they are entitled because they are not aware of it, so this will be a big breakthrough.

Crisis Loans

23. **Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): What proportion of crisis loans are repaid; and if he will make a statement. [76006]

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Steve Webb): All crisis loans are repayable, and the vast majority are repaid, albeit sometimes over several years. Of the loans issued in 2003-04, more than 95% have so far been recovered.

Philip Davies: It seems from answers given by the Department that each year only half of what is paid out in crisis loans is repaid. The police have reported to me that they have evidence of fictional crimes that people invent in order to obtain crime numbers enabling them to gain crisis loans. Can the Minister explain

what is being done to ensure that the amount of money being repaid increases, and to stop the abuse of the system?

Steve Webb: In order to give my hon. Friend a sense of scale, let me tell him that we lent a little over £200 million in crisis loans last year, and less than £500,000 was written off as unrecoverable. As I have said, the vast majority of loans are recovered, but I share my hon. Friend's concern that the money should be lent correctly. Localising parts of the crisis loan system will lead to much closer local scrutiny of the purposes for which the money is being lent.

Child Poverty

24. **Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect on child poverty of benefit changes in (a) 2011-12 and (b) 2012-13. [76007]

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): Treasury projections show that modelled tax and benefit reforms announced since Budget 2010 may result in a small reduction in child poverty in 2011-12 and 2012-13. These include above-indexation increases to the child element of child tax credit by £180 in 2011-12 and £110 in 2012-13.

Kerry McCarthy: I am slightly puzzled by the Secretary of State's response. I am sure he is aware of the research published last week by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation predicting a huge rise in the number of children living in relative poverty—of perhaps 500,000 more—despite the Government's introduction of the universal credit. Does he accept that child poverty is predicted to rise under his rule?

Mr Duncan Smith: The hon. Lady should not be so surprised given that I responded to the question she asked. The IFS projection deals with the tax and the benefits systems, but there are wider issues; we are addressing the pupil premium and other areas, which we think will also have an effect. The IFS projections are based on the premise that absolutely nothing changes, and I remind the hon. Lady that the last report showed that the previous Government were going to miss their 2010 targets before they left office.

Topical Questions

T1. [76009] **Sheila Gilmore** (Edinburgh East) (Lab): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): From today, and following the written ministerial statement laid in the House on Friday, employment and support allowance claimants who are eligible to volunteer for the Work programme will be referred to Work programme information sessions. Claimants in the support group will be able to opt in to the sessions. That will form part of the work-related activity component for those in the work-related activity group—WRAG. This is an important step in giving claimants a taste of the support available through the Work programme.

Sheila Gilmore: Does the Secretary of State agree with last week's comments by the Minister for Housing and Local Government that under-occupiers should not be bullied out of their homes, and will he now withdraw his proposals for social tenants which would result in exactly that?

Mr Duncan Smith: The position of the Housing Minister is correct, and I make it a principle to support him.

T4. [76012] **Bob Russell** (Colchester) (LD): Further to the Atos question asked earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff Central (Jenny Willott), does the Secretary of State agree that the company is not fit for purpose, that it treats many claimants in an acceptable way, and that, frankly, it is time that its contract was terminated?

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Chris Grayling): My hon. Friend needs to understand that Atos is simply a subcontractor to the Department for Work and Pensions. It does not take decisions about individuals. It simply operates to a template, which was mostly established under the previous Government. Of course we must be sensitive, but Atos and our other subcontractors are as careful as possible about the job that they do. Ultimately however, it is the Department itself that sets the policy and implements the processes, and that must take responsibility for the outcomes.

Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Lab): Given the Secretary of State's complaints about the free movement of European labour and his leadership of the Maastricht rebels in the '90s, may I ask why he will not be demonstrating some conviction and consistency this evening? Why is he putting his position and his party before his principles, and his career before his country, in the debate on Europe this evening?

Mr Speaker: Order. It is always a pleasure to listen to the hon. Gentleman, and that is, indeed, a topical question, but it suffers from the notable disadvantage of bearing absolutely no relation whatsoever to the responsibilities of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. I will give a seminar to the hon. Gentleman later, further and better to explain the point, but there is no requirement on the Secretary of State to respond to that question.

Naomi Long (Belfast East) (Alliance): Given the relatively small employment market in Northern Ireland, does the Secretary of State believe, based on his discussions with Northern Ireland Ministers, that enough jobs can be created for those leaving employment for the Work programme financial model to be effective in Northern Ireland?

Chris Grayling: As the hon. Lady rightly says, all these issues are devolved to Northern Ireland. We have regular contact with the Northern Ireland Administration, and my colleague, Lord Freud, has regular meetings with them on behalf of the Department. We all, of course, want to see growth and employment in every part of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, and to see all our welfare-to-work policies, both devolved and otherwise, bear fruit.

T7. [76015] **Duncan Hames** (Chippenham) (LD): In the Welfare Reform Bill Committee on 10 May the Minister with responsibility for disabilities, the Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Maria Miller), assured us that she would not remove mobility benefits from disabled people without additional support being in place. Would she care to update the House on progress in determining the level of support that will be available to disabled people, including care home residents, through personal independence payments?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Maria Miller): I thank my hon. Friend for giving me the opportunity to do that. As he is aware, we have been examining this issue more broadly and our research is well advanced. The independent review chaired by Lord Low has been examining some of the same issues, and it is sensible to reflect on the outcome of his important work in advance of our final decision. Lord Low is due to report on 3 November and I will announce our final decisions shortly after.

Mr Stephen Hepburn (Jarrow) (Lab): If Harrington does bring forward improvements to the work capability test, will the Minister give a commitment to review all those past cases seen and commissioned under Atos, where bad mistakes may have been made?

Chris Grayling: Of course, every claimant who goes through the work capability assessment has the right of appeal. I simply say to the hon. Gentleman that when Professor Harrington carried out his first assessment last year he said to me clearly that although he had recommended improvements, we could and should go ahead with the national incapacity benefit migration. I have accepted his recommendations.

T10. [76018] **Priti Patel** (Witham) (Con): Ministers will be aware of the difficulties that young people face in finding employment, and the challenges are naturally greater for those with disabilities. Will the Minister provide an update on Government plans to help young disabled people to get back into work, following the recent Sayce review?

Maria Miller: I thank my hon. Friend for her question. As she will doubtless be aware from her own constituency, the aspirations of young disabled people are no different from those of any other people. That is why, through the Work programme, the Work Choice programme and the access to work scheme, we will give young disabled people all the opportunities they need to progress into work.

T3. [76011] **Fiona O'Donnell** (East Lothian) (Lab): The Secretary of State seemed surprised that we do not share his love of statistics. I wonder whether it was he who briefed the Prime Minister last week, leading to the Prime Minister claiming at Prime Minister's questions

"that 500,000 people have jobs who did not have one at the time of the election."—[*Official Report*, 19 October 2011; Vol. 533, c. 893.]

The Prime Minister was not at his most eloquent last week. However, according to official figures, between April to June 2010 and the most recent figures—June to August 2011—employment is up by just 87,000. We do not like the Secretary of State's statistics when they are wrong. Does this not prove that the Government do not have a plan for tackling unemployment?

Chris Grayling: The hon. Lady is missing something out. One of the most regular refrains from the Opposition over the past few months has been that, as we have had to make necessary changes in the public sector as a result of the financial mess they left behind, the private sector would not be able to take up the slack. The truth is that although we have had a bad quarter for unemployment, we have seen more than 500,000 extra jobs in the private sector since the election and more jobs created in the private sector over the past year than have been lost in the public sector.

Mr Edward Timpson (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con): Under new housing benefit rules, foster carers who claim housing benefit will be penalised for having bedrooms occupied by foster children because they will be deemed as “under-occupied”. At a time when we need more foster carers, not fewer, what are the Government doing to address that anomaly?

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Steve Webb): My hon. Friend has a good deal of personal knowledge of this issue. I refer him to the comments made by Lord Freud when it was raised during consideration of the Welfare Reform Bill in the Lords. He observed that this is a serious issue and that he is keen to ensure that we respond appropriately to that important point.

T5. [76013] **Natascha Engel** (North East Derbyshire) (Lab): A record number of employment and support allowance claimants are wrongly assessed as fit for work. They cannot claim ESA while they await their appeal hearings, yet appeals are taking anything up to 15 months to be heard. What is the Minister doing to make the system better and, more importantly, quicker?

Chris Grayling: The hon. Lady needs to remember that the system we inherited from the previous Government caused the problems to which she is referring. We made changes after the Harrington review last year that were all in place earlier this summer for the start of the national incapacity benefit migration. We have yet to see the statistical outcome of that, but I am confident that we will see a fall in the number of successful appeals as a result of our decision to implement the Harrington recommendations in full.

Brandon Lewis (Great Yarmouth) (Con): For auto-enrolment to have the maximum impact, it is important that seasonal short-term employees have an equal opportunity to be part of it. Will the Minister outline what incentives the Government are putting in place to encourage take-up by short-term and seasonal employees?

Steve Webb: We must strike the right balance in respect of those who work for an employer for a very short period, in order to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy.

Those who are with a firm for more than three months will be within the scope of auto-enrolment, and those who work for a shorter period will still be free to opt in and trigger a contribution from their firm.

T6. [76014] **Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab): Will the Minister reassure my constituents that the assessment for the personal independence payment will be fit for purpose and will not repeat the experiences of the work capability assessment?

Maria Miller: I thank the hon. Lady for her question. She will be aware that last May we published the assessment criteria, that we have been testing those through the summer with 900 disabled people, and that we are working with more than 50 disability organisations. I hope that that assures her that we will ensure that it is very much fit for purpose.

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): I very much welcome the Government's plans to streamline advice and information and advocacy services, with the big possibility of a much enhanced citizens advice service. Will the Minister assure me that benefits advice and advocacy will be very much at the heart of the new service?

Mr Duncan Smith: Yes, I can.

Mr Frank Roy (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): Is the Secretary of State aware that it is proving impossible for MPs to make telephone inquiries to Work programme providers, outsource providers and work capability assessment providers?

Chris Grayling: We are extremely keen to see close relationships between local Members of Parliament and Work programme providers. If there is any issue in making that happen, we will happily act as middlemen to make sure the doors are opened.

T8. [76016] **Ann McKechnin** (Glasgow North) (Lab): As the Minister will be aware, there are approximately 2,000 local government employees in Scotland who administer housing benefit. He said in a recent parliamentary answer to me that those people are in his thinking in relation to the introduction of universal credit. Can he give any reassurance to the House that those people's jobs will be protected and will be considered as part of the new system?

Mr Duncan Smith: We have said all along that, when it comes to administering universal credit, all those who are responsible for administering various parts of it now will have an equal opportunity to show that they are the most efficient and most effective.

Miss Anne McIntosh (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I thank the Government for amending the state pension age for one category of women. May I press the Government and the Minister on the transitional arrangements for those women who will not have a reprieve, because presumably the unemployment benefit will not be as high as the state pension to which they would have been entitled?

Steve Webb: My hon. Friend is right that there will still be people who face a significant increase in their state pension age. Working-age benefits will be available, including jobseeker's allowance and employment and support allowance. Some such women will also have access to occupational pensions and other forms of income and we will support those who seek to carry on working up to their new state pension age.

T9. [76017] **Catherine McKinnell** (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): On Saturday, I joined more than 1,000 people in Newcastle for one of the many Hardest Hit campaign rallies across the country, in which people expressed anxiety about cuts to local care and support services, jobs and essential benefits for some of the most vulnerable in society. Given that disabled people are already twice as likely to live in poverty, what does the Minister have to say in response to their concerns?

Maria Miller: I regularly meet all the major organisations that are involved in the march. I can reassure the hon. Lady that we are doing work in the Department for Work and Pensions and through the Department of Health, with an extra £7.2 billion going on social care, an extra £3 million being put into user-led organisations and £180 million going on disabled facilities grants. Those are all additional areas of expenditure that disabled people should welcome.

Mr Iain Wright (Hartlepool) (Lab): One in five young people in Hartlepool is without employment, education or training. That is the highest proportion anywhere in the country and is the direct result of Government decisions such as the scrapping of the education maintenance allowance and the cancellation of the future jobs fund. Given the astonishing complacency of the Secretary of State's earlier answers and given that he has not given a fig about young people throughout this Administration, what practical, tangible steps will he put in place so that young people in Hartlepool are not a neglected, forgotten or lost generation?

Mr Duncan Smith: I must say to the hon. Gentleman, as I have said to many others, that these problems with youth unemployment are deeply regrettable but, most importantly, while we in government look after the economy and want to see greater levels of growth, he, like all his colleagues, needs to take account of the fact

that we are here because of the mess that his party left the economy in and the debts and the deficit—which we have to get rid of.

Gloria De Piero (Ashfield) (Lab): A constituent of mine has been taken off disability living allowance and was told in May that his appeal was ready to be heard at a tribunal but that the backlog meant that it could not be heard until April next year. That is an 11-month wait; does the Minister think that is an acceptable length of time?

Maria Miller: I am very happy to discuss an individual case such as that with the hon. Lady if she would like to talk to me at another point.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): Has the Minister with responsibility for disabled people received any reports of Remploy factories having to turn away work? If so, does she agree that, at a time when there is criticism of the financial performance of some of those factories, that would be perverse given that we want those factories to be taking on as much work as possible?

Maria Miller: The Government are absolutely committed to Remploy and are continuing to fund the modernisation plan. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we are looking at the future of Remploy—not just the factories, but employment services. If he has particular examples of current practice that he is concerned about, I would be delighted to talk to him about that. I am not aware of any such business being turned away.

Mrs Mary Glendon (North Tyneside) (Lab): Does the Minister consider £22.60 enough to live on as a personal allowance to provide clothing, toiletries, travel and socialising? If not, why does the Minister expect my disabled constituents from the Percy Hedley Foundation who took part in the Hardest Hit campaign to—

Mr Speaker: Order. Thank you for the question, but we must move on.

Maria Miller: The hon. Lady may be referring to disability living allowance. That is available for part of the costs that disabled people incur. There are many other ways that the Government support disabled people.

European Council

3.30 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron): With permission, Mr Speaker, I would like to make a statement on recent developments in Libya and yesterday's European Council.

Yesterday in Libya, after 42 years of tyranny and seven months of fighting, the national transitional council declared the formal liberation of their country. Everyone will have been moved by the pictures of joy and relief that we saw on our television screens last night. From Tripoli to Benghazi, from Misrata to Zawiyah, Libyans now dare to look forward, safe in the knowledge that the Gaddafi era is truly behind them.

This was Libya's revolution, but Britain can be proud of the role that we played. Our aim throughout has been to fulfil the terms of the UN Security Council resolution, to protect civilians, and to give the Libyan people the chance to determine their own political future. With the death of Gaddafi, they now really do have that chance. The whole House will join me in paying tribute to our armed forces for the role that they have played—over 3,000 missions flown and some 2,000 strike sorties, one fifth of the total strike sorties flown by NATO. As the Chief of the Defence Staff has written this morning, it has been

“one of the most successful operations NATO has conducted in its 62-year history”.

I believe it is something the whole country can take pride in.

The decision to intervene militarily, to place our brave servicemen and women in the line of fire, is never an easy one. We were determined from the outset to conduct this campaign in the right way, and to learn the lessons of recent interventions, so we made sure the House was provided immediately with a summary of the legal advice authorising the action. We held a debate and a vote in Parliament at the earliest opportunity. We made sure that decisions were taken properly throughout the campaign, with the right people present, and in an orderly way. The National Security Council on Libya met 68 times, formulated our policy, and drove forward the military and the diplomatic campaign. We took great care to ensure that targeting decisions minimised the number of civilian casualties. I want to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) for his hard work on this issue.

It is a mark of the skill of RAF, British Army and other coalition pilots that the number of civilian casualties of the air attacks has been so low. The military mission is now coming to an end, and in the next few days, NATO's Operation Unified Protector will formally be concluded. It will now be for Libyans to chart their own destiny and this country will stand ready to support them as they do so.

Many learned commentators have written about the lessons that can be learned from the past seven months. For our part, the Government are conducting a rapid exercise, while memories are still fresh, and we will publish its key findings. For my part, I am wary of drawing some grand, over-arching lesson—still less to claim that Libya offers some new template that we can apply the world over. I believe it has shown the importance of weighing each situation on its merits and thinking

through carefully any decision to intervene in advance. But I hope it has also shown that this country has learned not only the lessons of Iraq, but the lessons of Bosnia too. When it is necessary, legal and right to act, we should be ready to do so.

Let me turn to yesterday's European Council. This Council was about three things: sorting out the problems of the eurozone, promoting growth in the European Union, and ensuring that as the eurozone develops new arrangements for governance, the interests of those outside the eurozone are protected. This latter point touches directly on the debate in the House later today, and I will say a word on this later in my statement. Resolving the problems in the eurozone is the urgent and overriding priority facing not only the eurozone members, but the EU as a whole and indeed the rest of the world economy.

Britain is playing a positive role proposing the three vital steps needed to deal with the crisis: the establishment of a financial firewall big enough to contain any contagion; the credible recapitalisation of European banks; and a decisive solution to the problems in Greece. We pushed this in the letter we co-ordinated to the G20 and in the video conference between me, Angela Merkel, Nicolas Sarkozy and President Obama last week. We did so again at the European Council this weekend and will continue to do so on Wednesday at an extra European Council meeting.

Ultimately, however, the way to make the whole of the EU, including the eurozone, work better is to promote open markets, flexible economies and enterprise. That is an agenda that Britain has promoted, under successive Governments and successive Prime Ministers, but it is now an agenda that the European Commission is promoting, too. We have many differences with the European Commission, but the presentation made by the Commission at yesterday's Council about economic growth was exactly what we have been pushing for, driving home the importance of creating a single market in services, opening up our energy markets and scrapping the rules and bureaucracy that make it take so long to start a new business. Both coalition parties are pushing hard for these objectives.

This may sound dry, but if we want to get Europe's economies moving and to succeed in a competitive world, these are the steps that are absolutely necessary. These are arguments that Margaret Thatcher made to drive through the single market in the first place, and which every Prime Minister since has tried to push. If the countries of the EU were as productive as the United States, if we had the same proportion of women participating in our economy, and if we were as fast and flexible at setting up new businesses, we would have the same GDP per capita as the United States. That is an aim we should adopt.

The remainder of the Council was spent on the safeguards needed to protect the interests of all 27 members of the European Union. The Council agreed that all matters relating to the single market must remain decisions for all 27 member states and that the European Commission must

“safeguard a level playing field among all Member States including those not participating in the Euro.”

That leads me directly to the debate we will have in the House later today. Members of my party fought the last election committed to three things: stopping the

[*The Prime Minister*]

passage of further powers to the EU; instituting a referendum lock to require a referendum, by law, for any such transfer of powers from this House; and bringing back powers from Brussels to Westminster. All three remain party policy. All three, in my view, are in the national interest. In 17 months in government, we have already achieved two of the three. No more powers have gone to Brussels. Indeed, the bail-out power has actually been returned and, of course, the referendum lock is in place. I remain firmly committed to achieving the third: bringing back more powers from Brussels.

The question tonight is whether to add to that by passing legislation in the next Session of this Parliament to provide for a referendum that would include a question on whether Britain should leave the EU altogether. Let me say why I continue to believe that this approach would not be right, why the timing is wrong and how Britain can now best advance our national interests in Europe.

First, it is not right because our national interest is to be in the EU, helping to determine the rules governing the single market, our biggest export market, which consumes more than 50% of our exports and drives so much investment in the UK. That is not an abstract, theoretical argument; it matters for millions of jobs and millions of families and businesses in our country. That is why successive Prime Ministers have advocated our membership of the EU.

Secondly, it is not the right time, at this moment of economic crisis, to launch legislation that includes an in/out referendum. When your neighbour's house is on fire, your first impulse should be to help put out the flames, not least to stop them reaching your own house. This is not the time to argue about walking away, not just for their sakes, but for ours.

Thirdly, and crucially, there is a danger that by raising the prospect of a referendum, including an in/out option, we will miss the real opportunity to further our national interest. Fundamental questions are being asked about the future of the eurozone and, therefore, the shape of the EU itself. Opportunities to advance our national interest are clearly becoming apparent. We should focus on how to make the most of this, rather than pursuing a parliamentary process for a multiple-choice referendum. As yesterday's Council conclusions made clear, changes to the EU treaties need the agreement of all 27 member states. Every country can wield a veto until its needs are met. I share the yearning for fundamental reform and am determined to deliver it.

To those who support today's motion but do not actually want to leave the EU, I say this: I respect your views. We disagree not about ends, but about means. I support your aims. Like you, I want to see fundamental reform. Like you, I want to re-fashion our membership of the EU so that it better serves our nation's interests. The time for reform is coming. That is the prize. Let us not be distracted from seizing it. I commend this statement to the House.

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): I thank the Prime Minister for his statement. On Libya, I join him in expressing deep and abiding gratitude to members of the British armed forces. Over the past seven months, once again, our servicemen and women have been a

credit to our nation, exercising our responsibility to the Libyan people and to uphold the will of the United Nations. That is why I have supported the Government in their actions, and I commend the Prime Minister on the role that he has played in taking the right and principled decisions on the issue.

There are difficult days ahead, and it is for the Libyan people to determine their future, but I agree with the Prime Minister that, alongside the responsibility to protect, which we exercised, is the responsibility to help rebuild—in particular, to help provide the expertise that the new Libya will require.

Let me now turn to Europe, and here my opening remarks reflect some of the things that the Prime Minister said. We are clear, and have been consistently, that getting out of the European Union is not in our national interest. Cutting ourselves off from our biggest export market makes no sense for Britain, and the overwhelming majority of British businesses, however unhappy they are with aspects of the EU, know that, too.

What is more, at this moment of all moments, the uncertainty that would ensue from Britain turning inwards over the next two years to debate an in/out referendum is something our country cannot afford. The best answer to the concerns of the British people about the European Union is to reform the way it works, not to leave it. We should make the completion of the single market, common agricultural policy reform, budget reform and reform of state aids the issue. That is why we will vote against the motion tonight.

This is the context for the European Council that the Prime Minister went to this weekend: growth stalled in Britain since the autumn; growth now stalling in Europe; unemployment rising; and the threat of a new banking crisis. That is why yesterday's summit was so important.

I listened carefully to the Prime Minister's statement, and it sounds like he now believes that Britain should play an active role in solving this crisis, but the truth is that month after month the Prime Minister and the Chancellor have chosen to grandstand on the sidelines, not to help sort out the issue. The Chancellor even refused to go to the initial meetings that he was invited to on the issue. They have shown no will to try to find the solutions.

Let me ask where the Prime Minister now stands. On banking, does he believe that the amount of recapitalisation being discussed is sufficient to ensure financial stability throughout the European banking system, particularly in the light of the International Monetary Fund's larger estimates of capital required? On Greece, does he believe that the lessons of previously announced Greek bail-outs are being learned and will provide a genuinely sustainable solution? On growth, does he now understand that Europe will not get to grips with its debt problems until it get to grips with a crisis of growth and the immediate lack of demand in the European economy?

I suppose we should be pleased that the Government have moved from the Chancellor being empty-chaired at the meetings to the Prime Minister at least wanting to get into them, but he will have to do better than yesterday, because he was surprisingly coy about his one real achievement at the summit. In a few short hours, he managed to write the euro version of "How to Lose Friends & Alienate People". He went into the summit lecturing the Germans; he came out of it being shouted

at by the French. Apparently, President Sarkozy, until recently his new best friend, had had enough of the posturing, the hectoring, the know-it-all ways. Mr President, yesterday you spoke not just for France but for Britain as well.

The Prime Minister was in Brussels, but his mind was elsewhere. The Tory party on Europe is suffering another nervous breakdown, with a Prime Minister making frantic phone calls home, Parliamentary Private Secretaries threatening to resign, and it is not just the Stone Roses on a comeback tour, because the right hon. Member for Wokingham (Mr Redwood) is back among us, touring the television studios.

All the Prime Minister's present difficulties are of his own making. What did he say in 2006? He said that instead of talking about the things that most people care about, we were banging on about Europe. However, he spent the last five years telling his Back Benchers that he may not be banging on about Europe but that, deep down, he is really one of them. He was warned that he might start by dabbling with Euroscepticism, but that it was a slippery slope. That is exactly what happened.

Does the Prime Minister regret getting out of the European People's Party in favour of the right-wing fringe—[*Interruption.*] He says no, but I do not know whether he was aware that there was a dinner for EPP leaders on Saturday night. The German Chancellor was there, the French President was there, and the President of the Commission was there—mainstream centre right Europe—but the Prime Minister was not invited. He is the person who kept telling us that he was a Eurosceptic, who at the election promised renegotiation of the terms of Britain's membership of the EU. His party is paying the price because it believed what he told them. The country is paying the price because we are losing influence.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister was at it again, and we heard it again today. He is locked in a row with his Back Benchers, and what do we see? We see the resurrection of the old classic to get out of the social chapter, and withdraw employment rights. The coalition agreement is clear. That option is off the table. The Deputy Prime Minister is nodding from a sedentary position. That option—the third option in the Prime Minister's statement—is off the table, and the Foreign Secretary confirmed that again this morning. Let the Prime Minister answer this question. At the December summit, what position will he take? Will he be for renegotiation or against? The coalition agreement says that that option is off the table. He said in his statement that it is on the table. The position is totally unclear.

This goes to the heart of the Prime Minister's ability to fight in Europe on behalf of this country. Like his predecessors, he is caught between the party interest and the national interest. We see a rerun of the old movie—an out-of-touch Tory party tearing itself apart over Europe—and all the time the British people are left to worry about their jobs and livelihoods. The Prime Minister should stop negotiating with his Back Benchers, and start fighting for the national interest.

The Prime Minister: First, I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his kind words on Libya. I agree that, as well as the responsibility to protect, we have a responsibility to help rebuild, and we will certainly do that.

What he said about Europe started well with praise for the importance of completing the single market, something he is in favour of and I am in favour of. He did not tell us about all his views on Europe. Yesterday, he was asked repeatedly whether Labour would join the euro, and the answer was instructive. He said:

“It depends how long I'm prime minister for.”

I am not sure which prospect is more terrifying.

The right hon. Gentleman accused the Government of not going to meetings in Europe. We have been going to meetings in Europe to get us out of the bail-out mechanism that Labour put us into. He asked what we are doing to make sure that bank recapitalisation is credible. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor spent 10 hours in an ECOFIN meeting on Saturday ensuring that that happened. It would not have done without his intervention.

On Greece, we certainly want decisive action. Let me be clear about that. The right hon. Gentleman then said an extraordinary thing about the French President—that he thought the French President spoke for Britain—[*Interruption.*] That is what he said. It is difficult from opposition to sell out your country, but he has just done it.

I struggled to look for a question to answer—there were not very many. The right hon. Gentleman talked about the importance of global leadership. Let me just remind him that one of the absolute keys is going to be the role of the IMF. Let us remember that he led his Back Benchers and all his Front Benchers through the Division Lobby to vote against the IMF deal that his own former Prime Minister had negotiated in London. That was a complete absence of leadership, like so much we see from the right hon. Gentleman.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. A very large number of right hon. and hon. Members are seeking to catch my eye. I am keen to accommodate them, but I remind the House that we have a very heavily subscribed debate to take place afterwards. Therefore, brevity from Back Benchers and Front Benchers alike is of the essence.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind (Kensington) (Con): I agree with the Prime Minister's view on the debate this afternoon. However, has he had drawn to his attention the terms of the third option in the motion, which is to

“re-negotiate...membership in order to create a new relationship based on trade and co-operation”?

Is that not purely the situation of Norway and Switzerland, is that not incompatible with membership of the European Union, and should not anyone who is interested in renegotiation that will enable us to stay within the Union oppose this motion?

The Prime Minister: I think the vital interest for the UK is belonging to the single market—not just being able to trade in that single market but having a seat at the table where you can negotiate the rules of that single market, which of course countries like Norway are not able to do. One of the other problems with the motion—I completely understand the frustrations that many of my colleagues have about Europe—is that if you have a three-way choice, you could find that 34% of the country

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voting to get out of the European Union would be enough to deliver that or, indeed, that 34% voting for the status quo, which many of think is unacceptable, would be enough. *[Interruption.]* I think we have tried the alternative vote, and a pretty clear decision was made.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): How would the Prime Minister characterise his relations with President Sarkozy?

The Prime Minister: If you have a good relationship with someone, you can have frank discussions with them. I can tell the hon. Gentleman exactly what happened at the European Council yesterday. On the issue of Libya, Britain and France have worked together probably more closely than we have worked together at any time in the last 40 years, and on defence co-operation, we will continue to do that. I do not for one minute resile from the need sometimes to speak clearly and frankly on behalf of Britain and to stand up for the British national interest. It is in our national interest that the eurozone deals with its problems, and it is right that we make that clear.

Sir Menzies Campbell (North East Fife) (LD): My right hon. Friend deserves great credit for the determination and leadership that he showed in relation to Libya. He will understand that his views and mine on Europe are hardly identical, but, at the very least, can we not agree that in opposing President Sarkozy abroad, and in opposing the motion to be discussed here at home, he is clearly acting in the national interest?

The Prime Minister: I am very grateful for that compliment. The fact is that my right hon. and learned Friend is right to make the point. This is a coalition. There is not complete agreement on European policy between the parties of the coalition, but the coalition came together in the national interest and is acting in the national interest, and I think it is right to oppose this motion tonight, partly on the grounds that he puts forward.

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): It is a shame that the Prime Minister spent only 10 minutes on Libya, the European Council and the motion. On reflection, I hope that he will think that he should have paid more attention to the European Council.

US Secretary Geithner said that even if all Greece's debts were repaid, we would still have the same problem. Could the Prime Minister tell the House how he thinks that Greece will regain competitiveness?

The Prime Minister: I have probably made more statements on European Councils over the last 16 months than many Prime Ministers, and I have always committed to come back and report to the House.

The point that the hon. Lady makes is absolutely right. Greece is just the most glaring problem that the eurozone has to deal with. As I have said, that has to be dealt with decisively. It needs to be backed by a firewall, and it needs to be backed by the recapitalisation of banks. But the fundamental problem of the eurozone is

the issue of competitiveness and the very large current imbalances that are building up in some of the member states, particularly those in the south. As a result, what needs to happen above all, as I said in my statement, is an advance in competitiveness, in trade, and in completing the single market, which will help all those economies in the longer term.

Mr William Cash (Stone) (Con): The Prime Minister has made it clear that he advocates fiscal union within the eurozone. Can he explain to the House how it is that fiscal union of that kind is not a fundamental change in our relationship with the European Union, bearing in mind that it is established that the constitutional position is clear that where there is fundamental change, there must be a referendum? How can he square that circle?

The Prime Minister: Let me be clear with my hon. Friend. I think that fundamental changes are coming in Europe; they are clearly coming in the eurozone. That may lead to pressures, as we saw over the weekend, for treaty change. That will present opportunities for Britain and we should respond to those opportunities. The question for the House tonight is whether it is right to go off down the path of having a referendum that includes an in/out option, just when there are big opportunities as the eurozone and the EU are changing.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): I join others in congratulating the Prime Minister on his stance on Libya, but remind him that there are other countries, such as Yemen, that need to be focused on. The Lisbon agenda set out the benchmarks for economic growth, which were replaced by the 2020 strategy. Is the Prime Minister confident that, despite the eurozone crisis, those targets will be achieved?

The Prime Minister: First, the right hon. Gentleman is right on Yemen. As he knows, the National Security Council is spending an increasing amount of time on examining how we can best help that country not only to achieve a transition to greater democracy and freedom, but to tackle the security concerns that we have about it. He is right that we have had the Lisbon process and the 2020 process. The problem is that although this agenda gets pushed forward, in too many cases the targets and measures are not met. After 16 or 17 months of going to Council meetings, I am seeing a change of heart in the European Commission, not least because everyone recognises that the priority in Europe is now growth. The Commission has to stop adding expensive regulations to business and start deregulating, which is exactly the agenda that we are putting forward.

Richard Ottaway (Croydon South) (Con): Does the Prime Minister agree that not only in Libya, but in Tunisia and Egypt there is an opportunity for reconstruction and a transition to democracy? To what extent will that be dealt with on a bilateral basis or in conjunction with our partners through the European External Action Service?

The Prime Minister: The first thing that we have done is to help to change the European neighbourhood policy to ensure that it is much more engaged with Libya, Tunisia and Egypt, and to put in much more conditionality so that there is progress towards rights and democracy

in the countries that we are helping. In addition, we have a significant bilateral programme. It is essential to help those countries develop the building blocks of democracy, such as political parties, and understand the importance of civic society. The Department for International Development and others can help with that.

Mr Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): I join others in paying tribute to the bravery of our servicemen and women over Libya and to the work of NATO. I particularly commend the Prime Minister for his leadership on Libya. I am afraid that on Europe, the same cannot be said. The people of Britain will today be asking why he has decided to firmly set his face not only against his own Back Benchers, but against the settled will of the British people for a referendum on Europe.

The Prime Minister: First, I thank the right hon. Gentleman for what he said about Libya. As I have said, the country can be proud of what our armed service personnel have done. On Europe, I am clear about what Parliament should do about a referendum. We do not come to this place to give away powers that belong to the people, not to us. It is wrong that we did not have a referendum on Maastricht, Lisbon and those other treaties. My clear view is that it is when this Parliament proposes to give up powers that there should be a referendum. That is the guarantee that we have written into the law of the land.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): As global traders, our future prosperity lies in improved trade with China, India, South America and emerging economies in Africa, and not in being part of the backward-facing, inward-facing protection racket that is the European Union, which is propping up inefficient businesses and French farmers. The Prime Minister's objection to tonight's motion seems to be about timing. Will he give us a timetable for getting powers back from the European Union?

The Prime Minister: First, where I have some disagreement with my hon. Friend is that, although we of course want to export more to China, India, Brazil, Russia and Turkey—the fast-growing countries of the future—we have to recognise that today, 50% of our trade is with European Union countries. It is therefore in our interest not only to keep those markets open and have a say about their regulation, but to further open them up. That is what we should be pushing for and are pushing for in the European Union. As I say, there is a case for a referendum if ever this Parliament proposes to give up more powers. Otherwise, it is clear what the country wants us to do: it wants us to stay in the European Union, but to retrieve some powers and ensure that we have a better relationship with Europe. That is the commitment that we have made.

Tony Lloyd (Manchester Central) (Lab): The Prime Minister must recognise that whether we are talking about Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal or Ireland, only growth will make a real difference to the financial crisis. Why did he not advocate policies of growth at the heart of these debates and, in that way, give a lead to the British people about why Europe is so important?

The Prime Minister: We have been doing exactly that, but one reason some of those countries have got into difficulties is not just the shortage of growth and competitiveness, though that has been key, but the fact that they have built up very large budget deficits. That is the lesson right across Europe—you have to make sure that you cut your cloth according to what you can afford. That is a lesson that we are tragically having to learn in this country, too.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): My constituents in Dover were very pleased and heartened to see the Prime Minister standing up to the French.

When it comes to the national interest, is not a key point that we need action on budgets and action on getting us out of the bail-out fund, not action selling us down the river, joining up with the euro or selling down the £7 billion rebate that we used to have?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point, which is about what the British people want us to do specifically with respect to Europe. The biggest danger, they sense, is getting drawn into further bail-outs. That is why, in the treaty change that has already come forward, that was the price that we exacted—to get out of the EU bail-out fund by 2013. We have returned that power to the UK. We should also be taking action on the European budget, and we have secured agreement with some of the large countries in Europe on a real-terms freeze this year. Those priorities, plus the referendum lock, are what this Government have already been able to deliver.

Mr Denis MacShane (Rotherham) (Lab): The Prime Minister prayed in aid Margaret Thatcher, but she put her money where her mouth was in the sense that the UK contribution to the European Community went up from £656 million in 1984 to £2.54 billion in 1990—a fourfold increase. Then, it was to help Greece, Spain, Portugal and Ireland. Does the Prime Minister plan to emulate her to help Poland, Latvia and our poorer friends in the new Europe?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman reminds us that Margaret Thatcher did indeed put her money where her mouth was. The only trouble was the next Government came along and gave it away when they gave up the rebate for absolutely nothing in return.

Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend speculate on what the cost would have been to the taxpayer if he and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor had not negotiated to get Britain out of the bail-out mechanism?

The Prime Minister: The point about the bail-out mechanism is that we were left exposed by the last Government because of the existence of the European financial stabilisation mechanism. Although we are still at risk between now and 2013, what we have secured is that we have ended that from 2013. That is an achievement. We also stayed out of the second Greek bail-out, and that was an achievement. Those things have saved real money, and it is really important for people to understand that the Government have been focused on delivering something really concrete and important for the British people at this time.

Sir Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): As a Member who voted for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1973, and who as shadow Foreign Secretary refused to meet Gaddafi when he invited me to go to Libya to collect financial compensation—blood money—for the family of WPC Fletcher, may I state my disgust and revulsion at the murder, and the nature of the killing, of Gaddafi? May I ask the Prime Minister to emphasise to the national transitional council that the future for democracy in Libya lies in reconciliation, not revenge?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman makes an important point, and I can announce to the House that Chairman Jalil, leader of the national transitional council, has announced today that there will be an inquiry into the circumstances of Colonel Gaddafi's death. Clearly, we wanted him to face justice. That is what should have happened, and it is important that that inquiry goes ahead. However, I do not stand back for one second from what I said in my statement—that because the Gaddafi era is over and he is gone, the Libyan people, who genuinely feared that as long as there was a prospect of his coming back there was a difficulty in building their future, can now get on with that future.

Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): I greatly welcome the Prime Minister's leadership on Libya. Its liberation is a success not only for the Libyan people but for proving that the international community can act together to implement the responsibility to protect. However, does he agree that we must also exercise caution? Intervention under R2P must be used sparingly and only in cases that meet all the relevant criteria, such as there being a serious threat to human rights, the response being proportional and there being clear support for action internationally, regionally and within the country.

The Prime Minister: I very much agree with how my hon. Friend puts her question, but I would add something important to that: we should intervene only if we believe we are capable of doing so and of bringing about the effect that we need. There is a very important issue there. It is about seeing not only what is legal and necessary, but what we can do.

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): The Prime Minister must know of the growing division between the public and politicians. Does he have no concern at all about what will happen at 10 o'clock tonight, when all three party leaders will whip their Back Benchers in a Division on a motion that is not binding, and that seeks a referendum and future legislation in—probably—2013? Does that mean that once again, the public will say, "Seventy-five per cent. of us would like a referendum at some stage. This Parliament is not listening"?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady asks a very important question, so let me try and answer it. I absolutely believe it is right to have public petitions in the way that we now do, and that it is right to give time to Back-Bench motions—this Government have brought that reform about. However, the issue of Europe is not a side issue, but an important one, and it is important that political parties and Governments make their views on

it known. I do not accept the idea that somehow we can have a vote on something as important as this on a Thursday and hope that it will go unnoticed. I believe in the importance of Parliament, but I cannot believe in a sovereign Parliament on the one hand and on the other say that some of its votes and decisions do not matter. I simply do not think that that is consistent.

Mark Reckless (Rochester and Strood) (Con): The Prime Minister tells *The Daily Telegraph* today that we should use any treaty change to shore up the euro to get powers over employment and social policy back, yet on 25 March, he agreed to precisely such a treaty change, but did not ask for anything in return.

The Prime Minister: I have to take issue with my hon. Friend. The very limited treaty change that is about to be debated in, and hopefully passed by, the House of Commons, gets us out of the bail-out mechanism that the previous Government got us into. I thought, and I still think as Prime Minister, that that was the single most important price that we could exact for that treaty change—that was the biggest concern of the British public. The point I made yesterday and that I will make again today is that I believe that huge changes will take place in the EU and the eurozone. That will give us opportunities to maximise the national interest, which is what we should be talking about and debating in the Conservative party, the coalition and the House of Commons as a whole. We will not further that by having a referendum that includes an in/out option. As I have said, that would be like walking away from a burning house. We should deal with that first, then talk about the future.

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): What assessment has the Prime Minister made of the consequences of the eurozone crisis on UK regional export-led economic growth?

The Prime Minister: As I said yesterday, the eurozone crisis has clearly had a chilling effect, not only on eurozone economies, but on our economy, the American economy and economies elsewhere in the world. The eurozone is a huge market for the world's goods, and clearly there has been a slow-down, partly because of the lack of confidence in the eurozone. We must also be clear that a break-up of the eurozone would have severe consequences for neighbouring countries and banks. That is why it is very important that we work with eurozone partners to try to sort this issue out.

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): May I join others in commending my right hon. Friend for his leadership on Libya, for which he deserves considerable credit? May I also thank him for the constructive tone that he is adopting towards those of us who will support today's motion? So many parties have again and again promised a referendum, and the British people clearly want a say over our future relationship with the European Union. Does he understand our anxiety that it is ironic that the House of Commons is likely to vote heavily against what the British people want?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks about Libya and my tone, which I shall try to keep constructive throughout. I completely

understand people's frustrations: they were promised a referendum on the Lisbon treaty, but they did not get it because the treaty was put in place by the previous Government, which meant that it was not then possible to hold the referendum. However, the answer to the frustration in the country over not having a referendum on the last thing is not to offer one simply on the next idea. The most important thing is to deliver what people want, which is to ensure that we get the best out of the EU and that, where there are opportunities as Europe changes, we take those opportunities. That should be the focus in this Parliament and beyond.

Sir Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough) (Lab): The Prime Minister rightly said that the 27 nation states will make any decision on the single market. He has not told the House that the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, has been elected president of the 17 nation states within the eurozone, with France on one shoulder and Germany on the other. The President has said that he will inform the British Government prior to any summit meetings and inform them of the results. Does the Prime Minister think that to be "informed" is the same as to be "consulted"?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point: as the eurozone comes together and the governance arrangements change, it is important that those countries that are not in the eurozone—and, in our case, do not want to join—have their interests protected. That is why, in the Council conclusions, I secured specific language about ensuring a level playing field and that countries outside the eurozone are protected. This is a journey. The eurozone is going on one journey, where it sees closer collaboration and co-operation, but I believe that countries outside the eurozone will be looking for further protections to ensure that some of our vital national interests—things such as financial services—are properly protected and not put at risk by what is happening in the eurozone.

Mark Lancaster (Milton Keynes North) (Con): History tells us that following military victory, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, we have just 100 golden days to deliver stabilisation before the joy of victory turns to despair among the local population. The clock is now ticking, so will the Prime Minister say a few words about how we will deliver this stabilisation?

The Prime Minister: We worked closely with others on a stabilisation and reconstruction plan for Libya. A lot of work went into that. I am optimistic because we have seen how the national transitional council is genuinely national and bringing the country together, not wanting a division between Benghazi and Tripoli. It is transitional, and the clock is now ticking for it to set up a genuine transitional Government within 30 days. Everything that I have seen of the Libyan leadership shows that it wants to get on with rebuilding its country, and because of its oil wealth and the size of its sovereign wealth fund, it has the means by which to do it.

Fiona Mactaggart (Slough) (Lab): In the Prime Minister's statement, he suggested that the EU economies could be as productive as the US economy if we had the same proportion of women in the work force. However, with unemployment among women in the UK higher than at

any point since 1988, will he tell us three things that he has done to increase the proportion of women in the work place?

The Prime Minister: We have increased the hours available for free nursery care for three, four and two-year-olds. That is what we have done.

Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): Will the Prime Minister tell the House whether the President of Switzerland and the Prime Minister of Norway were at the table arguing with the French? I suspect that the answer is no because their relationship is different from ours. [HON. MEMBERS: "They are not in the EU."] That is absolutely right. They are not in the EU, which is why amendment C to the motion is completely the wrong option for our country to pursue.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We have to ask clearly, "What is in the UK national interest?" At the heart of our national interest, when it comes to the EU, is not only access to that single market but the need to ensure that we are sitting around the table of the single market determining the rules that our exporters have to follow. That is key to our national interest, and we must not lose that.

Mark Durkan (Foyle) (SDLP): Which situation does the Prime Minister hope that we will arrive at first: the eurozone passing a brink without teetering on it, or his Eurosceptics passing a top without going over it?

The Prime Minister: That one obviously took a long time to construct. I believe that the eurozone countries are coming together and seeing the need for a big and bold solution. That needs to happen. It will not solve the problem—because there are still major stresses and strains within the eurozone that need to be dealt with in the long term—but I think that it will happen this week. It is up to the House of Commons how it votes tonight, but I am clear that it is in our interest to be in the EU but seeking our national advantage and national interest at all times.

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): May I congratulate the Prime Minister on his leadership on Libya? Returning to fiscal union, may I ask him what part of fiscal union he believes could trigger the European Union Act 2011?

The Prime Minister: The key point about the European Union Act 2011 and the referendum lock that we put in place is that any passage of powers from Britain to Brussels results in a referendum. That is the key thing that we have delivered, which means that never again can we have a situation where, as with Maastricht or Lisbon, a treaty is passed that transfers powers from this House to somewhere else without the British people being asked first. I sometimes think that we have lost the ability to make clear what a significant change that is. That is the key thing that the referendum lock delivers, and I think everyone on this side of the House can be very proud of it.

Mr Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): Following on from the last question, just a few months ago this House spent 42 and a half hours debating the European

[Mr Wayne David]

Union Bill, the purpose of which is to allow for referendums on the EU. Is there any chance of seeing a referendum in the near future on the EU at all?

The Prime Minister: The point is that if a Government propose to pass powers from this House to Brussels, they should ask the British people first. That is the simple principle that we have put into law. It is important that we try to establish clear rules for the use of referendums in a parliamentary democracy, and I absolutely believe that rule 1, line 1 is: “If you’re giving up powers that belong to the British people, you should ask them first.”

Richard Harrington (Watford) (Con): I commend the Prime Minister on his statement, not least because it will reassure the thousands of my constituents who work for companies whose European headquarters are based in Watford. Can he reassure me that the things that my constituents do not like about Europe—for example, bureaucracy, reckless profligacy, gross overspending and too much regulation—will be dealt with to the best of his ability in the course of this Government?

The Prime Minister: I can absolutely give my hon. Friend that assurance. If he looks at what we have achieved in a relatively short time—getting out of the bail-outs, getting agreement among the big countries for a freeze in the European budget this year and getting the European Commission to focus on deregulation rather than regulation—he will see that they are all important. I agree with his first point. A lot of companies come and invest in Britain not just because of our economic strengths, our flexible labour markets and all the rest of it, but because of access to the world’s biggest single market, which is important for investment into Britain by American, Japanese and other firms, creating the jobs and wealth that we need.

Michael Connarty (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (Lab): With some financial analysts saying that banks holding sovereign debt might have to take a 25% to 60% write-down on that, can the Prime Minister elucidate for the benefit of the House what he means by a “financial firewall big enough to contain any contagion”, and say whether he thinks that the IMF needs to be involved and that the problem cannot be solved in Europe?

The Prime Minister: There are two issues if we are going to see a decisive resolution of the Greek situation. Obviously we need a recapitalisation of Europe’s banks, so that they have sufficient capital to withstand the losses that would otherwise affect them. Credible stress tests are crucial to that: there has been round after round of stress tests in Europe, but they have not been robust and credible enough. I believe that that has now been secured, not least because of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor’s work in the ECOFIN meeting. The second thing we need—the firewall; what I called the “big bazooka”, which the shadow Chancellor referred to the other day—is to ensure that we have a mechanism big enough to help to stop contagion to other countries. There will be discussions in the eurozone and outside it about how big that needs to be, but the answer is: bigger than is currently proposed, and they need to keep working on it.

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): I very much welcome the possibility that treaty changes will be needed in the next few months. Will the Prime Minister assure me and businesses the length and breadth of this country that he will use that opportunity to get rid of ridiculous regulations and laws that are impeding growth and job creation in our country?

The Prime Minister: I agree with my hon. Friend’s approach. We should use these opportunities as the European Union changes and the eurozone changes to maximise Britain’s national advantage. We have to be clear: we do not yet know how much of a treaty change will be proposed by the Germans and others, or how extensive it will be. We shall have to look carefully at that to see what is right for Britain in response. However, I should say to my hon. Friend that, so far in this Government, one treaty change has been proposed and we exacted an important price, which was to get us out of the bail-out funds from 2013, which was a clear and present danger to the United Kingdom.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): Is not the tragedy about the Prime Minister the fact that, as Leader of the Opposition, he totally underestimated the world crisis? As a result, he has had to grow up very fast in regard to European politics. What is his next alibi going to be in regard to the postponement of a referendum? I am sure that there is going to be one.

The Prime Minister: I have not for one minute underestimated the scale of the crisis that we face in Europe and across the world economy. Sadly, that crisis has been made worse by the vast overspending that took place under the Government whom the hon. Gentleman supported.

Tony Baldry (Banbury) (Con): Will the Prime Minister confirm that, at the last general election, the Conservative manifesto committed us to seeking to return powers from Europe on economic and social policy, but that nowhere did it contain a commitment to seek an in/out referendum or to seek to renegotiate our terms of membership of the European Union?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We did have a commitment to seek the return of important powers from the European Union, such as the social and employment legislation. Obviously, we are in a coalition, but as Conservative leader, I remain committed to achieving that, because it is in the British national interest to do so. My hon. Friend makes the important point, however, that it was not part of our manifesto or our policy to seek a referendum that included an in/out option. I completely respect the fact that there are Members, not only on this side of the House but on the Labour side as well, who have long wanted an in/out referendum, not least because some of them would like us to get out of the European Union altogether. But that is not our policy, and that is the reason we having the debate on this on a Monday, on a proper motion, in the proper way. This is not some side issue; it is an important issue. As I said before, I believe in the sovereignty of Parliament. To me, all decisions of Parliament matter, and the idea that we could sweep this off into a debate on a Thursday and that no one

would notice is wrong. What Parliament decides matters, and that is why the Government are taking the motion seriously.

Mr Michael McCann (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (Lab): A few weeks ago, I visited the Weir Group in my constituency. Its representatives explained the difficulties that they had had in evacuating British staff from Libya. They also told me of their keen desire to get back to working on vital infrastructure projects there as soon as possible. Will the Prime Minister tell us how he is going to ensure that that can happen?

The Prime Minister: I completely understand why the hon. Gentleman has raised that issue. It is important to his constituents and to that business, and, frankly, it is important for British investment in Libya. I can tell him that Stephen Green, Lord Green, has already held a Libyan investment conference and has plans to travel to Libya. I recommend that the hon. Gentleman contacts that Minister, and I will make sure that that happens so that we can help the Weir Group with the important work that it does.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): Many of my constituents who have contacted me over the past few days tell me that they lost their trust in politics because the previous Government refused to give them a referendum on the Lisbon treaty. What substantive message can my right hon. Friend give me to take back to those constituents?

The Prime Minister: I completely understand their concerns, but just because the last Government failed to hold a referendum on the Lisbon treaty does not mean that we should vote tonight for a referendum on an in/out option that was not in any of our manifestos. The reassurance that I would give to my hon. Friend's constituents is that the Government are doing all the things that people care about most in Europe, such as constraining the European budget, getting out of the bail-out funds and cutting unnecessary regulation. We are doing all those things, and there will be more to come.

Chris Leslie (Nottingham East) (Lab/Co-op): Did I hear the Prime Minister correctly when he said earlier that he now believes that there should have been a referendum on the Maastricht treaty? In the light of the Foreign Secretary's well-rehearsed opposition to that, will he tell us exactly when he changed his mind?

The Prime Minister: I have always felt that, and our Bill is clear. Under our Bill, Maastricht or any of those treaties would have triggered a referendum. That is the point. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has been keeping up. I hope that Labour will commit to that legislation, which will mean that if any Government ever try to give away powers from this House, they will have to ask the British public first.

Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): Has the Prime Minister noticed that, while this Government have ruled out joining the euro, it is the continued policy of Her Majesty's Opposition, regardless of who is leading them?

The Prime Minister: There was an interesting series of interviews with the Leader of the Opposition over the weekend. As well as saying that if he were Prime Minister for long enough, he would like to get us into the euro, he responded to being asked whether he thought that Brussels had too much power by saying:

"No, I don't think Brussels has got too much power".

That is the official position of the Labour party: wrong about the euro, wrong about Brussels, wrong about Britain. Wrong about everything!

Naomi Long (Belfast East) (Alliance): I share the Prime Minister's optimism at the formal liberation of Libya, and I pay tribute to the role our armed forces have played in that process. Is the Prime Minister as concerned as I am, however, at the allegation of the summary execution of any human being—even of a violent tyrant such as Gaddafi? Does he share my view that there is a need urgently to re-establish the rule of law and proper democracy in that country?

The Prime Minister: I think the hon. Lady makes an important point. We all saw those pictures on our televisions and newspapers; they were not pleasant images. I think everyone understands that that is not what should have happened; it should have ended in a trial and in Gaddafi facing justice. As I said earlier, Chairman Jalil has announced that there will be an inquiry, and I think it is important that the Libyans carry it out properly.

Rory Stewart (Penrith and The Border) (Con): May I respectfully disagree with the Prime Minister's idea that there are no lessons from Libya? The lesson from Libya, which could be applied to Europe, is that what matters is not what you ought to do, but how you do it, with whom and when.

The Prime Minister: I did not say that there are no lessons to learn; I think there are lessons to learn. The Government are carrying out a lessons learned process and will be announcing the key results from it. The point my hon. Friend makes about what you are able to do and how you build alliances to do what you want to do is absolutely vital—and was vital in this case. What I was trying to say—perhaps I did not put it across properly—is that we have to be careful not to say that because Libya was successful in this way, we can read that across to every single other proposed intervention. We cannot do that. As a liberal Conservative, I believe that a bit of scepticism should be brought to these schemes before we embark on them.

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): For the sake of absolute clarity, is it now this Prime Minister's position that he could accept substantial German-led changes to the Lisbon treaty without it requiring the referendum he promised the British people?

The Prime Minister: The key point is this. If there is a proposal for moving powers from this House of Commons to Brussels, there is a referendum guarantee. It is absolutely vital that people understand that; it is the promise that we make. We do not yet know whether treaty change will definitely be proposed; we do not yet know what it will consist of or how big it will be. The pledge I can

[*The Prime Minister*]

make is that we will use that opportunity to further the national interest—something that did not happen under 13 years of a Labour Government.

Duncan Hames (Chippenham) (LD): Closer fiscal policy co-ordination within the eurozone marks two very different degrees of political integration among EU member states. Does the Prime Minister consider that, unlike recent referendums in other EU countries, this development, alongside the passage of the European Union Act 2011, affords the British public a more meaningful veto than before on treaty changes and their impact on our own country?

The Prime Minister: I think my hon. Friend is absolutely right. That is the assurance that people seek—you should not change the rules of the game and you should not give away powers that are not yours to give away. The British people should have a block on that; that is what we have put into place. No Government should rule out for ever putting questions in a referendum—after all, this Government had a referendum on the alternative vote—but that is not what I am saying; I am saying that the bedrock of our views about a referendum in a parliamentary democracy is that you should not give powers away from Parliament without asking the people first.

Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab): Ahead of tonight's vote, with a rebellion apparently looming, will the Prime Minister tell us what advice he has taken from the former Prime Minister, John Major? [*Interruption.*]

The Prime Minister: Oh, thank you very much. Well, the hon. Gentleman can have plenty of advice from a former Prime Minister because he used to work for one.

I do not know whether it appears on his CV; my advice would probably be to leave it off!

Neil Carmichael (Stroud) (Con): With large and significant supply chains stringing across Europe and a market of 500 million people, does the Prime Minister agree that businesses across this country would be really pleased to see us further strengthen the capacity of the single market to deliver more trade?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point. All these years after the single market was started, we have still not completed the single market in services. In this country, service is one of our strongest industries, and it is actually countries like Germany that have not yet completed that single market. I know that people are bored of hearing the agenda of completing the single market in services, liberalising energy markets, deregulating in Europe, but if we want to raise our growth rate in Europe and raise our game in Europe, this is squarely in our British national interest.

Dr Thérèse Coffey (Suffolk Coastal) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his leadership in the Libyan situation, when there were many doubters who have been proved unequivocally wrong. Will he assure me that he will continue to work with the President of France and others on the United Nations Security Council to address the situation in Syria?

The Prime Minister: I can assure my hon. Friend that, whatever our disagreements on economic policy—and, by and large, we are united on it—the French President and I will work very closely together on foreign affairs and defence issues. I think that there is a real coming together of French and British national interests, but, as I said earlier, when we do sometimes have disagreements we should not be frightened, as good friends, of airing them and discussing these matters.

Point of Order

4.30 pm

Greg Mulholland (Leeds North West) (LD): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. On Friday I sought to table an amendment to the important motion that is to be discussed—and rightly so—this afternoon. The amendment called for an in/out referendum at the appropriate time, namely following the resolution of the eurozone crisis. However, the Table Office refused to take the amendment from my colleagues and me, although I offered to do it by e-mail or through my researcher, or to have a long conversation on the phone.

As you know, Mr Speaker—

Mr Speaker: Order. I think we have got the drift of the point of order.

Greg Mulholland: It is possible, Mr Speaker, for someone to introduce to the Public Bill Office, but not the Table Office—

Mr Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. We have got the gist of his point of order. I am grateful to him for giving me notice of it.

The rules governing the form of authorisation required to authenticate matters tabled on behalf of Members when they are not able to be present in person are designed to protect them. If the hon. Gentleman, notwithstanding what I have said, believes that they are no longer relevant to modern circumstances, I suggest that he raise the matter with the Procedure Committee. I hope that that is helpful.

Backbench Business

[34TH ALLOTTED DAY]

National Referendum on the European Union

Mr Speaker: I should inform the House that I have selected none of the amendments.

In view of the very large number of Members who wish to speak in the debate, I have imposed a limit of five minutes on each Back-Bench speech.

4.32 pm

Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House calls upon the Government to introduce a Bill in the next session of Parliament to provide for the holding of a national referendum on whether the United Kingdom should

(a) remain a member of the European Union on the current terms;

(b) leave the European Union; or

(c) re-negotiate the terms of its membership in order to create a new relationship based on trade and co-operation.

The motion stands in my name and those of many other right hon. and hon. Members.

I must start by thanking the Backbench Business Committee for providing time for today's debate. It is an historic debate, and the amount of interest generated in advance of it has surely put beyond any doubt the fact that the public are concerned about this matter. It fully vindicates the establishment of the Committee, and its decision to facilitate the debate. I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron), for Christchurch (Mr Chope), for Clacton (Mr Carswell), for Rochester and Strood (Mark Reckless) and for Wycombe (Steve Baker), along with many others, for their tireless work and support from the very outset. With the leave of the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) will briefly wind up the debate.

The motion reflects the wishes of the hundreds of thousands of people who have signed petitions calling for a referendum on the United Kingdom's future relationship with the European Union. Opinion polls clearly show that millions of others agree with them: in fact, the vast majority of the British people want a vote in a referendum. The arguments for and against the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union can wait until a future referendum campaign. The motion that is before us today simply paves the way for a referendum to be held on some future, as yet unspecified, date. Therefore, any argument that now is not the right time for a referendum to be held is, quite frankly, irrelevant. Even if the motion is passed today, a referendum is likely to be years away.

One reason for people's increasing concern about our membership of the European Union is the growing sense that this country, indeed this Parliament, is becoming ever more impotent as more and more decisions are taken in Brussels and then passed down to the United Kingdom to implement, whether we like it or not.

I want to mention one very important example of that from my constituency of Bury North. Before the last general election, the Conservatives pledged that if

[Mr David Nuttall]

we won the election we would keep open the children's department, including the maternity ward and special care baby unit, at Fairfield hospital in Bury, which was scheduled to close under Labour's plans. Sadly, despite that pledge, and despite massive local opposition to the closure plans, these vital services are still destined to close, and one of the driving forces behind the closure plans is the effect of the European working time directive. Thousands of my constituents feel completely let down, and even at this late stage I urge the Government to keep that pre-election pledge and to ensure these services are retained at Fairfield hospital.

Mr Denis MacShane (Rotherham) (Lab): Two weeks ago at the Inverclyde Royal hospital, 23-year-old doctor Lauren Connelly died in a car crash. All her colleagues believe that that was a result of her having worked exhaustingly long hours. We should not mock the working time directive. Although it is sometimes improperly applied in the UK, it is also saving the lives of doctors and patients.

Mr Nuttall: I believe it is for this Parliament to decide what rules and regulations should be taken up.

The voters know that the tentacles of the European Union intrude into ever more areas of our national life. Understandably, they are saddened—and, indeed, disillusioned—at being fobbed off, as they see it, by the political elite, who always seem to find a reason to stop them having their say.

More than a decade ago, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary coined the phrase, "We want to be in Europe, but not run by Europe." The sad fact is that since then we have increasingly become run by Europe. I and millions of others in this country want to be in Britain, and run by Britain.

More than 36 years have passed since anyone had the chance to have their say on this crucial matter, and in that time not a single power has ever been repatriated. I suspect that for some in this House there will never be a right time for a referendum on this issue, but I think that, by anybody's standards, nearly four decades is quite long enough to wait.

Moreover, almost two thirds of the people of the United Kingdom have never had the opportunity to vote on this issue. Indeed, figures supplied by the House of Commons Library show that approximately 8 million of the people who voted yes to continuing our membership of the common market back in 1975 are still alive today. That is just 16% of the current voting age population, leaving a staggering 84% who have never voted in favour of Britain's continued membership of the European Economic Community.

Heather Wheeler (South Derbyshire) (Con): Back in 1975, I was engaged in political work but I was also too young to have a vote, so I am very glad that my hon. Friend has raised this important point so early in the debate. The people of South Derbyshire sent me here so that we can have votes on issues such as the one before us.

Mr Nuttall: I thank my hon. Friend. I will now press on.

A staggering 84% of the current voting age population have never voted in favour of Britain's continued membership of the EEC, never mind the European Union. Furthermore, if I were a betting man, I would wager that some of those who voted yes back in 1975 may well have since changed their minds. The Common Market has fundamentally changed in size and powers as it has been transformed into the European Union, and without the British people ever being consulted, of course.

Mr Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): Why does the hon. Gentleman think that the Prime Minister has not stayed to listen to his speech?

Mr Nuttall: I am sure that the Prime Minister has many important duties to attend to.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate. The key point is that what this country joined was, in essence, a free trade area, and that since that time we have seen the continual salami-slicing of our sovereignty and the British people have still not yet been consulted on that change. The Government may talk about referendum locks, but that is tilting at windmills, given that no treaty is on the horizon and that key competences and powers are being transferred in the meantime. It is time to consult the people.

Mr Nuttall: The European Union Act 2011 deals with the future, but this motion deals with where we are today. People already feel that too many powers have been passed on. At a time when people pick up their phones and spend their own money voting week in, week out to keep their favourite contestants on programmes such as "Strictly Come Dancing" and "The X Factor", many will be baffled as to why the Government and all those who oppose this motion seem keen to prevent them from having their chance to vote on Britain's future relationship with the European Union.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): I very much agree with my hon. Friend. Does he agree that people will be even more baffled to understand the position of the Liberal Democrats? They stood on an election manifesto to have an in/out referendum and actually marched out of this House in the previous Parliament because they were denied one, so does he not agree that people will be particularly baffled as to why none of those charlatans over there will be voting for this motion?

Mr Nuttall: I am sure that millions of Liberal Democrat voters would appreciate having the chance to have their say.

Martin Horwood (Cheltenham) (LD): The hon. Gentleman will know, as I am sure he read the Liberal Democrat manifesto very carefully, that we committed to an in/out referendum at the time of a fundamental shift. That is why we supported an in/out referendum and proposed one in this Chamber at the time of the Lisbon treaty. Perhaps he can explain why every one of his then Conservative colleagues voted against that motion.

Mr Nuttall: The fact is that all the opinion polls show that approximately two thirds of the people want a referendum now.

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Here it is in black and white—it was in orange. This is exactly what the Liberal Democrats wanted to give the people and I am surprised that they are not honouring it today.

Mr Nuttall: The situation we find ourselves in is rather like that of someone who has boarded a slow train going in one direction and finds, just as they are settling in, that the train starts to career off at high speed in a completely different direction, with carriages being added on left, right and centre, and they are locked in and have no way of getting off. Worse still, the longer people are on the train, the more the fare goes up, but there is absolutely nothing they can do about it because any negotiation with the guards or the driver is almost impossible. This motion would simply allow the train to stop for a while so that the passengers can decide whether they want to continue the journey or even disembark.

John Hemming (Birmingham, Yardley) (LD): A lot of changes are happening throughout Europe. Does my hon. Friend accept that we need to add some junctions to the track in order to identify whether alternative routes are available? Does he agree that we should not wait for a referendum before doing that?

Mr Nuttall: I believe that now is the time to start—

Mr Speaker: Order. May I appeal to the House to settle down? A large number of noisy private conversations are taking place, which add nothing to but subtract much from the debate. Let us hear Mr David Nuttall.

Mr Nuttall: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I believe that it is now time to start the process of consulting the British people once more. I say “start” because that is all that this motion seeks to do.

Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con): Will my hon. Friend also acknowledge that not only is he moving this motion, but more than 100,000 people have signed an e-petition to 10 Downing street calling for him to do just this?

Mr Nuttall: If one added together all the petitions, one would find that many hundreds of thousands of people have called for us to debate this issue.

I am conscious that this is one of the most, if not the most, heavily subscribed Back-Bench debates ever. In conclusion, with the three-largest parties in the House all apparently instructing their MPs to vote against the motion despite what those MPs might individually believe to be the best course of action for our country, the result tonight may not be in very much doubt. Members can vote either to give their constituents a choice on Britain’s ongoing relationship with the European Union or to deny them that opportunity. It is as simple as that. If my fellow MPs join me in voting to give the British people a choice in a referendum, they can do so with a clear conscience, knowing that they will have a very large majority of the British people on their side.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Has my hon. Friend had the same experience as I have? In the past week I have had dozens and dozens of e-mails, telephone calls and letters from constituents urging me to support the motion, whereas the only communication I have had urging me to vote against it has been a telephone call from the Whips Office.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear. [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I want to hear the hon. Gentleman’s response.

Mr Nuttall: We always have to be careful about whether we are listening to the vocal minority or the silent majority. I believe that on this issue we should listen to the majority of the British people, who clearly want a referendum.

Some 40 million people of voting age alive today in this country have not voted in favour of Britain’s membership of the European Union, and this motion would start to put that right. Those who oppose it may well be smiling today, but winning votes in the House using strong-arm tactics does nothing to help to rebuild trust in politicians or to persuade the public that the majority inside the House are reflecting their views. Those who oppose the motion may well win this battle, but they most certainly will not win the war. We should remember the saying that he who laughs last laughs longest. I commend the motion to the House.

4.47 pm

Mr Jim Hood (Lanark and Hamilton East) (Lab): I welcome this debate. For new Members in the new Parliament, this will be their first experience of discussing European issues. I have listened to a lot of debates on Europe over the years in this place and they have not changed very much. Of course, I do have some antecedence on European treaties as I was the Chairman of the European Scrutiny Committee and its predecessor for a total of 14 years. I honed my skills in chairmanship by keeping the nine Conservative members of a 16-member Committee from battling with and killing one another. I remember that the split was five pro-Europeans and four who described themselves as sceptics but who we knew were anti. The hon. Member for Stone (Mr Cash) was on that Committee before I joined it and he and I had many exchanges over the years. I respect his views but do not agree with them, and neither did the majority of the Conservatives in the early part of my European scrutiny days.

I have fond memories of our debates on the Maastricht treaty. Those of us who were here at that time will remember that a lot of Members on both sides of the House wore a badge of honour for the number of times they voted against a three-line Whip. The hon. Member for Stone will correct me if I am wrong, but I am sure that he topped 150-odd occasions of rebelling against the Government. I do not see much difference in the debate today.

I did not read anything over the weekend to pre-empt the debate that is any different from the debate all those years ago on the Maastricht treaty. I listened to the Prime Minister today, who said that he was against the decision not to give the people a vote on the Maastricht treaty. I do not know—the records may say, but I

[*Mr Jim Hood*]

thought he was an adviser in the Treasury in those days, or it may have been just after that—but he was certainly involved in advising the Government of the day.

We should not forget that Mrs Thatcher gave us the single market and there was no referendum on that. It is the single market more than anything else that has impacted on how Europe works. Those who argue against the single market now were in the House supporting Mrs Thatcher when the measure went through without a referendum.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend mentioned Lady Thatcher. Is she not also the former Prime Minister who described referendums as the devices of demagogues and dictators?

Mr Hood: I may not be the historian that my hon. Friend gives me credit for, but I remember Mrs Thatcher saying a lot of things. Having been a miner on strike for 12 months during the 1984 miners strike, I have long memories of Mrs Thatcher's contribution to democracy at that time.

Michael Connarty (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (Lab): The mover of the motion, the hon. Member for Bury North (Mr Nuttall), alluded to the fact that Members had been strong-armed into voting against a referendum. Who is likely to be able to strong-arm my hon. Friend?

Mr Hood: I have been here for a few Parliaments now and I have never needed to be strong-armed to support the right causes. It is easier for me to say that because I have always been on the Labour Benches and the causes have been easier to support.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): The hon. Gentleman is telling the House of many of his fond memories. Does he remember a certain Tony Blair saying:

“Of course, Britain could survive outside the EU . . . We could probably get access to the Single Market as Norway and Switzerland do”?

Mr Hood: It may surprise the hon. Gentleman that I am not very good at remembering Tony Blair's quotes either, but I do remember Tony Blair winning three elections with massive majorities, and I can remember the good that that Labour Government did for the country, so I have fond memories of Tony Blair.

I conclude my brief contribution by saying that there is a false debate going on in the Chamber today. Those on the Government Benches who are arguing about defending democracy and the right of the people are not talking about democracy and they are not talking about defending the rights of the people; they are talking about getting the UK out of the European Union. Some Members on the Government Benches are honourable and argue that, but some do not. It is all about the nuances and the language, but there is a truism in the House and throughout the country.

The tabloid press is supporting the call for a referendum today. Some are doing it as a good and honourable cause, but there is a side of the tabloid press that supports the right wing on the Government Benches which wants to take the UK out of the European

Union. I can remember when we joined the European Union. It was trendy on both sides of the House to be against the European Union. We have moved on, our country has moved on, and we need to be not just in Europe but in the heart of Europe. By doing that, we represent the true sovereignty of this Parliament. For that reason, I will vote against the motion tonight.

4.54 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Lanark and Hamilton East (Mr Hood) and his shocking revelation that there are tabloid newspapers that wish to leave the European Union. This is an important issue at a critical time in European affairs and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bury North (Mr Nuttall) on securing the debate and moving the motion, even though, as I will explain, I disagree with it. As so many Members wish to contribute to the debate, I have given you, Mr Speaker, an undertaking that I will speak from the Front Bench for no more than 25 minutes—less, I hope—including interventions. I apologise for having to leave for Australia before the end of the debate.

Hon. Members who have put their names to the motion have done so for reasons that are honourable and passionately held. I wish to set out briefly six reasons why I believe the proposition to be the wrong one at the wrong time and why it would cut across a European policy that I believe has the best chance of success for this country. The starting point must be the recognition that disillusionment with the European Union in this country is at an unprecedented level, and in this regard there is some common ground between my hon. Friend the Member for Bury North and me. Just as I want to say some things that he and others will find difficult to accept, so I put it to those who have always enthused about the prospects for greater European integration that for this country the limits of such integration have been reached—more than reached, in my view.

The Leader of the Opposition said at the weekend that he did not rule out joining the euro in future. He must recognise that he is totally out of touch, not only with the people of Britain, but with economic reality. That is why the coalition Government—this is the first part of my argument—have already brought about a major change in European policy, which is absolutely in the interests of this country but which the motion would cut across. That change has three aspects, which I will set out briefly. First, following the previous Government's refusal to hold a referendum on the Lisbon treaty, we passed the European Union Act 2011, which sets out that, in the event of a Government proposing any further transfer by treaty of powers or competence to the EU, there must by law be a referendum of the British people.

Dan Byles (North Warwickshire) (Con): My right hon. Friend mentioned the Opposition's view. Does he not share my bewilderment that the Leader of the Opposition, in response to the Prime Minister's statement earlier today, appeared to say that the Prime Minister should not go into EU meetings and be robust in the British self-interest in case he upsets the French?

Mr Hague: Well, I never cease to be bewildered by the statements of the Leader of the Opposition, so we will leave him to worry about that himself.

Any or all of the treaties of the past 20 years would have been caught by the 2011 Act, and under the same Act parliamentary scrutiny of any treaty changes was vastly enhanced. The narrow treaty change that has been agreed to set up the European stability mechanism will now require primary legislation to be passed through both Houses of Parliament, rather than the cursory consideration it would have received under the previous Government.

Mr John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Does the Foreign Secretary not see that very substantial transfers of power are going on at the moment under this Government by directive, by regulation and by opt-in? Why can we not have some lock or vote on that?

Mr Hague: As my right hon. Friend knows, we are also improving the scrutiny of opt-in decisions by this House and made some important commitments on that during the passage of the 2011 Act. On financial regulation, as he may know, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has had a series of negotiating triumphs that have turned around the situation regarding directives that threaten this country's financial services industry.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Hague: I will give way to the right hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr MacShane), but then I will make a lot of progress.

Mr MacShane: Is it now the Foreign Secretary's view, and that of the Prime Minister, as he seemed to indicate in his statement, that we should have had a referendum in 1985 on Mrs Thatcher's Single European Act?

Mr Hague: I have just stated my view, which is that all the treaties of the past 20 years would have been caught by the 2011 Act and that there would have been a referendum.

Secondly, we have negotiated far harder and far more effectively on the European budget, in which the increases proposed have been totally unacceptable to this country. Working with France and Germany, the Prime Minister has achieved a sharp reduction in the EU's budget increase and a united demand for a real-terms freeze in the seven years from 2014 without making any concessions of our own.

Thirdly, we have used and will use any treaty change asked for by others to protect and advance our own national interest. The Prime Minister has secured agreement that, in return for accepting a legal basis for the European stability mechanism, Britain will no longer be liable for future eurozone bail-outs through article 122—a liability that the previous Government agreed to in their dying days.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Hague: I am going to proceed for a while, given the time constraints. I will give way again a little later.

We have, therefore, already saved the British taxpayer potentially billions of pounds. None of those three major advances for British interests would have happened

under the previous Government, because they actually did the opposite: refusing to hold a referendum; giving up £7 billion of rebate in budget negotiations for nothing in return; and signing us into a eurozone bail-out.

We propose to approach further treaty changes in the same firm and clear manner. We have agreed in the coalition that our first priority in responding to treaty changes aimed at stabilising the eurozone will be to protect the rights of those countries in the EU but outside the eurozone over decisions affecting them, and to prevent damage to the financial services industry that is so important to this country's economy.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Hague: I will give way again in a moment.

It is my view and the Prime Minister's view, and the position of the Conservative party, that we will use future opportunities to bring further powers back to the United Kingdom—to repatriate powers to the United Kingdom in those areas where we believe European integration has gone too far.

The final part of our approach to the EU is to make the case at every opportunity for it to do effectively what we joined it for: to expand the opportunities for trade both within Europe and beyond. Britain is the leading champion of expanding the single market and concluding more free trade agreements with the rest of the world. Last year's agreement with South Korea is worth up to £500 million to the British economy—a reminder to all of us, when we discuss these matters, that we are talking about not just politics, but people's jobs and businesses, which we must never forget.

Ian Paisley: The Foreign Secretary has quite rightly tried to outline the savings that the Government are making on European costs, but he must know that by 2018 this nation will have spent £356 billion on enforcing EU regulations. Does he not agree that this Parliament could spend it better—on farming, on health care and on social policy—than the European Community?

Mr Hague: I have explained what we are doing to keep the European budget down, and how I believe the European Union has too much power. The hon. Gentleman must be a little careful, because European Union spending has gone disproportionately to Northern Ireland, and he ought to bear that in mind.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): On trade, may I take the Foreign Secretary from the general to the specific? A number of my constituents work at the Luton van factory, which very nearly closed before it secured a major contract with Renault to keep it going for the next decade. Does he share my concern that my constituents' jobs would have been at risk had there been any danger of Britain being outside the European Union and the single market?

Mr Hague: It is true that if the European Union's external tariffs were applied to the car industry they would cost this country £1.5 billion a year, so we do have to bear that in mind.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Hague: I will have to proceed again. We are under this time constraint.

That is the Government's policy towards the EU, and that is why we cannot treat this motion, as some have suggested, in a casual way. To do so would not do justice either to the importance of the issues or to the significance of motions presented in this House.

The Prime Minister and I, as he said earlier, want many of the same things as some of the motion's supporters, but we clearly do not advocate leaving the European Union, and I say as someone who has called for referendums on European matters—on Amsterdam, Nice, Lisbon and the euro—and consumed vast acres of newsprint over the years, criticising the euro and setting out a different vision of Europe's future, that the proposition for a referendum before the House today is the wrong proposition at the wrong time. Building on what the Prime Minister said earlier, I want in the 15 minutes remaining to me to give the House six reasons—*[Interruption]*—some of them are very brief, do not worry—why that is the case.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Hague: But I will give way one more time, to my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron).

Mr Baron: No one doubts my right hon. Friend's Euroscepticism, but, despite all the talk of reclaiming powers, week in, week out competences and powers are being transferred to Brussels under the very noses of the British people. That is why there is growing frustration in the country, and that is why people want a say on whether they become part of this ever-closer political union.

Mr Hague: I do not agree with my hon. Friend that that is what is happening day by day, or week by week. In foreign affairs, for example, we are absolutely clear, and all our embassies and posts throughout the world are clear, that we will not permit any competence creep following on from the Lisbon treaty.

My first reason is the same as the first one given earlier by the Prime Minister. The deficits of recent years, and the slowness of growth in all western economies, make this a difficult and uncertain time for many individuals and firms. The eurozone is clearly in crisis, and to pile on that uncertainty the further uncertainty of a referendum on leaving the European Union, when half the foreign direct investment into Britain comes from the rest of the European Union, and half our exports go out to the rest of the European Union, would not be a responsible action for Her Majesty's Government to take. It would not help anyone looking for a job. It would not help any business trying to expand. It would mean that for a time, we, the leading advocates of removing barriers to trade in Europe and the rest of the world, would lack the authority to do so. It would mean that as we advocate closer trading links between the EU and the countries of north Africa as they emerge from their revolutions, helping to solidify tremendous potential advance in human freedom and prosperity, we would stand back from that. That is not the right way to respond to this dramatic year of uncertainty and change.

Mr William Cash (Stone) (Con): In light of what my right hon. Friend said in advocacy of the single market as it now operates, will he explain why, between 2009 and 2010, our trade deficit with the 26 member states jumped from minus £14 billion to minus £53 billion, and with the eurozone from minus £4 billion to minus £38 billion in one year—last year alone? Why did that happen, and what is his remedy?

Mr Hague: The remedy is to restore the health of the British economy, to have a tax system, such as the Chancellor is creating, that attracts businesses to this country, and to create export growth from this country to the whole world, not just to the European Union. We cannot do that if we are not taking part in the free trade agreements that Europe is making with the rest of the world.

The second and third reasons—

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): *rose*—

Mr Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Lab) *rose*—

Mr Hague: I will give two more reasons, and then I will give way again. The second and third reasons why I do not support the motion can be stated quickly. The second is that the election manifesto on which we stood as Conservative Members was very clear about the referendum legislation that we would introduce and that, in a coalition, we have now passed into law. We were also clear, having been asked about this many times during the election, that that did not include the option of an in-out referendum.

The third reason is that this Parliament has only recently, just weeks ago, passed with a large majority in this House comprehensive legislation setting out in minute detail the circumstances in which a referendum will be held.

Mr Field: Given that the Foreign Secretary said that if there is further substantial transference of power to Europe, we will have a referendum in this country, and as the Government are advocating closer fiscal and monetary union in Europe, which will obviously lead to major changes, why do they not adopt this motion and fix their own time scale for the referendum that he is promising?

Mr Hague: The only treaty change agreed so far—I am coming to this point—is the one that puts the European stability mechanism on a legal basis, and for that we secured in return, as the Prime Minister explained, that this country will no longer be forced to be part of eurozone bail-outs. We will respond to every proposal by putting forward what we need in return.

Any treaty that transfers power to the European Union, and that is interpreted not just by Ministers but by the courts of this country as doing so, will result in a referendum for the people of the United Kingdom.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Hague: Let me give my fourth reason before giving way to a Liberal Democrat Member.

As the Prime Minister said, there is a serious danger that while holding a referendum such as the one advocated—it is predicated on a Bill in the next session of Parliament, which runs from 2012 to 2013 and means that a referendum would be in 2013 or later—we would lose important opportunities to protect or to further our national interest in the meantime. On all those areas where we need the agreement of others—from the shape of the EU budget up to 2020, to agreement on our requirements for any treaty change—it could be harder, not easier, to get our way.

Simon Hughes (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (LD): Although of course the Foreign Secretary and his party, and I and mine, come from different positions on Europe, we both made commitments to referendums, but both were conditional on there being a shift of power from this country to Brussels. It therefore must be right that, at the moment, we concentrate on helping our colleagues to sort out the European crisis, which is what businesses want us to do, and on getting our economy to grow again, which is what our constituents, in and out of work, want us to do. The referendum would be an absolute and immediate distraction from that.

Mr Hague: That is one of the reasons I am giving.

My fifth reason is that the concept of holding a three-way referendum as set out in the motion is innovative but seriously flawed. Leaving aside for a moment all the uncertainty and difficulty which would occur in the run-up to a referendum, which is my final point, if we are serious about this we have to think carefully about what would actually happen in a three-way vote. It is highly unlikely that any one of the three options would receive more than 50% of the votes. If, for the sake of argument, 40% of people voted to stay in, 30% voted to leave, and 30% voted to renegotiate, would that mean that we stayed in without any renegotiation at all? Is this to be a first-past-the-post referendum or a preferential voting referendum? If it is to be a preferential voting referendum, we have just rejected that system—in a referendum. Perhaps we would have to have a referendum on the voting system for the referendum itself.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con) *rose—*

Mr Hague: I will give way again in a moment.

If we voted to leave the European Union, would that mean that, like Norway, we were in the European Free Trade Association and in the European Economic Area but still paying towards the EU budget, or, like Switzerland, not in the European Economic Area? If we voted to renegotiate

“based on trade and co-operation”,

as the motion says, does that mean that we would be in the single market, or not; still subject to its rules, or not? Does “co-operation” mean that we still work together on a united position on Iran, Syria and other foreign policy positions, or not? When we had renegotiated, would we, given the wide range of possible outcomes, need another referendum on the outcome of the negotiation?

I point these things out because there is a reason why a referendum is normally held on a specific proposition with a yes or no answer, and I believe that any future

referendum must be held on that basis, not as a multiple choice among vaguely defined propositions.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr Hague: I said that I would give way again, and I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Steve Baker).

Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): Surely my right hon. Friend must know as well as I do that preferential systems are used in this House for certain votes. Is it not equally the case that for some elections, first past the post is appropriate, and for others, a preferential system is appropriate? Why not have this three-way referendum on the basis of the single transferable vote, as we do in this House for other elections?

Mr Hague: My hon. Friend’s argument is that he would have a preferential voting system, but not everybody would, and I am pointing out the difficulties with that.

Kate Hoey *rose—*

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab) *rose—*

Mr Hague: I will give way another couple of times in a moment, but I am trying to help the House to make progress.

My sixth and final problem with the motion is that it does not do justice to the reality that the European Union is not a matter of everything or nothing. We are in the European Union, but not, thankfully, in the euro. We are not in the Schengen border control area. We opt out of many justice and home affairs provisions. I do not believe that most people in Britain want to say yes to everything in the EU or no to everything in the EU; I believe that they want to know that no more powers will be handed over to Brussels without their explicit consent, which is what we have provided for in our Act.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr Hague: I will give way to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart) and then to my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi).

Ms Stuart: I am sure that we still have sufficient time before the Foreign Secretary catches the plane to get him a DVD of his 2008 speech on the Second Reading of the legislation on the Lisbon treaty. He can then blush in the privacy of the aeroplane and probably answer the question as to why he was for referendums then and is against them now, the difference being that now he is in government.

Mr Hague: It will not be necessary to get the DVD—it is on YouTube. I can assure the hon. Lady that my position is exactly the same. I was in favour of a referendum on any treaty that hands over the powers of the people of the United Kingdom, and I am in favour of that now.

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): I happened to bump into the chairman of the Electoral Commission today and he did not rule out a three-option referendum as impractical. Did my right hon. Friend consult the Electoral Commission on this matter before giving his opinion?

Will my right hon. Friend also bear it in mind that the treaties are now so comprehensive that at the conclusion of the summit he has just attended, the European Union is setting up a new institution that does not even require the British signature on a new treaty: the so-called euro summit of the 17. He and his colleagues are having difficulty keeping track of things because that is how the European Union now works. The veto was the foundation of our membership and it is being eroded before our eyes.

Mr Hague: There is certainly no proposal at the moment to set up such an EU institution. That is an intergovernmental arrangement. Our first priority, as I and the Prime Minister have explained, is to ensure that matters that should be decided at the level of 27 countries are decided by the 27, not by the 17. I am grateful for my hon. Friend's information about the Electoral Commission—another unelected body that is trying to decide what we might do. I am giving my opinion on the consequences of a three-way referendum.

I will give way one more time.

Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): Does the Foreign Secretary agree that, whether in business or in politics, the best strategies end up failing if they are badly timed?

Mr Hague: I absolutely agree with that. I reinforce the point that this is the wrong proposition at the wrong time.

The British people want to know that no more powers will be given away without their consent; that at a time of budgetary restraint, EU institutions will be faced with the financial reality, which is what our Prime Minister is doing; that we will address the crisis in the eurozone with clarity about what should be done, while minimising the exposure of the British taxpayer, which is what the Prime Minister and the Chancellor are engaged in; that we will make a passionate case for Europe to take measures that help growth and free up businesses to trade and expand, which is what we are doing; that we will do nothing to add to economic uncertainty at a difficult and dangerous time; and that we will seek to repatriate powers as the opportunity arises, which is my position and that of the Prime Minister. That is the right policy for the United Kingdom.

5.16 pm

Mr Douglas Alexander (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (Lab): It is a pleasure, as always, to speak after the Foreign Secretary. This debate takes place at a time of great peril and uncertainty for the British and European economies. I am sorry that the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, for whatever reason, have felt unable to join us in the Chamber for the debate, which has already revealed, no matter what the result in the Division Lobbies this evening, the scale of division on the Government Benches.

I urge opposition to the motion because I do not believe that Britain's national interest would be served by spending the coming months and years debating the case for Britain leaving the world's largest single market. Recent figures have revealed that there has been zero growth in the economy since last autumn. Unemployment is rising again and has reached a 17-year high. Almost 1 million young people are unable to find work. Amid all the passion generated by this debate, no one can dispute the enduring significance of European markets to Britain's economic prospects.

Mr Graham Stuart (Beverley and Holderness) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Alexander: I will make a little progress, then I will be happy to give way.

Let me share with the House the description of Europe's economic importance to Britain given to me in a recent parliamentary answer by none other than the Foreign Secretary:

"European markets account for half of the UK's overall trade and foreign investments and as a result, around 3.5 million jobs in the UK are linked to the export of goods and services to the EU."

He states that those markets provide

"the world's most important trading zone, generating total GDP close to £10 billion in 2010".—[*Official Report*, 12 July 2011; Vol. 531, c. 256W.]

In what I hope was a drafting error rather than an economic forecast, he of course got the size of Europe's GDP wrong by a factor of 1,000. It actually had a GDP close to £10 trillion in 2010. The importance of the European economy to the British economy is none the less clear.

Mr Redwood: Does the right hon. Gentleman not agree that if Britain seeks a better deal, Germany will not turn around and say that it will not sell us any more cars and France will not say that it will sell us no more wine? That is an absurd scare.

Mr Alexander: Talking of absurd scares, it is now 12 years since the right hon. Gentleman pronounced the death of Britain in his book, so I am a little cautious of taking his advice on the matter.

All of us are aware that growth is stalling in Europe. Indeed, growth forecasts were downgraded in Germany just last week. We need to consider the economic effects at home and in our largest export markets abroad if the motion were to be passed. Businesses deciding whether to invest in Britain at this crucial time would have to make that decision not knowing whether it would still be in the European Union by the time that investment came to fruition.

Mr Cash: I would be most grateful if the shadow Foreign Secretary would answer the question that I put to the Foreign Secretary about the tremendous advantages that they claim for this economic miracle of Europe. How do you explain that under your watch, when you were in government—[*Interruption.*] Not yours, Mr Speaker. Can he explain why, under Labour's watch, the trade deficit with the other 26 member states went up from minus £14 billion to minus £53 billion in one year between 2009 and 2010?

Mr Speaker: Order. May I just remind the hon. Gentleman that I have never been in government, and fortunately never will be?

Mr Alexander: The global financial crisis that was suffered in 2007 is hardly news to anybody in the House. Indeed, it seems to me that there is a broadening consensus that international economic circumstances affect the performance of the British economy. We are increasingly hearing that line from the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The House has only recently debated the circumstances in which it judged it appropriate for a referendum to take place, and tried to formalise the process by which to decide what is significant and what is not. The current Government legislated for that in the European Union Act 2011.

Mr Graham Stuart: Does the right hon. Gentleman accept his role in the corrosive state of public mistrust in politics, after promising a referendum on the European constitution, aka Lisbon, and then breaking that promise, and of course after agreeing to the bail-out in the dying days of the last Government? Have the billions of pounds of public money that have been spent on that helped jobs in this country? I suggest to him that they have not.

Mr Alexander: First, the inconvenient truth for the hon. Gentleman is that there is no EU constitution. It was rejected by the Dutch and French voters. Secondly, if I recall properly, the newest member of the Cabinet, the Transport Secretary, is on record as having written a letter confirming the cross-party nature of support for the steps that were taken. In that sense, the hon. Gentleman might be better directing his question to the newest member of the Cabinet.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Alexander: I am keen to make a little progress, then I will give way again.

What is proposed on the Order Paper is something entirely different from the recent debates. The motion suggests that the priority should be to debate, campaign on and decide on the question whether Britain should exit the European Union. That is the question of substance that sits beneath the motion—whether it is in Britain's national interest to leave the EU.

I do not wish to intrude too much on the private grief of Conservative Back Benchers, but their disappointment in their Front Benchers is so great because their hopes were so high. The Foreign Secretary has journeyed a long way, because it was he who said:

“If you believe in an independent Britain then come with me and I will give you back your country.”

Yet if he was not rather conveniently getting on a plane to Australia this evening, the self-same Foreign Secretary would be coming with me into the No Lobby to support membership of the European Union. Along with the rest of the Conservative Front Benchers, he is today marooned between past pandering and his present position; between the rhetoric of opposition and the realities of government.

Nadhim Zahawi: Is the right hon. Gentleman's party's policy still to take this country into the euro?

Mr Alexander: It was the Labour Government who judged—

Nadhim Zahawi: Yes or no?

Mr Alexander: Just let me answer the question. The economics were not right to enter the euro; the economics are not right to enter the euro; and we do not envisage circumstances in which the economics will be right to enter the euro in the foreseeable future.

Let me offer Government Members a further argument about how they should vote this evening:

“What most people want in this country, I believe, is not actually to leave the European Union, but to reform the European Union”.

Those were not my words but the words of their own Prime Minister. And what of the Prime Minister's real influence in Europe, about which we have heard something this afternoon? It is true that European leaders have been arguing for months, but President Sarkozy's comments last night, which seem to have engendered pride among Conservative Members, confirmed that about the only thing that European leaders can agree upon is how unconvincing they find the stance of the British Prime Minister. Let me share with the House the President's words. He said:

“We're sick of you criticising us and telling us what to do. You say you hate the euro...and now you want to interfere in our meetings”.

When I read that, I thought for a moment that the President had joined the 1922 committee. The President, European leaders and even 1922 committee members are unconvinced by the position that the Prime Minister has adopted.

The Prime Minister boasts to the House that he will have a leading role when European leaders gather at lunch on Wednesday, but on last night's performance, he will be lucky to get a bread roll from them. The Prime Minister's isolation results directly from the sad truth that in recent weeks, the Government have spent more time negotiating with their Back Benchers than they have spent negotiating with European partners.

Mr Baron: May I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman is creating an Aunt Sally by talking about the economics of the EU? This debate is about whether we give a say to the British people by having a referendum on the future direction of the EU. Why will he not accept that there is disillusionment about ever-closer political union, and that this debate is not about free trade and access to EU markets?

Mr Alexander: First, the hon. Gentleman could have directed that question at the Foreign Secretary. Secondly, it is in the character of the EU that it is not open to the UK to say, “We will involve ourselves exclusively in economic and trade matters,” because we need to secure the support of other European partners for such changes. I accept that there is a concern among the British public in relation to Europe. My answer to that concern is not to leave Europe, but to reform it. In that way at least, I agree with Conservative Front Benchers.

Mr David: Would it not be far better for the Prime Minister of this country to argue the case for a growth strategy for the whole of the European Union instead of arguing with his Back Benchers?

Mr Alexander: We waited in vain for answers to the Leader of the Opposition's questions on the British Government's position on what should happen on Wednesday in relation to the scale and significance of the bail-out fund for Greece, and even if the issue of Greek debt is addressed, profound questions remain on economic growth and productivity.

Andrew Bridgen: Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that the previous Labour Government gave away a huge amount of our annual rebate in return for the reform of the common agricultural policy? How successful has that reform been?

Mr Alexander: I am glad that at least a degree of truth is entering our discussions—it was suggested earlier that the rebate had not been continued—but I recollect well the circumstances in which those negotiations took place back in 2005. If I recall correctly, there was broad cross-party agreement that we had a responsibility to welcome the A10—the new members of the EU—and that it was inevitable that the European budget would be adjusted to reflect their entry. I am unyielding in my continued commitment to the need for reform of the CAP—I hope that that is another matter on which there is genuine cross-party agreement.

Michael Connarty: There is a lot of talk about being honest with the British people. My right hon. Friend has exposed the false prospectus of the main Government party, but he has been light in tackling the Liberal Democrats, who committed themselves to a referendum, and who are now jumping into bed with the Tories just to keep—so it seems to me—their ministerial cars.

Mr Alexander: I want to deal with business before pleasure. That the Liberal Democrats take strong, principled stands in their manifesto and choose to break them only a matter of months later might simply be habitual, but I await with interest a speech from a Liberal Democrat that tries to make sense of the contortions that they have got themselves into.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend agree that Government Members seriously underestimated the economic situation worldwide and thought that they could confine it to Britain, and that as a result the Prime Minister will have less credibility in Europe when he tries to renegotiate some of the powers that have been given to Europe?

Mr Alexander: I have great sympathy with that point. For many months before and after the election, the Conservative party suggested that Lehman Brothers collapsed and the Greek economy was in difficulty because the Labour Government built too many schools and hospitals and employed too many doctors and nurses. The Government are now attempting suddenly to change their story and attribute their having, this year alone, to reduce the growth forecast four times—if I recollect correctly—to the fact that the Greek and European economies are not performing appropriately. That they are having so much difficulty explaining the inadequacy of their own policy is diminishing their credibility not only in the halls of the European Council, but among the British public.

Martin Horwood *rose—*

Mr Alexander: I am happy to give way to a Liberal Democrat.

Martin Horwood: The right hon. Gentleman is making an unfortunately partisan speech and misrepresenting the clear Liberal Democrat pledge to support a referendum at the time of a fundamental shift in the relationship between Britain and Europe—I am sure that that will be pointed out many times today. Should we not instead be uniting to counter the threat to the £351 billion of direct investment from other EU states posed by discussion of a referendum at this vital time?

Mr Alexander: I think that the person who started with a partisan speech was the Foreign Secretary, who was at pains continually to assert the position of the Conservative party—a very different approach from that of speaking on behalf of the Government, which is the conventional approach from Government members. However, if the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Martin Horwood) wants to continue to defend and account for the position of the Liberal Democrats, I wish him the best of luck.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): Why does the right hon. Gentleman persist in treating the electorate as fools by describing the Lisbon treaty as not a European constitution, when everybody else knows that it is? Is this not one reason why there is so much mistrust in Europe?

Mr Alexander: Some of the frustration and disappointment I hear from the Government Benches would be better directed towards the Treasury Bench, rather than the Opposition. On Lisbon, one need only recollect the cast-iron guarantee that the now Prime Minister offered to his own Back Benchers. The position on Lisbon has been well-rehearsed. What was new, frankly, was the Prime Minister's statement today that he supported a referendum on Maastricht. That must have been news to the Foreign Secretary, who entered the Division Lobby to oppose such a referendum—if I recollect correctly.

Mr Jenkin: The right hon. Gentleman says that we should concentrate on reforming the EU from within, but what happened during 13 years of Labour Government? They failed to reform the CAP and the budget, while the accounts have not been signed off for more than 14 years. What happened to the Lisbon competitiveness agenda, signed up to in 2010, to make Europe the most competitive economy in the world? Where were we by 2010? Has he not demonstrated that he tested that policy to destruction and that there must be change?

Mr Alexander: The hon. Gentleman takes an honourable position with which I disagree: that Britain's best interests are served by leaving the EU. On the EU's changing character, I would pray in aid the accession of 10 new members of what was previously the eastern bloc and the change that that has effected to the balance within the EU. Of course, however, there are continuing challenges, which is why I regard it as such a disappointment that the Government seem to glory in the isolation that the

Prime Minister has secured for himself, when we should be arguing for continued reform not just of the European budget—

Mr Jenkin: You failed.

Mr Alexander: It was the hon. Gentleman's own Prime Minister who went to Brussels last year asserting that there was going to be no rise in the European budget but left having voted in favour of a rise.

Mr MacShane: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that under Margaret Thatcher the CAP took 70% of the EEC-EU budgets, but that that figure is now less than 40%, and that under John Major the EU budget was 1.23% of European gross domestic product, but that it is now 1%? It is not perfect, but reform goes on all the time, and I wish the Foreign Secretary well as he continues those reforms. But do not live with these myths.

Mr Alexander: I concur with the bipartisan character of that intervention. The Prime Minister's isolation results directly from the sad truth that in recent weeks the Government seem to have spent more time negotiating with the people from whom we have just heard.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Alexander: No, I shall make some progress.

By default or design, the Government's habit of sitting on the sidelines, only criticising and carping, has proved to be genuinely bad for Britain and the prospects for reform within Europe. All parties support the single market. We want to see reforms on the digital economy, services and energy that could make a real, practical difference to the lives and opportunities of British companies and consumers. All parties support European-level co-ordination on issues where we can work together internationally, such as—I agree with the Foreign Secretary on this—cutting off the oil that helps to prop up the Syrian regime of President Assad.

The way to address the present concerns is reform of Europe, not exit from Europe. Britain's economy is flatlining and Europe's economy is in crisis. Putting off investment and undermining confidence at such a critical time would be the wrong choice for this House and the country. The right course for British growth, British jobs and British interests is to reject the motion before the House.

5.35 pm

Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con): I understand that I have only five minutes, so I will take only two interventions—if people want to intervene—if colleagues do not mind.

I would like to address first the process and principle of the motion and then present-day Europe, if colleagues will forgive the alliteration. The origins of today's debate lie in the Government's democratic outreach, through e-petitions. More than 100,000 people signed an e-petition calling for a debate in Parliament on this issue. The Backbench Business Committee then decided that to be the right debate to bring before Parliament and, as Members will know, that Committee is elected by the House. This debate has not been brought about by a

small or large number of Conservative Back Benchers, therefore; it is a response to the will and the voice of the British people.

Also, it is wrong to try to frame this debate as calling for an immediate referendum or, indeed, for an in-or-out referendum. That is clearly not the case, as is self-evident from the motion, which is mainstream and inclusive. The motion calls for a Bill and has a timetable referring to this Session. As colleagues will know, that Bill might not come forward for another 18 months and would be subject to the same drafting, the same consultation and the same amendments and new clauses as any other Bill. Therefore, to suggest that the motion necessarily reflects what would be in the Bill is disingenuous at best. Any subsequent referendum would also be consulted on with the Electoral Commission in the normal way and would not necessarily reflect the motion before the House today. This is not about an immediate referendum—I would not support an immediate referendum—nor is it about an in-or-out referendum, which I would not support at this stage. I support a trade-plus relationship with Europe; let us see how Europe responds. If it does not respond, perhaps the British people in future will demand that this Parliament move to an in-or-out referendum.

Andrew Percy: Is not the point that as far as pro-Europeans are concerned there will never be a right time for a referendum? Indeed, we could see constituents in Scotland voting on their relationship with the Union with England, while our constituents in England will be denied any say about our relationship with Europe.

Mark Pritchard: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point, as always. We have had referendums on a range of issues, whether in Northern Ireland, London, Wales or Scotland—indeed, referendums on anything but the European issue. I hope that that will change.

Some have accused some Government Members—and even some Opposition Members—of making Europe an issue. I would remind the House that Europe is an issue today because Europe is making itself an issue, not those on our Back Benches. On the principle, millions of people have never had a say on the European question, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bury North (Mr Nuttall) said, because they either had not been born or were not old enough to vote in 1975. Even among those who were old enough to vote, many thought that they were signing up for a common market, not a political union.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I was old enough to vote in 1975, and I voted for joining the European Union for economic reasons and nothing else. It has changed hugely in my lifetime, and I would now like a vote on whether we continue with the slide into a political union. Does my hon. Friend agree?

Mark Pritchard: My hon. Friend makes his point eloquently. He and others signed up to a common market, but that has not turned out to be the case. The millions of people in the group that I call the “great disenfranchised” need to be enfranchised. They are the lost generation of voters that the political establishment in this country has left behind.

Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mark Pritchard: Forgive me; I will not have any more time if I give way.

No politician should have anything to fear from the ballot box. This is not just about the narrow renegotiation of powers, or the question of in or out, or remaining in the European Union on the present terms, although that is the text of the motion. This is fundamentally about freedom and democracy, and about ensuring that the European project has ongoing democratic legitimacy, which it currently lacks. I believe that the 1975 referendum result has now passed its sell-by date.

Europe is going to become more of an issue, not less of one. That is self-evident, given the possibility of a financial transaction tax—I welcome the Government's opposition to that—or of more bail-outs up to 2013. There might not be any beyond that point, but there is always the possibility of back-door bail-outs through low-cost International Monetary Fund loans. There are also the questions of fiscal union, of the loss of Britain's veto that President Barroso hinted at the other day, and of a single Treasury. Most of my predictions are wrong, so I give the House a big health warning here, but I predict that we might move more rapidly along a fast track to the first elected EU President under a universal franchise. All those things must be resisted. There are those who argue that the renegotiation of powers should come after a referendum. I disagree. I believe that a referendum would empower the Prime Minister to go to Brussels to negotiate. It would also put Brussels on notice that it needed to listen to the British people.

My parliamentary colleagues have come under some pressure, and I say to all of them who are supporting the motion today that they are not rebels; they are patriots. They are people of their country. There are those who say that members of my party are obsessed by Europe, but there is only one obsession on these Benches today, and that is an obsession with growing the economy and tackling the deficit left by Labour. That should not be replaced by the obsession of those who obsess about not giving the people a voice.

I say to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, for whom I have a huge respect, that the domestic politics of this country can no longer be disaggregated from the economics of the eurozone or the European Union. Europe will therefore have to be dealt with at some point, whether this evening or at some other time in the near future. We as a party, as a country, as a democracy and as a Parliament should listen to the people and be ahead of the political curve, rather than behind it. There are those who are calling for a fresh start. What better fresh start than a fresh vote? Let us do the right thing by allowing all the British people their birthright: a vote on the destiny of their own country. I say to all those who want to support the motion: history is on our side. I say to the Government: we may have a referendum lock, but please don't start to unpick it.

5.43 pm

Mr David Crausby (Bolton North East) (Lab): I will not be voting for the motion this evening, not because I do not believe that the British electorate are entitled to a referendum on European membership; I do. I shall not vote for the motion because the third option makes complete nonsense of the proposal. It establishes the motion as belonging to the far right of the Conservative party, which wants nostalgically to return to the 1970s

when the common market was a big businessmen's club with no workers rights that contained only nine member states. If that were not the case, the motion would include further left-wing options to improve workers rights, for example, but then it would start to look like an even more ridiculous referendum.

The matter should be clear. The question should be whether we should be in or out of Europe. The present three-way proposal would result in a complete dog's breakfast, leaving the British people as frustrated as ever. What is clear to me, however, is that public dissatisfaction with our Euro-relationship will not go away because Britain has never really had a fair and democratic say.

We were taken into the Common Market in the first place by a Conservative Government without a referendum because Ted Heath knew full well that the public would not have voted for entry. He was well rewarded by defeat at the next election. When Harold Wilson delivered his promised referendum on the so-called negotiated terms, it was a complete farce. To be fair, his Government were rewarded by defeat at the next election.

Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Lab): I was active in the Labour party at that time and I voted no. My hon. Friend might remember that the great majority of Labour MPs at that time voted no in the referendum and that a special Labour party conference had a big no vote on the referendum as well. It was the leadership who supported our continued membership of Europe.

Mr Crausby: Things have certainly changed. The 1975 referendum yes campaign was all about arguing that leaving Europe would take us into isolation. There were even claims from the yes campaign that if we left we would be starved of food. My own employer at the time wrote to every employee, urging them to vote yes, claiming that leaving the Common Market would cost jobs. They employed more than 3,000 people at that time; now they employ just 100—so I suppose matters could have been worse.

Graham Stringer (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab): I was on the same side as my hon. Friend in 1975 and I voted to come out of the EEC as it then was, but does he agree that the biggest lie told then about the referendum on entry to the EEC was by Ted Heath when he said that there would be no loss of sovereignty?

Mr Crausby: I will come to that. Voters were deceived by promises of huge increases in national prosperity and soothed by the leadership of the three political parties into voting yes. On one side of the argument sat the three party leaders—Harold Wilson, Ted Heath and Jeremy Thorpe—and on the other sat Enoch Powell and Tony Benn. The British media almost universally portrayed the issue as established common sense against the extreme fringes. The Government produced a document entitled "Britain's New Deal in Europe"—I kept it because I knew I would be able to hold it against them one day—in red, white and blue. It recommended a yes vote; it was delivered by the Post Office to every home and it made clear promises. The most important promise was that Britain had a veto on all important new policies and developments. It said:

"No important new policy can be decided in Brussels or anywhere else without the consent of a British Minister answerable to a British Government and British Parliament."

Just 10 years later, another Conservative Government completely reneged on that vital promise without a referendum. This time, it was Margaret Thatcher who gave up Britain's veto when she signed the Single European Act, which actually makes Maastricht and Lisbon look like a sideshow. To talk now about "no new powers to Europe" is, quite frankly, shutting the stable door once the horse has bolted. It may well be that this is not the time to resolve the British people's dissatisfaction with our membership of the European Union, but the time must come.

Michael Connarty: I often find that people list all the things that they are against when they make an argument, but given my hon. Friend's background in the trade union movement, surely he must welcome the fact that the social chapter and social Europe have been massively important for improving the lives of our people?

Mr Crausby: I do, but my point is that we will not resolve this issue until we have sought the consent of the British people, which we have never done.

The leaders of our major political parties must face the facts. If they wish constructively to maintain our relationship with Europe, with public support, they should have the collective courage to take the argument to our people, instead of huddling together against a referendum every time it arises.

5.50 pm

Mr Adam Holloway (Gravesham) (Con): I had no real background in politics when I was elected in 2005. I had been a soldier and a television reporter. In fact, I had never even been into the House of Commons Chamber.

A couple of days before the House sat for the first time after the election, I wandered into the Members' Lobby and chatted to one of the security guards, who let me into the Chamber. It was dark, and I started to think about the historic things that had happened here. I thought of Winston Churchill leading Members out of the House to St Margaret's church to give thanks for the end of the second world war. And then I asked myself, "Why are you thinking about yourself and how clever you are to have got here?" Actually, this was about the thousands of voters in Gravesend, Northfleet and the villages who had allowed me to overturn quite a healthy Labour majority and replace it with a pretty tiny Conservative one.

Did any of us imagine when we made our acceptance speeches at the counts that Members of Parliament would be slagged off to quite the degree that they are now? My mother does not like to tell people that I am a Member of Parliament, because of the response that she receives when she does.

Mr MacShane: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Holloway: I should love to.

Mr MacShane: Surely what the hon. Gentleman's mother does not want to admit is that he is a Conservative Member of Parliament. That is the problem.

Mr Holloway: It may have something to do with the fact that she lives in the north of Scotland.

This country developed and exported the simple idea that laws ought not to be made unless they were made by the people's elected representatives, but it seems from some of the e-mails that I have been receiving over the last three days that some of our constituents are quite close to giving up on that notion. Why is that? We hear the reason every time we meet our constituents. "You are all the same," they tell us. "You will say anything to get elected." One of the things on which I have agreed with them over the past seven years is that we should have a referendum at some point, and, in my view, we need to completely rewire our relationship with Europe. We need to be in Europe, not run by Europe.

What we are taking about today is not just Britain's relationship with the European Union, but the authority and legitimacy of this Chamber. During the last Parliament, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was one of the leaders of all three parties who expressed the view that we should have a referendum on Europe.

Mark Lazarowicz (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Holloway: I will not, actually.

The Deputy Prime Minister was even louder in his protestations. He said:

"The Liberal Democrats believe we should have a real vote on Europe—whether we should be in Europe or out... the public back our position by a margin of 2:1".

I should say that the margin is about the same today. Those statements, and many more from the Front Benches, render irrelevant the arguments that we have heard today about whether this is the right moment for a referendum.

I am sure that if the Government had not liked today's motion, they could have come up with something. What would it say about the relationship between Parliament and the people if we were to deny not only what we have recently promised, but what people out there, at our invitation, have asked us to do through the petition?

I should have much preferred a Conservative Government, but I support this Government sincerely and spiritedly. I was one of only about 50 Back Benchers who supported my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron) in the leadership election, and now I really do think—I am not just sucking up—that he is a brilliant Prime Minister. I have never voted against the party line, even when I have known enough about what we were discussing to be aware that I should vote against it. I have loved doing my minuscule job as a parliamentary private secretary in the foreign affairs team, whose Ministers I respect—and believe me, they are doing a very good job. Trust me, and again I am not sucking up, they do not come better than the Minister for Europe—"Hear, hear" at this point. *[Laughter.]*

I am mostly enthusiastic about the coalition in private. If you are part of a team, you support it. But if you cannot support a particular policy, the honest course of action is of course to stand down. I want decisions to be closer to the people whom they affect—to be made by local communities, not sent upwards towards Brussels. I am not prepared to go back on my word to my constituents, and I am really staggered that loyal people

[*Mr Holloway*]

like me have been put in this position. If Britain's future as an independent country is not a proper matter for a referendum, I have absolutely no idea what is.

Mr Cash: Many people in the country, knowing of the integrity and the honesty that is reflected in my hon. Friend's speech and knowing that this honourable gentleman—this honourable friend—has decided that he will resign his position as a parliamentary private secretary in the Foreign Office on a matter of such importance, will commend him for it.

Mr Holloway: Obviously, I completely agree with my hon. Friend.

We do not have the right to give away powers entrusted to us by our constituents. To anyone who is still wondering which way to vote, I say: "Do not try to guess what the result of a referendum would be, and do not worry about wording or timing. You need only ask yourself two questions. First, is this the right thing to do in principle? Secondly, what do your constituents want you to do?" Here is our opportunity to show people that the system can work, that representative government continues to function in the land where it was nurtured and developed, and that patriotism—putting one's country rather than one's own interests first—is not foreign to the House.

Mark Pritchard: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr Holloway: No, I really cannot give way now.

Members can repay the confidence placed in them by their constituents on that first evening when they stood on the platform and heard the returning officer mention their name. They should not rebel against the people who sent them here. For me, the bottom line is really quite straightforward. For seven years I have been wandering around telling the good people of Gravesham that we should have a referendum, and that we should renegotiate our position. Let me end by saying this: "If you have done the same, you must support the motion."

5.57 pm

Mr Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr Holloway). I salute him and commend what he has done in putting the country and his constituents before his party. I think that Members here, and his constituents, will praise him loudly for his actions today.

The Foreign Secretary described this as a symbolic debate, and I suppose that there is something symbolic in the fact that tonight, despite his words, he will be heading as far from the European Union as he possibly can—although, if I may paraphrase him slightly, he should think about the rest of us who must stay here until long after he has gone.

The people who deserve to be given credit first tonight are those who signed the petition to secure the debate. I was pleased to be able to go to No. 10, along with others from the House and outside, to deliver that petition. I also commend the hon. Member for Bury North (Mr Nuttall) and the Backbench Business Committee for allowing the debate to take place. I think that it is very timely indeed.

We meet in the context of reports that are swirling around of threats against Members of Parliament and their ministerial careers, and all sorts of indications of Members' inability to find new seats should they vote the wrong way tonight. It was said, I think again by the Foreign Secretary, that Members were not adopting a casual approach to the debate. That is certainly true of the Whips, who have very evidently been far from casual in the lines that they have taken. I think it deeply regrettable that the Whips in all parties should be so vociferous on such an issue. This is a Back-Bench debate, and people should be allowed to have their say and vote freely.

One of the problems most evident in political discourse in society today, throughout the United Kingdom, is the disconnection between Parliament—and political leaders—and the people. There is no better illustration of that than the spectacle tonight, in the House, of three party leaders and leaderships telling Members of Parliament, many of whom—in all parties—want a referendum and want to let the people have their say, that they must vote against that. I believe that although the vote may be won today by the party leaderships and the Whips, ultimately the people will have their say, because we have seen throughout the rest of the world that the people cannot be denied their democratic will.

Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot) (Con): Does the right hon. Gentleman therefore agree that, in the words of Gandhi:

"Evolution of democracy is not possible if we are not prepared to hear the other side"?

Mr Dodds: I entirely agree, and I think that people in all parts of the United Kingdom who are listening to the debate will be mystified by some of the arguments being put forward, which are completely contrary to their wish simply to have a choice. Regardless of whether people are for or against the EU, they are entitled to have their say.

We have witnessed a breach of trust by the Labour party. It denied the people of this country a vote on the Lisbon treaty, which was, in effect, a European constitution. The Conservative party has done the same thing, because before the last election the Prime Minister gave a cast-iron guarantee that there would be a vote; and the Lib Dems said, "We must have an in/out referendum," yet we are now told they will vote against tonight's motion.

Dr William McCrea (South Antrim) (DUP): As the majority of the United Kingdom electorate have never voted on our relationship with the rest of Europe, why does my right hon. Friend believe this Government seek to deny them that right through a referendum? Are they afraid of what answer the people might give?

Mr Dodds: I will address the arguments advanced by the Foreign Secretary shortly.

The Democratic Unionist party is the only party in this House that is united in favour of a referendum for the people of the United Kingdom. We have been consistent on that point; we called for a vote on the Lisbon treaty, the Single European Act and Maastricht. We have also been consistent on the euro.

Mr MacShane: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Dodds: I cannot give way again, as I do not want to lose any time. The right hon. Gentleman may well have a chance to speak later on.

Many Members on both sides of the House—including some representing Northern Ireland constituencies—are hiding their views on the euro now. They are shy about letting the people know what they truly believe about it. I am glad that our party has been entirely consistent and principled on that, and that our position has been vindicated.

There are clear reasons for calling a referendum. It is clear that the vast majority of the people of the United Kingdom want a referendum; that is their settled will. Moreover, 36 years have passed since the people have had a chance to deliver a verdict. This is also clearly not a party political issue; rather, it is a constitutional one. Members on both sides of the House hold different views, too, as this is a matter that transcends party allegiance. The people must therefore have their say.

It is nonsense to talk about a referendum being a distraction. The EU and all its works go to the heart of decision making on all aspects of policy in this House and in Government. We must therefore have a chance to deliver our verdict on how the relationship between Europe and the United Kingdom should evolve. Moreover, the crisis in the eurozone and the consequent move to create a tighter fiscal union among its 17 members will have a direct and profound impact on the United Kingdom. That is going to happen, and the Prime Minister has indicated that there is likely to be a treaty change. Therefore, despite the argument advanced by the Foreign Secretary that now is not the right time, it is clear that we are going to have a referendum.

The Foreign Secretary listed the occasions on which he advanced the argument for a referendum. I am glad he did so on those occasions, but I am sorry that he is not advancing that argument now, and that when he did so in the past, there was no talk about a referendum being a distraction and about uncertainty for business. The Conservative party was saying very clearly that it was right to have a referendum. Why, therefore, is now suddenly not the right time?

The crisis in the eurozone offers an opportunity for the British people to be given their say, and we must grasp it. It will be scandalous if the people are denied that chance. We are told that that was not in the manifesto, but that argument does not wash, because a referendum on the alternative vote was not in the manifesto either, yet a referendum on that was inflicted on the people of the United Kingdom.

The Foreign Secretary also claimed that there was a danger that opportunities would be lost if we were distracted by having a referendum, but why should that be the case? Why would we not have the opportunity to continue to advance our case in Europe at the same time as laying the groundwork for a referendum, which he and the Prime Minister admit is likely to be on the cards fairly soon anyway? It is better that we take that into our own hands by making the preparations now, so that we give the people of this country what they want: a referendum.

6.4 pm

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): It is a delight to follow the right hon. Member for Belfast North (Mr Dodds), who made an impassioned speech. I am pleased that we were both named signatories to the motion, as that shows that there is cross-party support for this debate. I was, however, disappointed to hear my Prime Minister say in his statement before the debate that tonight's vote will show the will of Parliament, as it clearly will not do so. It will show the will of the Whips; it will show the will of enforcement. It will certainly not show the will of the people, who have voted for us to be elected to Parliament to speak on their behalf. I am therefore saddened, as I would like Parliament to express the will of the people tonight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr Holloway) gave a fine speech, in which he pointed out that some people will say anything to get elected. If Members have been going around their constituencies and the country saying, "I'd like to have a referendum," when they have the chance to have one they should be principled. I congratulate my hon. Friend on having taken the principled stance of resigning from his post over this. As he said, he spent seven years telling his constituents, "Given a chance, I would give you the opportunity of a referendum."

It was with a degree of sadness that I dug out the Liberal Democrat leaflet—printed, boldly, in orange. It calls for a real referendum on Europe, and many Members have referred to it. It was printed only a very few months ago, and just before a general election, and I am sure people were giving them out in their thousands. Many people ask what the defining difference is between us and the Liberal Democrats, and perhaps this leaflet helps to answer that. It carries the name of the current Deputy Prime Minister, and a photograph of his face is printed on it, and this is what it says:

"It's been over THIRTY YEARS since the British people last had a vote on Britain's membership of the European Union. That's why the Liberal Democrats want a real referendum on Europe. Only a real referendum on Britain's membership of the EU will let the people decide our country's future. But Labour don't want the people to have their say... The Conservatives only support a limited referendum, on the Lisbon Treaty. Why won't they give the people a say in a real referendum? Not everything is perfect in Europe, but we"—

the Liberal Democrats—

"believe our membership has been good for the country. In Europe we can get real action to tackle climate change... That's why the Liberal Democrats will campaign to stay in Europe in the referendum. But whether you agree with Europe or not, it is vital that you and the British people have a say in a real EU referendum."

The right hon. Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz) takes a principled position in arguing exactly the same point. He is in favour of the EU, and he could make that argument in a referendum campaign. Moreover, we are not debating nuances tonight.

Mr Redwood: As my hon. Friend noted, when the Liberal Democrats were in opposition they read opinion polls to choose popular policies, but now that they are in government they read opinion polls to choose the most unpopular policies possible. Some 80% of the public do not want a three-line Whip, so they impose one; 67% of the public want a referendum, so they are now against that.

Mrs Main: Well—

Martin Horwood *rose*—

Mrs Main: I shall not give way to Liberal Democrat Members, as they can speak for themselves when they make their speeches. They can explain why, throughout a general election period, they gave out thousands of leaflets promising a real in/out referendum in which they would be prepared to defend their principled stand of wanting to stay in Europe.

I was surprised that the hon. Member for Bolton North East (Mr Crausby) lost the plot by getting hung up on the wording. My hon. Friend the Member for Bury North (Mr Nuttall), who proposed the motion, has got it absolutely right, and I hope the hon. Gentleman reconsiders his position.

The argument tonight is not about the wording; it is about whether or not we give the hundreds of thousands of people who want an opportunity to discuss this issue the chance to do so. Whichever side of the argument people fall on, and whatever the answer may be, we should not be frightened of simply giving them the chance to have that debate. That is what we are voting on. We are not voting on the wording. We are not voting on whether we should be in or out. We are voting on whether we want to give the British people a chance to hear the arguments in a reasoned way, rather than hear them as a result of a knee-jerk referendum called because Europe suddenly decides to do something we do not like. I would much rather that we have the chance, whichever side of the argument we fall on, to go out to make the case in a reasoned way. I would rather the wording be carefully crafted in a Public Bill Committee, not cobbled together because Europe suddenly does something we do not like and we say, “Oops, it’s a treaty change. Oops, we need to have a quick referendum.”

Let us do this at our pace. Let us not be frightened of the answer. I do not know what the answer will be. It might be one that I do not like, but I am prepared to live with it. I, too, have never voted on whether or not we should have joined the Common Market, as my mother would have called it, but I know from talking to people that they feel strongly that it is now time to talk about this matter, because we are dealing with something completely different. I am sick of hearing the word “referendum” touted around when it is popular with the voters and then seeing it kicked into the long grass when it falls into the “too difficult” box. This is not the “too difficult” box.

Martin Horwood *rose*—

Mrs Main: I am not going to give way to my colleague from the Liberal Democrats, because their speakers can defend themselves tonight. This motion is not in the “too difficult” box, and I am sure that there will be Liberal Democrats who search their conscience and decide to walk through the Lobby with us on a principled motion to give the people the right to have their say.

Martin Horwood *rose*—

Mrs Main: I will give way if the hon. Gentleman is going to explain the Liberal Democrat position.

Martin Horwood: I have explained our position, but I want to ask the hon. Lady about hers. When the Liberal Democrats, at the time of a fundamental shift in the relationship during the course of the Lisbon treaty, actually proposed an in/out referendum, she voted against it. Why was that?

Mrs Main: I ask the hon. Gentleman to join us tonight to say, “This is now what we should be doing.” He may just throw brickbats and not consider what the Liberal Democrats promised the people, but he has a chance to renew that promise tonight. We have a chance tonight to engage with what the people are asking us to engage in. Our leader promised us that we would have a chance to vote on the Lisbon treaty and we voted accordingly, but we did not have it. We have a new chance now.

This motion is not about reliving history, but it is about looking at how we have engaged with the voters over the past few years. My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham has got it absolutely right: we have to be principled. For those who have maintained a principled plea to be given the chance, tonight is that chance. If the wording is not quite as some people would like, they should not worry because there will be a chance to craft it in Committee. Hon. Members should not feel that unless they can agree with every little word in the motion they cannot go through the Lobby with us. The wording is only suggested; the principal thing we are voting on tonight is whether we are going to listen to the people and say, “Let’s engage in this argument.” Let us not just park it in the “too difficult” grass, with promises of referendums tomorrow, because they may never come; and if they do come, they may come at a very inappropriate time to make the argument with the British people.

6.12 pm

John Cryer (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): It is good to see the Foreign Secretary still in his place before he dashes off to this urgent, massively crucial and completely unavoidable meeting in Australia that he has to attend. I am sure that this has absolutely nothing to do with avoiding tonight’s vote, and any suggestion that it has is scurrilous. He rightly spoke about scrutiny, but he may recall that when he was an MP under John Major’s premiership the then Government removed European questions and the debates on European orders from the Floor of the House, thus reducing the scrutiny, because things were getting a bit lively at that point. If he will not agree to a referendum, perhaps he will agree to bring European questions and European orders back to the Floor of the House.

Having got that small point over with, may I say that I have never been a great supporter of referendums? They can be divisive, they have to be treated with extreme caution and they have been used by dictatorial Governments in the past. The criterion for having a referendum is that a Government pass measures that seek to change the power of the ballot box—that is the time to seek a referendum and seek the consent of the British people. This should not be done at any time other than when a Government seek to change the power of the ballot box.

Since the last referendum in 1975 which, as has been pointed out, was caused by the Wilson Government, we have had the Single European Act, the Maastricht and

Amsterdam treaties, the growth and stability pact, and the Lisbon and Nice treaties. All those changed the power of the ballot box, most of them—not all—involving huge shifts of power from the democratically elected Governments of western Europe to Brussels and Strasbourg. The Single European Act gave up the veto, which we had been told at the time of the referendum in 1975 would remain permanently. Since then, many of the treaties have shifted perhaps 30 or 40 areas of responsibility from the veto to quality majority voting. For that reason alone, we need a referendum on future membership of the European Union.

This is not an issue among the political elite of western Europe. There is a justifiable perception among a lot of voters, not only in this country but in other western European countries, that there is a tiny political elite at the apex of the European Union which says, “This doesn’t matter. We don’t want people having their views on Europe tested. We don’t want to have to go out to seek people’s opinions.” That was demonstrated when the Irish people voted against the Nice treaty, as within a day or two the western European Foreign Secretaries issued a communiqué saying, “It’s very nice of you to have made a decision; now go away and make another one. Keep trying until you get it right.” The legislative process in Ireland was actually changed, by a Bill that took a day to get through all the stages in the Dail, in order to gut the process that led to that referendum. They were then able to rig the following referendum and change the view of the Irish people on the Nice treaty.

Ian Paisley: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that those antics by our neighbours have increased the cynicism towards Europe and all things European?

John Cryer: Yes, I would agree with that. As I believe we all recognise, there is generally a profound cynicism about the political process, not just in Britain but across western Europe. In this country, there are specific reasons for it, but tonight we have the opportunity to restore a bit of trust in the political process. I disagree completely with the three-line Whip being imposed by all the parties. When the leadership of all three parties acts in that way, it tends to foment that cynicism.

One of the great truisms of British politics is that when people move from this side of the House to that side of the House they tend to change their views on Europe pretty rapidly. That has fomented cynicism about the political process. Conservative Members have a chance tonight to restore a bit of face by being consistent in their views on Europe. I was not unanimously loyal during my previous eight years in this place when the Labour party was in government—I voted against my party about 84 times. When I went into the Government Lobby, my then Whip, whom I shall not name, greeted me by saying, “Voting Labour again tonight then, John?” I therefore speak as someone who has rebelled in the past and paid the price for it.

Many Conservatives—I am not talking about the Liberal Democrats because we expect them to be inconsistent—said things about Europe when they went before their selection committees and their electorates and people now expect these things to be upheld tonight. People expect us to be consistent. I suspect that an awful lot of Conservative associations and an awful lot

of Conservative voters in those constituencies will applaud Conservative MPs who vote for this motion in the Lobby tonight.

6.17 pm

Mr Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con): If not now, when?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo): You have to keep an eye on the hon. Gentleman. He has very succinct speeches.

6.18 pm

Natascha Engel (North East Derbyshire) (Lab): That is a fabulous speech to follow, so I thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish, not as succinctly, to say that this debate is about one thing only: our democratic deficit. It is not a debate about what is good or bad about the EU. We are debating whether we think that people should have a say on EU membership. In the 36 years since people first voted on our continued membership of the then European Economic Community, they have not been given a say, yet the EEC of 1975—an economic and trading bloc—is not the EU of today, which is a political union underpinned by a part-common currency in crisis.

Several hon. Members rose—

Natascha Engel: I will make a little progress and then I will be happy to give way.

The architects of the European Union have created something of such size and complexity that they themselves have admitted that it has become too big to fail. At the same time, for most normal people the EU becomes ever more remote and unaccountable. It is a political project that people feel has gone too far, too fast, with many things that affect their daily lives being determined by Brussels and not Westminster. That makes this a matter of sovereignty.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton and Wanstead (John Cryer) has said, we have referendums very rarely in this country and only on matters that concern how we govern ourselves. As elected politicians who govern, we have a vested interest in this matter, and because we have a vested interest it is a matter that we should not decide just for ourselves. Over the weekend and in the earlier statement the Government argued that now is not the right time to hold a referendum because of the crisis in the eurozone, but it is precisely that crisis that has demonstrated to us how bound up in Europe we have become politically and economically and how little influence we have over the decisions that are taken.

The truth is that the “not the right time” argument has nothing to do with markets and everything to do with what people might say. The Government are worried that people might say no, and, as every experienced politician knows, you do not ask the question unless you are sure that you will get the answer you want. No is not the answer that the Government want.

Last summer, the Government introduced e-petitions to engage and better connect with people and to give them a chance to have their say. The Government promised that any e-petition that gained more than

[Natascha Engel]

100,000 signatures would be taken very seriously by the House. We have welcomed the debates on the riots and on Hillsborough, but when it comes to something that is inconvenient and that the Government do not want to have debated, suddenly now is not the right time. If we pick and choose, we are telling people that politicians will decide what people are and, more importantly, what they are not allowed to have a say on. That is not democracy.

Yesterday, we celebrated free and democratic elections in Tunisia. Next week we celebrate Parliament week and this year's theme is stories of democracy. What a terrible shame it would be if today we took one of the most anti-democratic decisions of our generation and denied people a say on something as fundamental as who governs them.

6.22 pm

Mr Robert Walter (North Dorset) (Con): May I reassure hon. Members on both sides of the House that I shall be voting tonight not in response to a three-line Whip but in what I believe is the national interest?

I am saddened by some of the comments I have heard in the Chamber today. Since 1960, the Conservative party and Conservative Governments, whether it was Harold Macmillan, Alexander Douglas-Home, Ted Heath, Margaret Thatcher or John Major, have always believed that our future was in Europe, and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister follows in that tradition.

It was from the embers of the second world war—a Europe torn apart by Germany and Italy—which for many was the second terrible war in a generation after the great war, or the war to end all wars, that the idea of the European Community and European union was born. I believe that European unity was a cause to end all wars—on this continent at least. I campaigned hard in the 1975 referendum for a yes vote and I remember endless arguments with my late father-in-law who told me not to trust the Germans and certainly never to trust the Italians. He rang me up after the vote and said, “I thought I’d better tell you I voted in the referendum yesterday,” and I said, “Oh, yes,” expecting him to tell me that he had voted no. He said, “I voted yes—not for me and probably not for you but for my grandchildren.” His grandchildren are my children and they are grown up now; indeed, they are the same age as many of my colleagues in the House today.

Mark Lazarowicz: The hon. Gentleman reminds us that the debate about joining the European Economic Community back in 1974 or 1976 was never just an economic argument. It was precisely the argument about securing peace in Europe that was behind European union, and that was also one of the factors that was put forward in the debate at that time, although I accept that economic motives were the prime issue in that debate.

Mr Walter: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right—it was a political argument. What I am sad about is that there are those who want to destroy that legacy and the legacy of those who fought and voted for that lasting peace—a Europe in harmony, comfortable with itself

and respecting differences of culture, language, history and nationality, but confident in its ability to work together.

Mr Cash: I just want to mention to my hon. Friend that my father was killed in the war in Normandy and I am sure that he, together with all the others, also appreciated that what they were doing was fighting for freedom and for the democracy that is being put at risk by opposition to this motion.

Mr Walter: I hope that that is not correct and I remind my hon. Friend that he and I first met when we were both on a committee of the European Movement, which, of course, had just campaigned for a yes vote in that very referendum.

Mr Redwood *rose*—

Mr Walter: I shall not give way any more.

The world has shrunk. More than ever, we travel, we trade and we live in each other's countries. In 1972, this House voted not only to be part of that common European future but to be an architect of its destiny as a full member of the European Community. The European Union is not a perfect form of government, but neither are the British Government, any Department of State or any local government. If that were the case, we would not be here; we would all be wasting our time.

Mr Redwood: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Andrew Percy: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr Walter: I will not give way any more; I really need to get on.

The European Commission and the European Parliament have ideas and aspirations that sit more than awkwardly with the concept that we all have of a sovereign state. There are those in Brussels who see national Governments and national Parliaments as a nuisance and who think that life would be much simpler if we decided everything at a European level, but thank God we live in a democracy. Thank God we have Members of the European Parliament who are prepared to stand up for the British interest and, more particularly, that we have Ministers and a Prime Minister who can go to Brussels, argue our case and succeed.

What is it that my colleagues and friends want from any new treaty? Have we not had enough of treaties? Can we not at least make the one that we have work? What would a new treaty do? Would it relegate us to the European Free Trade Association or the European economic area? Would it get us the Norwegian deal? They argue that the EU would have to give us access to the single market—yes, but at what price? Norway does not have a free ride in its access to the single market. It does not contribute to the common agricultural policy but it jolly well pays its share to other areas of the EU budget and it gets absolutely nothing back. What is more, its price for access means that it too implements all EU directives—in fact, it has a better record than us, with 99.6% of EU directives having been implemented by the Norwegian Parliament—but the difference is that it has no Ministers at the table when they are discussed. It has no Commissioner, no parliamentary

representation in co-decision and it has to accept whatever Brussels sends. It is not even a case of, "Take it or leave it;" it is, "Take it, or else."

We cannot blame Brussels and the wicked foreigners for all our woes. To quote the Prime Minister, "We are all in this together".

Europe needs Britain and Britain needs Europe. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary struck the right note earlier. We are in Europe, our history is European and our destiny is European. As far as I am concerned, we are here to stay and I beg my colleagues to reject the motion.

6.29 pm

Mr Roger Godsiff (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab): I regret the fact that the Government's business managers managed to turn inconvenience into a full-scale crisis vote this evening. I regret even more the fact that there is not a free vote across the House tonight. There should have been, and I rather suspect that those on both Front Benches will come to regret the fact that they did not allow a free vote.

I voted for a referendum on the Lisbon treaty, together with some of my hon. Friends. I will vote tonight in support of a referendum. Some of the suggestions that I have heard, that this debate is a distraction or, as somebody said, an irresponsible distraction, are both arrogant and insulting to the vast majority of the people of this country who feel that their views on Europe are not being heard.

Ever since the treaty of Rome was signed, its architects have had a clear objective of moving towards a united states of Europe and in doing so they have followed three steps. The first was ever-closer union, political and economic. The Single European Act, which Mrs Thatcher signed, was a massive step in that direction, as was the creation of a single currency. The second aim has been to move relentlessly forward—take two steps forward, a massive great row, go into denial, label objectors mad or worse, take one step back, wait for the fury to subside, then move two steps forward again.

The third and most important objective has been to avoid whenever possible giving the electorates of Europe a direct say in decision making. If some member states are legally obliged to have referendums, as happened in France and Holland, then the approach has been to play down the importance of the issues, say they are purely technical, just a tidying-up exercise, not something to bother the electorates of Europe. The reason is obvious. We all know that if we ask the people a question, we might get the answer that we do not want.

The creation of the eurozone is just another attempt to move forward the project of a federal united states of Europe. The creation of the euro was always economic nonsense. There has never in the history of the world been a successful monetary union without a fiscal union as well. It was a house built on quicksand, not a house that caught fire. It does not matter how much money is thrown at it to try to underpin it. It does not matter how much financial scaffolding is put around it. It will fail. It is not me saying this: the markets have already made their decision. They know that the euro is unsustainable. They know that it is built on quicksand. They know it is going to fail, and if the politicians are not on the same wavelength, that is their problem.

The only way out is full fiscal union. I agree with the Chancellor when he urged the members of the eurozone to move towards that. At least that is logical. But in doing so, members of the eurozone will have to cede all their tax-raising and all their spending powers to the Commission in Brussels. That will be a massive step towards the creation of a united states of Europe. Whether the member countries of the eurozone wish that to happen is a matter for them.

The reason why so many people are angry in this country and why the opinion polls seems to show that they are anti-Europe is that they feel that nobody is listening to them. That is bad for democracy. Today the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have set out their stalls and said where they stand. They should put that to the electorate and have it debated in the country. That is what democracy is about. At the end, they should allow the people to decide.

6.34 pm

Sir Malcolm Rifkind (Kensington) (Con): I am against the motion, in part because I think the timing, given the financial chaos in Europe, is highly inappropriate. But that is not the main reason that I would give to the House as to why the motion is unwise. It purports to give three choices to the House and to the country as a whole—in the European Union, out of the European Union, or renegotiation, but as has been pointed out earlier in the debate, that is not really a third option because it is renegotiation with a view to purely a trade relationship in Europe. That is, in effect, leaving the European Union because it involves no sharing of sovereignty. I fully concede that any membership of the European Union at the end of the day must involve, as it always has done, some willingness to acknowledge that sovereignty has to be shared.

Mr Redwood: Has not my right hon. and learned Friend noticed that the motion refers to trade and co-operation to encompass the current Conservative policy?

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: No, I am sorry, that is not the case because present Conservative policy is about sharing sovereignty in certain areas where it is overwhelmingly in our national interest. When we consider what the real options are, the real debate is not whether we should be in Europe or out of Europe, but what kind of European Union we are prepared to be members of.

The assumption of this debate and many other debates is that one side or the other will win. We will either have an even closer union or the European Union will ultimately implode. That might be what will happen if the European Union does not use its own common sense and look to see whether there is a third route.

Mr Baron: Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: Not at this moment, if my hon. Friend will allow me.

There is a third route and we are already partly along that way—that is, an à la carte Europe, where each member state decides what degree of integration it is prepared to accept in view of its own national history, rather like France being a semi-detached member of

[*Sir Malcolm Rifkind*]

NATO for three years because it believed it to be in the French interest, and NATO did not collapse as a consequence.

I say that we are already part of the way there, because at present, of the 27 member states, only 17 are members of the eurozone. Ten states are not, some because they do not want to be, and some because they could not join even if they wanted to. We are not part of Schengen, nor are the Irish. The neutral countries such as Austria, Ireland, Sweden and Finland, have never been fully involved in defence co-operation because of their neutrality.

The problem at present is not that there is not an element of à la carte, but that there is a fiction in the European Union that that is purely temporary. That it is a transition and that we are all going to the same destination and the debate is merely about how long it will take us to get there. No, that is not the case. What we need is a European Union that respects the rights both of those who have a legitimate desire, in terms of their own national interest, for closer integration, and those of us who do not choose to go that way. That has to be argued and negotiated, sometimes on the basis of considerable acrimony.

Mark Pritchard: My right hon. and learned Friend talks about renegotiating and repatriating powers. What powers and what timetable does he envisage?

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: As I said, the idea of an à la carte Europe is already partly there, but it should not just be a privilege; it should be a right. What we need, not just for the United Kingdom, but for all the member states, is a European Union where we will not stop France and Germany if they wish to move to closer integration and fiscal union—that ultimately is their business—but nor must they seek to impose a veto on the level of integration that we should have.

There is an irreducible minimum because, as I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, a member state cannot simply not participate in the single market, but that does involve substantial sharing of sovereignty in a way that a free trade zone does not. That point does not seem to have been acknowledged by many of the critics. If there is, as we have at present, free movement of labour, that is not consistent with a purist view of national sovereignty, but it is crucially in the interests of the United Kingdom.

Mrs Main *rose*—

Sir Malcolm Rifkind: I have already given way twice. I am sorry, I cannot give way again without losing my own time.

Those are the points of the real debate that we must take forward. It so happens that this is not just a theoretical option. There is a strong possibility that because of the chaos in the eurozone, there will be a need for some treaty change. That will require to be agreed unanimously, and that provides my right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary with what is likely to be an excellent opportunity to take that debate forward and to argue that if other countries wish to go further, we wish to consider the question

of the kind of European Union we and perhaps other countries such as Sweden, Denmark and Poland would be content with.

On that basis, I say to the House that we cannot constrain the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister in the incredibly difficult negotiations that will take place. To have a debate that might lead to a referendum on whether Britain will remain in the European Union or leave it entirely is such a massive distraction from the real concerns that this country and the rest of Europe have to address. [*Interruption.*] I am sorry, but I am entitled to my view, just as all my hon. Friends are entitled to theirs.

I am conscious that many Members wish to speak and so will conclude my remarks. There have been other occasions of this kind when people have had fundamental differences of principle. I recently read a quote that struck me as highly relevant to our debate. It was from a politician who belonged not to the Conservative party, but to the Labour party. In 1957, Aneurin Bevan, a great believer in unilateral disarmament, spoke to a Labour party conference that was likely to carry a resolution in favour of unilateral disarmament. He told his own party:

“if you carry this resolution and follow out all its implications... you will send a British Foreign Secretary, whoever he may be, naked into the conference chamber... And you call that statesmanship?”

It was good advice then and remains good advice now.

6.40 pm

Mr Ian Davidson (Glasgow South West) (Lab/Co-op): I can think of no other issue where the gap between the political elites and ordinary people in this country is so great. It is not the most important matter the House will ever discuss, but it is the one where that divergence is greatest. This divergence, and the feeling among the population of the country that their views are ignored, breeds and feeds cynicism about politics in general. The most cynical attempt to avoid that popular opinion was used in relation to the constitution that was not a constitution, because if it had been a constitution, it would have to have been put to a referendum. That was a breathtaking piece of cynicism and manipulation. No Member really believes that it was anything other than a means of overcoming the possibility of popular rejection.

It is therefore beholden on us to take seriously the fact that 100,000 voters have signed an e-petition. It was mentioned earlier that millions of Liberal Democrat voters would reject the proposal in a referendum, but I think that such a view is seriously mistaken, because there are probably no more than 100,000 people prepared to own up to being Liberal Democrat voters, so the number of people who signed the petition is greater than the number of Liberal Democrats in this country.

I think that disillusionment on this question has also been spread by the false prospectus the Conservatives gave to the country as they ran into the general election. There was a feeling in this country that a Conservative Government would stand up for Britain much more and take a more robust view on European matters, but the fact is that they have sold the jerseys. The overwhelming majority of people who voted for the Conservatives, believing that they would stand up to Europe, are now disillusioned, which is why every registration of public opinion indicates that there is a substantial drift of

voters from the Conservatives to UKIP on this matter. I give the Conservatives the following advice for their own good: if they want to stop that drift to UKIP, they must stand up for what they said they would do during the general election. If they wish to say that they would like to do those things, but the Liberals are holding them back, they should come forward and say it honestly, rather than saying, "It's actually much more difficult than we thought and we're up to all sorts of sophisticated things that you are too thick to understand." That is effectively what they are saying.

I am glad that this is not an in/out referendum, because I must confess that I would not have favoured either option. I am not in favour of voting in the referendum to remain in the EU, because that would be seen as a green light to ever-closer union, and I am not willing to be put in a position where the only alternative is to leave the EU, because I do not support that. I believe, as many of my colleagues on the Labour Benches once believed, that there is a third way—the way of reform. I believe that many of those who oppose the motion are doing so under the banner of reform, but are not actually all that serious about reform. They are committed to ever-closer union, but with a little tinkering.

Therefore, I support the motion because I think that the size of the vote tonight matters as a signal to the country that a substantial number of people are strongly committed to strong renegotiation when compared to those who take the view that it should be business as usual. As for those who say that the time is not yet right, I think that that is a disgraceful argument unless they tell us when the time will be right.

Michael Connarty: It was so close to the Lisbon treaty that I assumed they had read it. Can my hon. Friend tell me where in the Lisbon treaty it says anything other than that. One clause allows an in/out decision, but there is nothing else in the treaty on that?

Mr Davidson: I thank my hon. Friend for giving me an extra minute.

I also think that those who argue that this is simply a distraction would never want to discuss it anyway. They argue that it is not the right time or that this is only a distraction, but would they have said otherwise if the motion had been brought forward two weeks ago, or at some other time? I do not think so. They are in fact more interested in being part of the cosy club. This is an important debate, but as I said before, it is not the most important debate the House will ever have, and the EU is not the most important thing we will ever discuss.

Nadine Dorries: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Davidson: For another minute, yes I will.

Nadine Dorries: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the reasons why British people are so engaged on this matter is that, in these difficult economic times, when we are giving £25 million a day to Europe, they want to see not only the repatriation of powers, but the repatriation of some of the money?

Mr Davidson: I agree with that. They would like to see that because what we need to do is move on from the debate we are having today. Whenever I see the three

party leaderships lining up together, I think that they must be wrong, and I think that the vast majority of the public take that view as well. At least there is no conspiracy involving the nationalist parties, because they have not bothered to turn up. We do not know what their view is on whether Scotland would be part of an EU that Britain had already left, because that is one of the things they want to fudge and sweep under the carpet.

However, if we want out of the CAP, we ought to be discussing how we can do that? If we want to stop paying so much money to Sicilian gangsters and a variety of other crooks across Europe, how do we manage to do that? If we want to provide genuine bilateral support to those who are much poorer than us in eastern Europe, how do we do it without the middle men cutting chunks out of it? The same concern applies to the third world. How do we ensure that other European countries, individuals and gangs are not siphoning off some of that money? If we want to scrap the common fisheries policy and introduce something better, how do we do that? Those are the sorts of debates we need to have. In my constituency, how can we ensure that local people get local jobs without the EU telling us that they must be advertised Europe-wide? That is what we need to discuss.

6.48 pm

Mr William Cash (Stone) (Con): A few months ago the Prime Minister asked me after a debate to write to him about my views on the European Union, so I wrote him a pamphlet called "It's the EU, stupid." That was a reference not to him, but to Bill Clinton's recognition that the economy is at the heart of the issue. In just the same way, I believe fundamentally, as I have set out in the pamphlet—I will quickly encapsulate some of the thoughts it contains—that this is first of all a matter of principle. The referendum issue has been going around since before the Maastricht referendum campaign. I voted yes, as it happens, in 1975, but since then we have seen the accumulation of powers and the broken promises, betrayals and prevarication. The argument is that it is never the right time to deal with these issues, but that is the problem, and the British people feel that they have been betrayed by a failure to deliver on those promises.

Steve Baker: I would have voted yes in 1975, but does my hon. Friend agree that the EU has gone far beyond that which is necessary to guarantee peace and prosperity?

Mr Cash: Yes, indeed, and I will go further: the EU has created a situation in which it actually damages our economy. That is the problem, and that is the reversal of the situation, with massive over-regulation—£8 billion a year, according to the British Chambers of Commerce—over the past 20 years in this country alone.

As I said earlier in my interventions on the Foreign Secretary and the shadow Foreign Secretary, we are running the single market on a deficit that has gone up in the last year alone by as much as £40 billion, so it would be inconceivable for us not to take a rain-check and say, "We cannot just continue with this and pretend that nothing is going on."

If ever there was a time to tackle the issue in principle, it is now, and that is what the motion is about: whether there is a case for renegotiation or for leaving the

[Mr Cash]

European Union. On renegotiation, we must establish the fact in line with the wishes of the people of this country—not because the Whips have said, “You’ve got to do this, that and the other” or, with great respect, because the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary have said so, but because we have a sacred trust, as elected Members of this House, to do what is right, in the interests of the British people as we see it for our constituents, and in the national interest. This is exactly that issue tonight.

The Prime Minister has given two speeches over the past year or so—one was about rebuilding trust in politics, and the other was about a European policy that we can believe in. I strongly recommend that people tonight, tomorrow or at some point read those speeches again and ask themselves, “What is going on in this debate today?” We know that the Whips have been strongly at work, but I had all that over Maastricht, we have had it over the years and it becomes something that we have to get used to. The reality is that we are doing the right thing for the right reason. That is the point.

Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. Does he not think that, because the debate has been generated by an e-petition, because it has been made possible by the Backbench Business Committee and because it is an issue that does not divide Members along party lines, it is totally wrong for both party leaders to apply the three-line Whip?

Mr Cash: I absolutely agree. In fact, I think that three parties are involved, and the point applies to all of them.

I should like to return to the Prime Minister’s statement today and to test it against what has been going on. He said to us: “Members of my party fought the last election committed to three things,” including, “stopping the passage of further powers to the EU.” The Foreign Secretary, in his article in *The Daily Telegraph* the day before yesterday, said that he objected to the Lisbon treaty, and he will remember that he, I and many Conservative Members fought, united together, against it line by line—every aspect of it—and fought for a referendum. Yet, we have been watching the implementation of further powers—I do not want to get into the semantics or legal niceties of the word “powers”, because I know them as well as anybody else in the House—and every aspect of that Lisbon treaty day in, day out, and many of the problems that we are now experiencing are a result of its implementation.

The Prime Minister went on to say that we have instituted “a referendum lock to require a referendum, by law, for...such transfer of powers”, and I have a ten-minute rule Bill on that tomorrow. It would reverse section 4 of the European Union Act 2011, which I opposed on the Floor of the House. I see the Foreign Secretary smiling, because he knows what I am going to say. The real test, as I said to the Prime Minister during his statement, is about fundamental change—constitutional, political and economic. That is the test that needs to be applied, and it was endorsed—by the way—by the Lords Constitution Committee only last year.

Fiscal union, of which I shall explain more tomorrow, is such a fundamental change, but the Government quite deliberately ensured through section 4(4)(b) of the 2011 Act that there would be no referendum when the provision in question applied, in their terms, only to the eurozone and not to us directly. At the very time when we were being told that, however, I and others objected because we felt that such a provision would affect us enormously. We were told that it would not, but now we are told day in, day out how much it does affect us, and that therefore we must not do what we are doing tonight, for the very simple reason that, somehow or other, it will undermine our economic activity with the European Union. That is absolute rubbish. The reason why we are in such difficulties with deficit reduction is that there is no growth, and there is no growth because 50% of all our economic laws come from Europe. It also accounts for 40% of our trade, a point that the Foreign Secretary made, but the fact is that we have a massive trade deficit, as I have already described.

The EU is a failed project. It is an undemocratic project. This vote—this motion—is in the national interest, because it is for democracy, for trust in politics and for the integrity of this House.

6.55 pm

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): I am not sure when the Foreign Secretary has to leave, but he is going to a very important conference, the Commonwealth conference in Australia. Many people in this country believe that the Commonwealth was sold out when we joined the Common Market, and I hope he remembers that by 2050 the 55 members of the Commonwealth will have 38% of the global labour force, while the European Union, with its 27 members, will have only 5%. I hope he goes with that figure in his head to the Commonwealth conference, because then we might actually see much more attention paid to the Commonwealth.

This could have been a wonderful day for Parliament, for democracy and for the new regime—on which the coalition have to be congratulated—of the Backbench Business Committee, with its many keen members. This debate was brought about by a process involving people outside, in the United Kingdom—and let us stop talking about “Britain”, please, because when we do we ignore Northern Ireland, which when it comes to a referendum is going to be very important.

Let us not forget, as many Members have said, that this issue has reached us today not only because of the 100,000 e-petition signatories, but because of the many organisations that have brought together different types of petition and written to people. It is not just about e-petitions.

Millions of people out there are watching what we are doing today, but the three party leaders, to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South West (Mr Davidson) referred, have it seems almost—I am not sure whether I am allowed to use the word—colluded to ensure that Members do not have a free vote. I am therefore so pleased to hear tonight not just from my own side, but from people on the opposing Benches how many Members are prepared to say, “Party Whips are fine, because of course we are elected from our party, but sometimes the issue is more important than the party.” This issue is more important than the party, and that is why we have so much cross-party involvement in and support for the motion.

Mark Lazarowicz: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Kate Hoey: No, I will not, at this point—and not to you.

A number of points have been made, and I want to make just a few short ones. On the idea that the issue is a distraction, I have to say that the European Union is the thread that runs through every part of every law that we make in this country, and we must recognise that and ask people whether we have gone too far.

The Foreign Secretary talked about repatriation of powers, which I want to see, but, on the threat of a referendum hanging over the Foreign Secretary, we know that the Commission hates referendums, and I remember him arguing—I was on his side—for a referendum on the Lisbon treaty, when he stated how much more strength it would give to the elbow of the then Foreign Secretary. We want to repatriate powers, and, if the rest of the European Union knew that the British public were sick, sore and tired of the money being spent on Europe, of the bureaucracy, of the corruption and of all that, they would be much more likely to negotiate the repatriation of them.

Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con): Does the hon. Lady agree that the one industry in this country that has suffered for the past 30 years under the European Union is the fishing industry? A referendum would right the wrong that has been done to that industry, and the destruction that it has suffered over the past 30 years.

Kate Hoey: I do not understand why my party, which wants a change in the fishery policy, are not allowing a free vote tonight at the very least, never mind supporting a referendum.

I get a bit fed up on this side of the House—I have said this before—about the way the media paint the matter as always being about Tory splits, attacks on Cameron, Tory diversions, and so on when a huge number of Labour supporters in this country want a referendum. That is why my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition was rather ill advised to impose a three-line Whip. We need to have this debate out in the open.

What is everyone afraid of? It is ridiculous of those who are not in favour of a referendum to say that this is not the right time, because we all know that we would not have the legislation in place until the end of 2012, or probably 2013. We could not possibly have the necessary White Paper, or the details of what would go into the referendum until 2014, so no one should accept the reason that this is not the right time.

What causes the lack of confidence felt by the leaders of the main parties who are afraid of a referendum? We must choose whether to integrate fully into a pan-European system of government based in Brussels, or to seek a more international future based on trade and co-operation, not just with the EU, but with the rest of the world. It is time to stop being little Europeans; we must be internationalists. We have all had the Whips on our backs over the years. We have all survived, and many of us are still here. Despite what they have said, it is important that right hon. and hon. Members do what they think is right, what is right for their constituents, and what is right for the country.

7.2 pm

Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con): It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey). I congratulate the Backbench Business Committee, and particularly my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Bury North (Mr Nuttall), who is not in his place, on securing this debate. It is important, and the strength of support behind the online petition shows that people in this country care about it. I congratulate the Government on introducing the Backbench Business Committee.

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): Some hon. Members have cited the feeling of people in this country. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that Ipsos MORI conducts regular polling on the most important issues to people and that this month, as in several months, this issue is the 22nd most important, with only 3% of the population believing that it is?

Jake Berry: I am aware of that polling, and that is why I do not support today's motion.

John Hemming: I understand that the e-petition has only 36,000 signatures, but a paper petition has more than 100,000 signatures.

Jake Berry: In my home town of Liverpool people would be burned for witchcraft for signing anything on the internet. The general petition had 100,000 signatures.

I am constantly told that the EU is not a doorstep issue, but when one scrapes the surface and goes out and talks to people, as I did in my constituency last weekend, one finds immense anger. People in my area regard the EU as remote, undemocratic and, more often than not, working against our national interest, instead of in favour of the UK. There is a perception among the people I speak to out there that Brussels is elite and is ramming through a federalist agenda while mere voters, such as people in this country, are onlookers. On the rare occasions that we have within the EU been given a chance to make our views heard, if we have voted the wrong way, Europe has simply dismissed our views.

Five of the last eight referendums in the EU have been against a proposition. When countries and people—for example, Ireland—vote against a proposition, they are told to vote again until the right result is achieved or, as with the EU constitution, we are told that it has only been fiddled around the edges with a change in only a few words or a couple of paragraphs, or that it has been changed and is only a treaty so there is no right to a referendum. That is why there is so much interest in today's debate. The hon. Member for Vauxhall made a good point when she said the issue is not party political, or a matter of left or right, or not even Eurosceptics versus Europhiles. There is a huge appetite in this country for a genuine conversation about where our relationship with the EU should go.

That brings me to my views on the motion, which I will not support. It is absolutely right and proper to have this debate, and I am delighted that we are having it. I take this opportunity to put on record the fact that we must have a fundamental renegotiation of our relationship with Europe, but we do not live in a bubble, and we must pay attention to the crisis in the eurozone and to politics in our own country. The crisis in the

[*Jake Berry*]

eurozone is like a spark in Pudding lane. If we do not continue to support member states in supporting the euro and in sorting out the Greek problem, the fire will rip through the City of London and our entire economy. A vote today to put in doubt our membership of the EU for up to 18 months would fuel market speculation, fatally wound the eurozone and its economies, and have exactly the same effect here in the UK.

My second reason for opposing the motion is that the mainstream policy, which is supported by my party, to repatriate powers is the right way forward. Now is not the time to tell people that we are taking our bat and ball home. We must fight from within the EU to repatriate powers. There is a coalition behind that point of view beyond this Chamber. The UK Independence party fought the last general election on a policy of withdrawing from the European Union, but it did not win the election. The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats together won with a mainstream policy of repatriation.

Mark Reckless (Rochester and Strood) (Con): Did UKIP not win more votes in more constituencies than the number by which we did not achieve a majority? My hon. Friend spoke about repatriating powers, but that is not Government policy. We heard the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary refer to their policy, but it is still to be agreed with our coalition partners.

Jake Berry: It is the Government's policy. We heard the Prime Minister give commitments today on the referendum lock and future treaty negotiations. I and, I hope, my constituents take comfort from the words from the Front Bench. I will not support the motion today, but I am relying on those commitments, and I and my constituents want them to be honoured.

Ms Gisela Stuart: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Jake Berry: I am sorry, I do not have time to give way.

Failure to honour commitments on the repatriation of powers and the referendum lock will lead to further erosion of trust in this Government and this Chamber. I hope that the Government will continue to look at repatriating those powers.

7.8 pm

Mr Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): Let me be clear: I do not support today's motion because I believe that it is in Britain's national interest for us to be involved in the European Union. As has been widely acknowledged by many in this debate and elsewhere, half of Britain's exports go to the rest of the European Union, and 3.5 million jobs in this country are dependent on our trade with our partners in the European Union. My own constituency is a former mining constituency where manufacturing is now very important. If Britain were to withdraw from the European Union, or even substantially to renegotiate its terms of membership, it would be bad economic news for the people I represent.

Andrew Percy: I am interested to hear what the hon. Gentleman says. However, the argument is not about whether we are in or out of Europe but whether we have a referendum. If he is so convinced of his argument, why is he frightened to allow the British people to express their view?

Mr David: I believe that our place is firmly inside the European Union. We had a vote in this country to join the European Union, and I see this as a natural progression.

Several Members have referred to those huge countries, Norway and Switzerland, and said that Britain could have a similar relationship with the European Union. I would make two points about that. First, neither of those countries is a major trading nation, whereas the United Kingdom is.

Mr Redwood: A very large number of jobs in China depend on exporting goods to the European Union. China is not a member of the European Union, so how do those jobs survive?

Mr David: The crucial thing is what happens to the jobs of people in this country. Many of the inward investors who come to this country from the United States of America do so because we are an integral part of the single market. If one puts in question our membership of the single market, one puts in question the economic viability of this country.

Secondly, with regard to Norway and Switzerland, let us not forget that although those countries have a good trading relationship with the European Union, the rules that it applies to them are imposed on them, whereas we are in the single market—an integral part of that market—and have a full say on the rules that apply to everyone.

The real question is not whether we support the European Union but what kind of Europe we want in future. The European Union that I want to see—as, I believe, do most people in this country—is not about uniformity and centralisation but is based on the principle of subsidiarity, whereby decisions are made as close to the people as possible. We want a European Union in which the single market—a single market that works to Britain's national advantage—is completed. If that is to happen, it is no good our being on the sidelines moaning and groaning; we have to be there, ensuring that the European Union always works to our national benefit.

The European Union should not just be about a single market for business—it should also be a social Europe for people. The social Europe agenda is very important. Unlike the right-wing Eurosceptics, I believe that the European Union should offer something tangible for ordinary working people. Similarly, it is important for us to be concerned about the environment. Who in their right mind, these days, can believe for one moment that individual countries—medium-sized nation states—can successfully tackle the environmental problems that we face? We have to work together with other people, with other countries throughout the world, and, yes, inside the European Union.

It is also important that we address such issues as industrial policy. We must realise that we need to ensure that our small and medium-sized businesses develop over the whole of the European Union and that we need joint policies to ensure that there is maximum benefit.

Sheryll Murray: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us why he will not let the British people have a say so that they can decide that they want to support the kind of European Union that he seems to support?

Mr David: I respectfully point out that there are such things as election manifestos. The Labour party, for example, has made it clear that this is the kind of Europe we want, and the kind of Europe which, if we are in power before too long, as I think we will be, we want to help to create.

We have heard a lot about money going from the United Kingdom to the European Union. Yes, there is a relatively small membership fee, but we do not hear about the fact that £1 billion of European regional development fund money that has been allocated to the hard-pressed regions of England is not being spent because of Government public expenditure cuts. Hard-pressed regions such as Rotherham, Doncaster, Sheffield, Preston, Scarborough, Barnsley and many others are losing out on European money because of the Government's ideology. We want to make sure that that money is put to good use. We want to make sure that we have a pragmatic approach to the European Union and do not put blinkered ideology above all else. I am afraid that many people in this debate do precisely that.

Above all, if there is to be economic rehabilitation of this country, it is absolutely imperative that we have a growth strategy not only here in the United Kingdom but in the European Union. Forty per cent of our trade is with our eurozone partners. One of the great ironies is that our Prime Minister believes in a very strict austerity-based economic policy, so his greatest economic soulmate is Chancellor Merkel. The European Union as a whole, and the eurozone in particular, needs a growth strategy. It is no good having austerity, austerity, austerity; we also need a growth strategy that will create the kind of demand that we need for prosperity for the future.

The real debate that we face in this country is not about whether we are in the European Union or out of the European Union; it is about what kind of Europe we want to see.

7.16 pm

Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con): The big mistake that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr David) has made is to believe that Euroscepticism is a right-wing phenomenon. I have news for him: Euroscepticism is a growing movement, with people of all persuasions—right, left and middle—getting increasingly fed up with how this country is treated by the European Union. The proof of that is some of the petitions that came to the Backbench Business Committee and that stimulated today's debate. He is going down a blind alley if he thinks that this is just a right-wing cause.

I have the privilege to represent the residents of the borough of Kettering.

Mark Lazarowicz: The hon. Gentleman says that people are concerned about how they are being treated by the European Union, and that may or may not be so. Does he accept, however, that the European Union is not some distant organisation over which we have no say? We are a powerful member state in the European Union, and we send MEPs, Cabinet Ministers and other Ministers there on our behalf. If we are not getting what we ought to out of the European Union, is not that due as much to how we are represented in Brussels as to anything else?

Mr Hollobone: Many of us would like the European Union to be even more distant than it is. The problem is that its tentacles creep into all aspects of the British way of life. I think the hon. Gentleman will find that there are people in this country, from right, left and middle, who think it is outrageous that over the next five years, in this current Parliament, our membership fee will be £41 billion.

Nadine Dorries: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr Hollobone: I will give way when I have told my hon. Friend that in the previous Parliament the membership fee was £19 billion; it has more than doubled.

Nadine Dorries: The hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) touched on this point. If the House voted yes tonight, then when our Foreign Secretary, Prime Minister and Chancellor went to negotiate with our European partners, they would take with them the threat of the loss of £45 billion and would perhaps be treated slightly differently in the negotiations. Does my hon. Friend agree with that?

Mr Hollobone: I do agree. They could not really treat us much worse.

From my perspective and that of my constituents, whom I have the privilege to represent, the EU is getting its hands on more and more aspects of the British way of life. My hon. Friend the Member for South East Cornwall (Sheryll Murray) spoke about the effect on this country's fishing industry, which has been destroyed by our membership of the European Union. Our membership fee has more than doubled. Nine out of every 10 jobs in this country go to foreign migrants, most of whom come from the European Union. These issues are not of concern only to right-wing people; they are of concern to every person in this land.

This debate is exposing an increasing disconnect between our constituents—the residents we struggle to represent—and the Front Benchers of Her Majesty's Government and Her Majesty's Opposition, who have tried to deny debate on this issue. One of the qualities of the Backbench Business Committee is that it chooses subjects for debate in this House that the Government would not otherwise allow. That is why the Backbench Business Committee chose this subject. We would not be having this debate if we had left it up to Her Majesty's Government.

I have a confession for the House: I do not believe in ever closer union. I think it is wrong in principle and I think the British people do as well. I have another confession for the House: I believe that Britain would be better off out of the European Union altogether. I do not expect a majority in this House to agree with that, but I am privileged to put that on the record on behalf of my constituents in Kettering. I believe that if we were to have a referendum on in or out, most of my constituents would vote to leave because they have had enough.

Martin Horwood: Does the hon. Gentleman think we would be better off without the European arrest warrant, which brought home 145 suspects last year to face criminal charges in this country, and without Europol, which cracked the world's largest online pornography ring last year?

Mr Hollobone: As far as I am concerned, the hon. Gentleman and his Liberal Democrat colleagues are forcing this country to not have the right policy on Europe. If he wants to talk to me and other Members about justice issues, why does his party not do the decent thing and let us come out of the European convention on human rights? There are prisoners in this country whom we cannot repatriate to their country of origin because they claim spurious family life issues, which keep them here.

Michael Connarty: I hate to continue the process of lecturing, which my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South West (Mr Davidson) did not like, but it is the Council of Europe, not the EU, that set the convention. In 1949, 49 countries came together to bring about human rights for all in Europe.

Mr Hollobone: With the increasing ratchet of the terms and conditions of European Union membership, that is now a condition of membership for new entrants to the club.

John Hemming: I do not agree with ever closer union, but I do believe in remaining in the EU and will oppose the motion.

Mr Hollobone: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly at liberty to do that. Thanks in part to his good offices, we are having this debate about the future of Britain and Europe, which we would not be having without the Backbench Business Committee.

Emma Reynolds (Wolverhampton North East) (Lab): If so many people in our country want to leave the European Union, why did the only party to advocate such a thing, the UK Independence party, get only 3% of the vote in the last general election?

Mr Hollobone: In my election literature in Kettering and in my campaign speeches and hustings, I made it quite clear that I am in favour of Britain leaving the European Union, and that if there were a referendum I would vote to leave. The majority over Labour in Kettering went up quite substantially as a result. The problem with the European issue at general elections is that there are a lot of other issues to discuss and it gets lost in the noise, in part because of the establishment view on the European Union, which often suppresses public opinion on this issue.

What has most worried me in the course of the past week is the attitude of Her Majesty's Government. I know that we cannot talk about the amendments that never happened, but one of those amendments called for a White Paper on how this country would repatriate powers from the European Union. Her Majesty's Government were not even able to support that. Is it any wonder that, on the ConservativeHome website today, a poll suggests that two thirds of Conservative party members do not believe that the Government have any intention of repatriating powers from Europe? I have to say to those on Her Majesty's Government's Front Bench tonight, "Shame on you."

7.23 pm

Sir Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough) (Lab): I am grateful for the opportunity to follow the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr Hollobone). He made a point about the European convention on human rights and was corrected by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Michael Connarty). The convention has nothing to do with the European Union and we should not confuse our concepts. The hon. Gentleman also talked about a membership fee. I do not know why he considers our contribution to the European Union to be a fee. The European Union is a political, geographical and economic area, and we play a part in all three aspects. The Foreign Secretary was quite right to say that because of our involvement in the European Union, we have influence with Syria, are able to negotiate with Iran and have greater power.

I am glad that the hon. Member for North Dorset (Mr Walter) has stayed in the Chamber, because he was perfectly right in his short history lesson. He used the eloquent phrase that the European Union, starting with the Common Market, began from "the embers of the second world war".

He was perfectly right about that. He also talked of sovereignty, which keeps popping up in this debate. The right hon. and learned Member for Kensington (Sir Malcolm Rifkind) referred to sovereignty shared. When Ted Heath took us into the European Community, he talked of a "pooled sovereignty". That is as true today as when he said it.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman also talked about various aspects of the European Union, such as Ireland and Austria being neutral states. The essence of the European Union is unity in diversity. We may have different views and perspectives, but we are united in that economic, political and geographical space.

We have talked about trade and the single market. The Conservative party is a party of trade and of the single market. The Prime Minister mentioned saying in his discussions on Sunday that the single market would always stay with the 27 member states. He was perfectly right to say that.

I have to take issue with the hon. Member for Stone (Mr Cash), who is no longer in his place—that is not his fault because he sat here for long enough. When I heard his arguments about the deficit and Europe, I wondered what he was talking about. Does he want a McKinley tariff wall? Does he want to stop people buying Volkswagens, Audis, Fords made in Germany, or iPads, which are made not in America but in China? What does he want in a free-trade area, where there is the free movement of goods and people? How can we go back to the era of tariff walls?

Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con) *rose*—

Sir Stuart Bell: The hon. Gentleman can sit down because I am not giving way to him.

Teesside is the third largest port in our country. We face out to Europe and we export to Europe. The point has been made many times, including by my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr David), that 50% of our exports go to Europe. Why did Nissan come to Sunderland? It is because it has the Tees and so can export to Europe. Many years ago, I heard Hilary Marquand say that in

Europe we take in each others' washing. That is perfectly true. We trade among ourselves and that trade is a rising tide that, as John Fitzgerald Kennedy said, "lifts all boats".

The hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex (Mr Jenkin) touched on a significant point, which I put to the Prime Minister. He mentioned that the 17 eurozone members at the weekend elected their own president, the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy. The 17 members of the European Union that are in the eurozone will have their own meetings, outwith the 27 countries of which we are a member. Mr Van Rompuy said:

"Rest assured that we will narrowly and closely inform all the preparation of the summits we shall have in the eurozone, and we shall advise of the results."

As I said carefully in my question to the Prime Minister, Mr Van Rompuy will have Germany on one side and France on the other, so where will we be? We have opted for a two-tier Europe and we have opted out. I am sure that the Prime Minister will do all that he can—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. Martin Horwood.

7.28 pm

Martin Horwood (Cheltenham) (LD): This is an important debate. In a sense, I commend the 100,000 people who brought it about for bringing these issues into the open, not least because it has allowed Conservative Members such as the hon. Member for North Dorset (Mr Walter) and the right hon. and learned Member for Kensington (Sir Malcolm Rifkind) to find their eloquent, pro-European voices. Many of us are perhaps guilty of having let the Eurosceptics dominate this area for far too long.

Stephen Phillips (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): I think that the 100,000 people who signed the e-petition would like an answer to a very simple question: the Liberal Democrats promised an in or out referendum, so why are they not supporting one tonight?

Martin Horwood: The hon. and learned Gentleman has anticipated my next sentence. There has been a lot of talk about manifestos in this debate, so I will tell the House exactly what the Liberal Democrat manifesto said. It stated:

"Liberal Democrats... remain committed to an in/out referendum the next time a British government signs up for fundamental change in the relationship between the UK and the EU."

We support that now, we supported it at the general election and we supported it at the time of the Lisbon treaty, when such a fundamental change was actually being discussed. What is more, we put the matter to a vote of the House at that time, and many hon. Members who are now rising in criticism voted against it, including the hon. Member for St Albans (Mrs Main) and, actually, the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mr Walker), who succinctly asked earlier, "If not now, when?" Well, the answer was then, and I am afraid he missed the chance.

Mr Jenkin: I recall that debate about referendums at the time of the Lisbon treaty. One got the impression that the Liberal Democrats wanted to say they were in favour of a referendum but not vote for the amendment

that might actually create one. It was a cynical manoeuvre and just the kind of thing that has brought the House into disrepute with the British people.

Martin Horwood: I thank the hon. Gentleman, but I have with me the list of how Members voted on our proposal for an in/out referendum at the time when we said it was appropriate, and I do not think his name is on the list of the Ayes. A few Labour Members did break ranks, however.

Andrew Percy: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Horwood: I am sorry, I will not give way again, otherwise I will be out of time.

May I also remind some Conservative Members of what was promised in their own manifesto? It promised that any proposed future treaty that transferred areas of power or competences would be subject to a referendum lock. Of course, they actually got that in the European Union Act 2011, which we all voted for only a matter of weeks ago.

Andrew Percy: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Martin Horwood: No, I will not, I am sorry.

Let us look at some of the options on offer in the motion. We have the renegotiation option, which, frankly, is a fiction. What kind of negotiation would take place if we actually tried to do that? What price would Monsieur Sarkozy or Frau Merkel extract in those negotiations for the disruption and risk that would be posed to the working of the Union? Why would the renegotiation succeed if the other 26 member states did not support it, and why would they support it if the only issue of debate was Britain's terms of membership? That is why it is such a nonsense to extract renegotiation from any other fundamental shift in relationships that would be happening at the time.

Stephen Phillips: Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

Martin Horwood: I am sorry, I have taken my two interventions.

What I believe all factions of Eurosceptics are really calling for in this debate is withdrawal. That is what they really believe in, let us be honest about it. They perhaps want membership of the European economic area, maybe without the complexities of European Councils or the political complexities of the European Parliament, and I assume without complexities such as the border controls of the Schengen agreement. Let me tell them that there is good news for them. There is one very beautiful country that has achieved that exalted status. One country is a beacon for the Eurosceptics. One country is a member of the European economic area but not of the European Union or Schengen. It is Liechtenstein. That is the level of influence that the Eurosceptics are demanding for this country. They would give up our influence on the European market and our influence as a member of the EU on negotiations from climate change to world trade. They would condemn us to the sidelines of Europe and do profound damage to the interests of this country.

[*Martin Horwood*]

I am old enough to remember a Europe where military, communist and fascist dictatorships outnumbered democracies. One of the greatest achievements of the European Union is that we have between us—27 sovereign states and 500 million people—created a peaceful, democratic federation of which we, as Britons and as Europeans, should be profoundly proud. I am very proud of that. I believe that this is the wrong motion at the wrong time, calling for a referendum that would not work and that would do profound damage to Britain's national interests, and I think we should throw it out tonight.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. Please resume your seats. We have had 23 speakers so far, and considerably more Members than that still wish to come into the debate. To accommodate as many as we possibly can, the time limit is being reduced to four minutes, still with injury time for two interventions.

7.34 pm

Mr Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Lab): I want to address the politics of this question, and in doing so pose the question why this issue, above all issues, has a sulphurous effect on our politics. I also wish to thank Ministers for getting us off the hook tonight by imposing a three-line Whip, which disguises the changing politics in the House since I have been a Member and signals that we need to rethink our position.

Why does Europe have such an evil, sulphurous influence on our politics? I am not nearly as hopeful as the hon. Member for Cheltenham (*Martin Horwood*), who thinks that we are all sailing into the sunshine. Given the stresses caused by the stupidity of a single currency, I worry about what will happen to democracies in mainland Europe as countries' living standards are forced down in an attempt to make their budgets balance.

The real reason why Europe has such a sulphurous impact on our politics is that, as we now know from the records, there has been an exercise in deceit from the word go. We know that Ted Heath, in presenting it to the British people as merely a common market, was signing up to the political project that we see now. We need not just dwell on the origins of the problem, because in the previous Parliament my party's Government said that they would offer a referendum on the constitution. Of course, what we did not notice was that they were going to decide whether it was a constitution, and they decided that it was not. They said that they would have a referendum on it, but then said, "Oh, it's rather too late now for the people to have such a vote." Over the years, there has been a growth in cynicism among the electorate about whether we as parliamentarians are ever going to deal seriously with the issue, and that is what we ought to address tonight.

Mr Graham Stuart: I know that the right hon. Gentleman is very fair-minded, so I put it to him that there is a massive difference between the Labour Government's promise on the constitution/Lisbon treaty and the Conservative party's leadership saying, once the cheque had been cashed and the treaty ratified, that holding a

referendum on it was pointless. It was not a betrayal, it was recognition of the betrayal carried out by the Labour party.

Mr Field: I disagree with that. Part of the reason for rearranging our procedures in the House and giving the Backbench Business Committee more power was to try to strike a new relationship with the electorate. What has happened? We are now having a debate that the Government presumably did not want us to have, and they are railroading their Members into supporting them with a three-line Whip. The same is happening on our side of the House.

The truth is that the Government have scored an own goal. The second big change in the House in the years I have been here, along with the cancerous effect of Europe on our democracy in this country, is that the Conservative party has changed radically. People watching the debate tonight need only look at the number of Conservative Members who wish to participate and the number of Labour Members who wish to participate. When I first came here, if someone raised the issue of Europe regularly they were cast as being slightly bonkers or very bonkers. Now we see that the Conservative party has genuinely changed on the issue. Thanks to the Government's ham-fisted approach in imposing a three-line Whip, the country will not see how significant that change has been and how in tune the Conservative party now is with both Conservative and Labour voters in the country.

I make a plea to Members on my own side of the House. We are getting it wrong on the issue of the representation of England and appear to be a party controlled by our Scottish colleagues. Increasingly, the question will be how England is represented in this Parliament, and so far we are on the wrong side of that debate. Again tonight, by trying to force Members into the Lobby in support of the Government stance, we are in danger of alienating many Labour voters.

When I first stood for election, the turnout was 85%. Last time, it was 60%. How have we managed to turn off 25% of the electorate? It comes down to our conduct as politicians. We were going to make a small move by having debates that we, Back Benchers, could control, but the Government decided it would be better to clobber us with—

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.39 pm

Mr Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Birkenhead (*Mr Field*), who has long made measured contributions to such debates, but I want to draw attention to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (*Mr Holloway*), who is not in the Chamber. He made the speech of the night so far by bringing his integrity and judgment to the fore at the expense of his political office in the Government. The House should respect him especially for that.

The fact is that this debate is beginning to show a pattern. Members who reflect the widely held public sentiment that our relationship with the European Union is not quite right and that something needs to change are all in favour of a referendum, whether that means a modest renegotiation or, like my hon. Friend the Member for *Kettering (Mr Hollobone)* says, leaving the EU

altogether. Members who have spoken against the motion are determined to keep the relationship the same, at least for the time being.

I fully respect my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, who says that he wants to repatriate powers, but as with St Augustine and chastity, he wants repatriation, but not yet. We know that public opinion overwhelmingly shows a strong sentiment for a fundamental change in our relationship with the EU. Unfortunately and sadly for the House, on an occasion when we could reflect our voters' genuine concerns on this vexed subject, which has riven politics and both parties over many years, we will vote perhaps 4:1 against what we know most of our constituents would prefer.

Angie Bray (Ealing Central and Acton) (Con): Does my hon. Friend accept that although the country is undoubtedly interested in all matters EU, it is probably more interested in issues such as growth and jobs? Does he also accept that a referendum at this time would simply create uncertainty, which would hardly be conducive to attracting the foreign investors that we need to help with growth and jobs?

Mr Jenkin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that point, but this issue has come to the fore because it is about not only democracy and consent, but growth and jobs. If the coalition came into being for anything, it was for the deficit reduction programme. That is its *raison d'être*. It might not have escaped her notice that that programme is in trouble, because the economy is not growing. There are many reasons for that—the US, the crisis in the eurozone, and our country's indebtedness and excessive taxation—but one fundamental reason is that we are overburdened with European regulation. That is why a majority of businessmen in this country now say that the advantages of the single market are outweighed by the disadvantages.

Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I spent 10 years in the European Parliament and watched powers transferred from Westminster to Brussels, making business more expensive and introducing more regulation. If we want to free up our economy and move forward, we need substantially to renegotiate. The motion gives us a chance to send that message to the Government and to strengthen Ministers' hands when they go to Europe to do so.

Mr Jenkin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that point.

We know from experience that we cannot rely even on the assurances given to us by our European partners. In 1992, we thought we had opted out of what was then called the social chapter. We thought that would protect us from the working time directive, but by the end of that Parliament the EU had circumvented the opt-out in typical fashion: it used a different treaty base to force the directive on to our statute book, against the wishes of our Parliament, by making it a health and safety programme.

The same thing is happening with the agency workers directive, which the Government have bitterly opposed because they know that it will price more young people

out of the labour market. We now have above-average youth unemployment in this country when it used to be below-average.

Martin Horwood: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Jenkin: I hope the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I have given way twice.

The same thing is happening in the regulation of the City of London. If there is one thing that we should never have agreed to in principle, it is that the European Union and Michel Barnier should take over the regulation of the City—our biggest single tax generator. That was driven by a misplaced notion that Bonn, Frankfurt, Paris and the City should be given equal status as global financial centres. That would be disastrous for the City.

We should oppose the Tobin tax on principle, because at the end of the day, it is another tax that takes money out of the pockets of ordinary people, but you wait, Mr Deputy Speaker, the financial transactions tax proposed by the EU will be forced through on some spurious treaty basis.

Sir Stuart Bell *indicated assent.*

Mr Jenkin: The hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Sir Stuart Bell) agrees that that will be forced through on a spurious basis to cover the City. To coin a phrase, we can't go on like this. Now that the EU is moving into a phase in which huge decisions, such as the decisions of the 17 on fiscal union, are being taken without the requirement of a British signatory on any treaty, we are losing the veto, which was the foundation of our EU membership and which made it acceptable.

Therefore, it is now time to renegotiate. It is urgent for our economy. If we need a referendum to force the Government's hand, that is what I will vote for.

7.46 pm

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): About halfway through this evening's debate, it might be helpful to remind the House that the motion states:

"That this House calls upon the Government to introduce a Bill in the next session of Parliament to provide for the holding of a national referendum".

Do hon. Members remember national referendums? All three parties promised one in their 2005 election manifestos, and each came up with its unique way of reneging. The motion states that the referendum should be

"on whether the United Kingdom should

(a) remain a member of the European Union on the current terms;

(b) leave the European Union; or

(c) re-negotiate the terms of its membership in order to create a new relationship based on trade and co-operation."

I must confess that when I first read that, I thought it would be extraordinarily difficult for anyone to disagree with a single word of it, whether they were for or against the EU.

Mr Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): On the subject of reneging on promises, is not the crux of the matter this: if we live in a democracy, the people should have a voice?

Ms Stuart: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. Moreover, whatever people think about referendums—whether they think they are good or bad—the political parties on both sides of the House have started to promise them, but once in government, they come up with incredibly ingenious ways of changing their minds.

I recommend that the one third of hon. Members who were not here in 2008 watch the Foreign Secretary's speech on Second Reading of the European Union (Amendment) Act 2008—the Foreign Secretary mentioned that it is on YouTube. It was a brilliant speech. It was so funny I even bought a copy. It is quite interesting to see why he has changed his mind. For an illustration of a 180° turn, watch that speech.

European Union debates become kitchen sink debates. Rather than put arguments on the substance of the debate, hon. Members put arguments for or against. For the Lib Dems, returning one criminal to the UK becomes the reason why we need an EU-wide arrest warrant and criminal justice system; on the other hand, the EU is bad because one old lady is run over in a constituency in the north-east because of the working time directive.

Let us for a moment forget about that and talk about the nature of democracy and the nature of democracy in the House. For better or worse, the House has decided that it should become a far more participatory democracy. We have said that we will ask the people much more and have such things as e-petitions. If we are to have e-petitions, we had better start taking them seriously. We cannot say, "Some are more frivolous than others. If they suit us, we'll take them on board; and if they don't, we'll knock them on the head," because they are all serious.

The introduction of the Backbench Business Committee was good for democracy in the House, but there are things that we cannot do—the Prime Minister's statement, which was one of the weakest I have ever heard from a Prime Minister returning from a European Council, showed the weakness of the changes made. We no longer have pre-European Council debates, whereas previously we would have had a day to discuss it; the Foreign Affairs Committee, as I understand it, no longer visits one of the troika countries during the six-month period of a presidency; and we have no specific debates on the EU, and whenever anybody wants to discuss it, we write them off as narrow-minded little Englanders who just want to get out, but it might be that they do not like the current arrangements or that they want someone to make the case for them.

It is presumptuous of the House to think that it knows what the people would say. We should not take for granted what the people would say. Even if I were to accept the Government's argument that now is not the time, what is the case against having a referendum at the same time as the EU elections in 2014? I assume that for once—it has not happened since I have been around—we would have a European election during which we actually talked about Europe. We could have a referendum on such an occasion. In the name of democracy and having trust in the people, which we all say that we do, we should vote for the motion tonight, because if politicians do not trust the people, why on earth should the people trust the politicians?

7.51 pm

Mr John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): There have been many powerful speeches already rightly saying that this debate is about democracy. Democracy is fundamental to the House—the mother of Parliaments, an example to the world—which has been through a bad time. It has been humbled by its failure to listen carefully enough to the people and because too many powers of self-government have been needlessly given away to Brussels. The people not only want us to listen, to have this great debate and to have a free vote to express their opinions and views, but would like to feel that the people in this House, charged with the duty of governing, have the power to govern. They believe that the Government should come here and answer to us and that we, from both sides of the House, should hold them to account. If they do a good job, the public reward them in a general election, and if they do a bad job, they sack them. However, what we now see happening, because there is too much unaccountable European power, is the breakdown of the fabric of consent that is fundamental to a democracy.

If hon. Members were to go to Greece today, they would see what happens when that consent starts to break down. Rich Greeks now think that their Government have no right to tax them because they are on autopilot from Europe and they do not like what it is doing, and poor Greeks think that the Government have no right to remove some of their benefits because they think, again, that they are on autopilot from Brussels. In Portugal, Ireland or Slovakia, we see that the European mess can change Governments—regardless, almost, of what the people think—but that when the people put in a new Government, it makes absolutely no difference to the policy that the country is following, because it is all on autopilot and has been preordained by the IMF, the bankers and, above all, the EU bureaucrats and assembled member states.

We need to ensure that we—those of us with a heart and a conscience—send a loud message to our constituents tonight that we are democrats, that we think that the public were right to demand this debate, that we admire the Prime Minister for making it possible through the petition system and that we would like the Whips to withdraw so that a proper expression of opinion can be given. We want our Government to understand that if too many powers are taken away, we will no longer have the authority or opportunity to govern. Already, we have to say too often to our constituents, "I cannot help you with that because it is a European directive. I cannot assist you with this because it is an unaccountable European programme." We can no longer change the law in the way that we wish because it is preordained by some Brussels decision.

This House was great when every law that applied to the British people was fought over in this Chamber and in Committee and satisfied the needs of the majority. This House was great when the public knew that when they had had enough of rotten Government, they could change not just the people, but the policies they were following. This House was great when it had full control of all our money and did not have to give away tariffs and taxes to foreign powers to spend in ways of which we do not approve. We need to wake up. We need to do what the British people want us to do. We need to take responsibility for governing this country. We need to

enact the laws. We need to debate and argue about it in here. Brussels has too much power. The British people need a say. Let us have a vote.

7.54 pm

Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby) (Lab): I shall be voting for the motion tonight because I do not want to be part of what has become a three-party conspiracy against the people. It is an abomination of democracy that the three parties, all of which have promised referendums and then denied the people those referendums and which are now forcing us to vote against a referendum, decided to impose three-line Whips on their followers to vote for Europe. It is behaving like Europeans. The EU is the construction of an EU elite that does not listen to the people: it knows where it wants to go, and it is not bothered what the people think. We cannot have that attitude in this country.

We have to show the people that they can have a referendum. When we had a referendum 36 years ago, people voted for a very different institution—for a trading relationship—but it has now become a European monolith with ever-increasing powers. It is moving towards ever-closer union and is claiming to control economic policy as well. It is a very different institution and far more expensive. Budget contributions are £7 billion net a year, rising to £10 billion fairly soon. The CAP costs us £16.7 billion while the common fisheries policy costs us £4.7 billion. The British people must have a say on whether they want to make those excessive contributions. Why should the three parties be denying them?

It would have been sensible for all three parties to agree to give us a free vote so that we could hear the sensible, clear, un-Whipped decision of Parliament. That might well have been in favour of a referendum, but I do not know. It would also have been sensible for the Government to have had a referendum in reserve because it would have strengthened their position in the negotiations with Europe that the Foreign Secretary told us were to come, but they avoided that. I cannot tell how this euro crisis, which is bedevilling us all, will work out—nor can the Prime Minister for that matter—but I question whether it is in our interest to keep the euro going. It would be more sensible for Greece to devalue and come out, and perhaps for some of the other Club Med states to do the same, because it would allow them to expand and grow, whereas at present they face 10 years of deflation. That would also put up the exchange rate of the German—or northern—euro, so that it would become less competitive and take a smaller share of our markets. That would be a logical outcome.

We are going to struggle to use the big bazooka, as the Prime Minister put it, to keep Humpty Dumpty together—I am not sure how we would do that—but we have to bear it in mind that the people of Europe also want referendums. There are a series of policy studies based on the 2009 referendum showing that in Europe, 63% of people—from a sample of 27,000—wanted any future decisions to be taken by a referendum. This has been an interesting debate. It has been interesting how little praise for Europe there has been. It was interesting, too, that the Foreign Secretary defended Europe by praising with faint damns and turned down the weapon that the House was offering. I hope that we have tonight a big vote in favour of the motion. It would send a signal to Europe of what the people of this country

think—not the elite, but the people—and would send a signal to the people that they can trust us and that we have their interests at heart.

7.58 pm

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): I, for one, shall be supporting tonight's motion for one simple but important reason: the very nature of our relationship with the EU has fundamentally changed since we joined it in 1975, yet the British people have not been consulted on that change. Instead, they have consistently been denied a say. Perhaps tonight, we have an opportunity to put that right.

It is a great shame that all three political leaders are whipping this vote in the way that they are. Some of the arguments that have been used to try to defeat the motion are illustrative. There has been no shortage of red herrings and Aunt Sallies as to why we cannot have a referendum on our future relationship with the EU. The first is about economics. A long line of speakers have talked about how important Europe is to us economically and how things would get so much worse if we left the EU. However, the debate on the motion is not about that; it is about whether we give the British people a say about the nature of our relationship with the EU. That argument is therefore a red herring. Indeed, the fact that our balance of trade with Europe is negative weakens it even further.

We have had the red herring about timings: “This is not the right time.” However, I cannot remember when, in the last 36 years, it has been the right time. We have consistently been told, “This is not the right time.” I would turn that on its head and say that, with Europe in a state of flux, this might be a good time to renegotiate our relationship. I find it strange that, once again, the line is: “This is not a very good time.”

Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that the right time to have a referendum was on the Lisbon treaty, which was in all three parties' 2005 manifestos? Frankly, I would have enjoyed campaigning for a no vote to that treaty, rather than watching the previous Prime Minister surreptitiously go down to Lisbon and sign it virtually in secret.

Mr Baron: I am sure that the majority in the House can agree with that view.

Let us look at some of the other red herrings that have been discussed this evening. There is the argument that if the motion was passed and we had a referendum, that would somehow weaken the Foreign Secretary's hand. I completely disagree with that. A Foreign Secretary or Prime Minister going to negotiate would be emboldened by knowing that the voice of the British people had indicated the direction of travel and how they wanted the relationship to progress.

Then we have had the argument that says, “Why bother with the motion? We've already got an à la carte Europe”—that is, people are already opting in and out of this and that, and so on. However, that argument does not stand up either, for the simple reason that what is happening, under the very noses of the British people, is that our sovereignty is being salami-sliced, week in, week out. We may talk about a referendum lock on future treaty changes, but to a certain extent that is

[Mr Baron]

tilting at windmills, for the simple reason that there is no treaty on the horizon; rather, what is happening, week in, week out, is that key competences and powers are being transferred over to Brussels. One example is in criminal justice, with the European investigation order.

Mr James Clappison (Hertsmere) (Con): That is a valuable point. Is it not the case that legislation regularly comes forward within the extensive competences that the European Union already enjoys? The European Union is occupying ground and legislating in matters that should be the preserve of this House.

Mr Baron: Absolutely, and my hon. Friend is well placed to see that for himself, sitting as he does on the European Scrutiny Committee. Key competences and powers are transferred across to Brussels almost daily, yet the political leaders in this place seem not to recognise that fact.

The political elites across Europe—not just here—should understand the growing frustration with the current situation. We joined what was essentially a free trade area; it has turned more and more into political union. People do not like that. They want to be consulted, but they will be denied that freedom of choice if Members in this Chamber defeat the motion this evening. That, in my view, has to be wrong.

The time to put it right is now. This is the motion that some of us have long believed is right and that was going to happen, but because of U-turns and deliberations by party leaders we have been denied this say. The political elite need to understand that at the end of the day they must answer to their electorate. They cannot justify ignoring the electorate when there has been so much fundamental change in our relationship with the EU. I would urge hon. Members—particularly those who may still be undecided—to support the motion this evening, if only in the name of democracy.

8.5 pm

Mr Denis MacShane (Rotherham) (Lab) *rose*—

Hon. Members: Groan!

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. He has not said anything yet.

Mr MacShane: In the spirit of the hon. Member for Broxbourne (Mr Walker), tonight I shall vote for parliamentary democracy and against plebiscites, and I urge all hon. and right hon. Members to do the same.

8.6 pm

Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): It is amazing how united the Conservative party has been so far today. We had a Eurosceptic statement from the Prime Minister and then a Eurosceptic speech from the Foreign Secretary, so it can only be the Liberal Democrats who are inveigling us down the path of unrighteousness and taking us away from supporting the motion. The Foreign Secretary made six points that must have been written for him by the Liberal Democrats, because he is

far too clever a man to have thought of them for himself, because they do not really add up. I shall go through them.

The Foreign Secretary made two points that were essentially trivial—too trivial for a man of his standing. They were, first, that there was no manifesto commitment for a referendum. However, manifestos can deal only with what is known at the time; they cannot deal with things that have not yet arisen. The crisis in the eurozone and the changes that could come from it were not known with clarity at that point, so it is now right to think beyond the manifesto to what the next steps are. That point can therefore be discarded.

The Foreign Secretary then said that we had passed an Act of Parliament to deal with when we could have referendums, and so we did; but again, this House knows many things, but it is not omniscient. It cannot take care of every occasion that may arise when a referendum may be a good idea or every occasion when the British people—whom we should trust—may want one. So, those two points go.

The other two points that do not add up to much were, first, that a three-way referendum is confusing. However, that is not a problem because the motion calls for a Bill in the next Session, which can deal with any confusion. We can, in our wisdom, work out how to phrase a referendum—or series of referendums, if necessary—that will be understandable.

Martin Horwood: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and we always enjoy his speeches, but will he clear up some confusion about the proposed three-way referendum? Will it use the alternative vote system or first past the post? The motion is not entirely clear.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me an extra minute—it is kind of Gloucestershire to give something to Somerset for once. That issue can be dealt with in the legislation. Indeed, we could two referendums. As it happens, it might make more sense to have the second referendum after the renegotiation is completed.

The fourth point that did not work was that the EU was all or nothing. However, it is already not all or nothing: we already have opt-outs and so forth. There are therefore two remaining points—as those who are good mathematicians will have worked out—that we need to look at. One was that we are dealing with this issue in a crisis and this is therefore the wrong time: “When a man’s house is burning down, you send in the fire brigade.” Quite right. But then, when he wants to hire someone else’s house nearby to find fresh accommodation, they can set the terms of the tenancy. That is the position that we are in with the European Union—a very strong negotiating position, which we should maximise.

We should also note that we cannot solve our financial crisis until we have freed ourselves from the yoke of European regulation. Only this weekend, we have seen that Tesco is going to take on fewer part-time people because of a directive from Brussels. Are we really going to deny our citizens growth because Brussels wants to put a further yoke on them?

Ian Swales (Redcar) (LD): Is my hon. Friend aware that one of Tesco’s most profitable areas is the part of eastern Europe that is in the European Union?

Jacob Rees-Mogg: Tesco, great company that it is, is also very popular in Thailand, whose application for membership of the European Union I am currently unaware of.

The Foreign Secretary made a final point that we would lose opportunities by going for a referendum now. Well, of course we would not; we would gain them. We are negotiating on the budget for the next few years on the basis of an absolute majority and a one-vote veto. This is not the intermediate budget. Our position is quite strong.

As I see it, we have a wonderfully united Conservative party, upset by the Liberal Democrats. I admire the Liberal Democrats. They are good, honest people, but, when push comes to shove, getting a proper relationship with the European Union is more important than the coalition. If the Liberal Democrats want to go into a general election saying, "Let's have more rules from Brussels and from Mr Barroso", let them try it. We shall see how many seats they win on that basis. It is for us Back Benchers to say to Her Majesty's Government: "Stiffen your sinews, summon up the blood and imitate the action of a tiger, for that is how you should behave towards our European partners, not like Bagpuss."

Hon. Members: Hurrah!

8.11 pm

Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Lab): When I made my maiden speech, Ann Widdecombe had spoken just before me and she got a cheer. At the time, I said to myself, under my breath, "Follow that!" I am afraid that I shall have to do the same thing now.

The hon. Member for Basildon and Billericay (Mr Baron) mentioned red herrings several times. I am afraid that there are rather too few herrings around our shores on account of the common fisheries policy. It is a pleasure to speak in the debate on the motion tabled in the name of the hon. Member for Bury North (Mr Nuttall), and I congratulate him on bringing it forward. I shall certainly be voting for it this evening.

It is abundantly clear that the call for a referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union now has mass support across the country. A recent YouGov poll showed that 61% were in favour, with only 24% against. Among Labour supporters, 53% are in favour of a referendum, with 33% against. I hope that, together with other comrades, I speak for that 53% majority of Labour voters.

There is no mystery as to why our political leaders are so opposed to holding a referendum. It is clear that they fear doing so because they fear that our electorate might vote for Britain to withdraw from the EU. If that happened, I suspect that there might be a domino effect across the whole European Union. I am, however, mystified as to why our leaders are so frightened of such an outcome.

Mr Sam Gyimah (East Surrey) (Con): No one can really know what will happen in a referendum. In 1975, the public seemed to be against the EU, but they voted by 2:1 to join. None of us really knows how public opinion will fall in a referendum.

Kelvin Hopkins: I entirely accept that point, but I believe that the British people have become wiser about this matter since 1975. At that time, every single organ

of the media was in favour of a yes vote; a no vote had no support in the media at all.

Mr Leigh: Surely the point is also that, in 1975, the hon. Gentleman had a vote, I had a vote and my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone), who is sitting next to me, had a vote. I do not know whether Mrs Bone had a vote—

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): She was too young.

Mr Leigh: Indeed, and Mrs Leigh certainly did not have a vote, along with 84% of the present population. Do they not have a right to vote?

Kelvin Hopkins: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. I was the agent for the no vote in Bedfordshire in 1975, so I have a track record.

Is our political class frightened that, if the British people voted to leave the European Union, we would no longer be a member of the common fisheries policy? Are they frightened that we might regain control of our fishing waters, stop the fishing free-for-all and see our fish stocks recover? Is it frightened that we would no longer have to subscribe to the common agricultural policy, and that we could instead choose to subsidise our farming, as and when, and where, we considered it appropriate and necessary? Is it frightened that we would no longer have to contribute to the European Union budget, at a cost of many billions a year, and rising? I cannot for the life of me see why such developments are so frightening.

There is also the old chestnut about Britain's economic dependence on the EU, and the number of jobs that people say could be lost. We have heard a great deal about that tonight. The reality is that we have a massive trade deficit with the EU. In 2010, we bought £53.5 billion more from the rest of the EU than they bought from us. It is laughable that the EU could start a trade war with the UK, when it needs us so much more than we need it.

Mr George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend feel comfortable being bracketed with those such as the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex (Mr Jenkin) who want to take away the rights of workers and recalibrate arrangements more towards employers?

Kelvin Hopkins: I want this Parliament, not Brussels, to decide our employment laws. I have every confidence that the British people will vote in a Labour Government next time, to restore powers to trade unions and to working people. That is what I shall always fight for.

If we were to leave the EU, we should also find ourselves not bound by EU competition rules, so that we could, for example—and uninhibited by Brussels—buy trains from Bombardier, rather than from continental producers. We could also stop EU rules being used to promote the privatisation of the NHS. So what is there to fear? Rather, I think that there would be great advantages to being independent of the EU, and I have not heard a compelling argument to the contrary. I am going to vote for the motion tonight. This is the beginning of a long campaign, and I look forward to its successful end.

8.17 pm

Mr Stewart Jackson (Peterborough) (Con): It is a pleasure to rise to support the motion tonight. The House will know that I am not a “usual suspect”. Loyalty to the Conservative party runs through my veins, having been a member for 26 years. Those on the Front Bench will know that, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr Cameron) had his problems with grammar schools in 2007, I supported him. I also stood shoulder to shoulder with my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague) in 2001 when he was performing his historic role of saving our currency from the single currency that was being foisted on our country. He was traduced, lied about, ridiculed and attacked, and that was just by people in our own party. He was vindicated, however, and we have yet to hear a substantive apology from many of the people who advocated joining the single currency.

It is more in sorrow than in anger that I vote for the motion tonight, because I support the Government and the fantastic work that they are doing on schools reform, on welfare reform and on getting down the appalling deficit left by the previous Labour Government. So I need no lectures on loyalty from some people. I defer to the Foreign Secretary, but I regret the unfortunate rhetoric that he used this morning about parliamentary graffiti. If I may be cynical, I fear that it has been a long road to Damascus from Richmond, Yorkshire, but I hope that I am wrong about that.

I say to my colleagues that we can have a proper, mature debate on the future. This is not like the theological, semi-religious schisms of the 1990s. There is a settled Eurosceptic consensus in our party, and we now need to think about where we are going and how we are going to get there. The motion is helpful. It would have given the Prime Minister the wind behind his back. It is flexible, and it does not seek to fetter discretion. It is most certainly not a “better off out” motion. We could have had a well-informed, reasonable debate between the respective positions.

Priti Patel (Witham) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a powerful, personal statement to the House on his position on the motion. Does he agree that the public want to see less Europe and more Britain, and that the only way to achieve that is through supporting the motion and giving the British public a democratic vote on our future relationship with the EU?

Mr Jackson: I could not have put it better myself.

Hon. Members have made the point that a person has to be over 54 years of age to have had the opportunity to take part in a plebiscite on our future in Europe. If we can have a referendum on fiscal powers for Wales, on the north-east Assembly, on Scotland, Northern Ireland, Greater London government and other issues, why can we not have one on one of the most important philosophical differences about our approach to the European Union in a whole generation? It is not right.

Nadine Dorries: We have heard many Members say this evening that now is not the right time. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is a disingenuous argument because this motion does not impose a referendum now, but at some time in the future. Those hon. Members who say that now is not the right time are, as I say, being incredibly disingenuous about the motion.

Mr Jackson: Absolutely; I agree with my hon. Friend. When is the right time? Net contributions of £9 billion are not loose change in our politics. We are on the cusp of a potentially new, more deeply integrationist treaty and an irreversible hard EU monetary union with profound ramifications for the future of this country, particularly for the City of London.

I have to say to the Foreign Secretary, who is now on his flight to Canberra, that he once described the euro as

“a burning building with no exits”,

but he seems happy now to provide new mortice locks for the windows and the doors.

The House of Commons should be allowed a free vote and an unfettered debate on this issue. The Government have no mandate to whip the vote as they have this evening. No one has a mandate since all the parties effectively reneged on the Lisbon treaty prior to the last general election. I have to say, as a former Whip, that this has been a catastrophic mismanagement for my party. We should have been able to show to our people that we were mature and that although we had logical differences, we would respect each other so that the integrity of Parliament would have been improved as a result. Instead, we have had the heavy-handed whipping that we have seen tonight.

We can no longer exclude the people of this country—in the era of Twitter, Facebook and the internet—from the decision-making processes. We cannot infantilise them and make them look foolish as if only we, with the political elite and the plutocratic, bureaucratic elite of Europe, know what we are doing and they are too stupid to understand because they are the little people. It will not do any longer. The people’s voice will be heard.

I gave my maiden speech in June 2005. I said then that

“all political power is merely a leasehold held on trust and...it can be removed at any time. The people of Peterborough put their trust in me...I promised not to let them down”.—[*Official Report*, 6 June 2005; Vol. 434, c. 1078.]

It is a leasehold; we cannot sell the freehold of our birthright, our democracy and the freedom of our country.

I have no intention of breaking the bond of trust I made with my constituents in Peterborough. If we cannot debate the biggest constitutional issue of our generation here in the very cockpit of democracy in the House of Commons, why are we here? That would make manifestos a sham and elections meaningless. For me, constituency and country must come before the baubles of ministerial office. I will keep that faith with my constituents and, with a heavy heart, I will vote for the motion and take the consequences.

8.23 pm

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): My starting point is that there are good democratic reasons for those in favour of our continued membership of the EU, albeit a reformed EU, to support a referendum. I believe that it is precisely the refusal to give people a say on the EU that is leading to greater public disillusionment with it. It is precisely that that leads people to think that the EU is an elitist project which is done to them and

which is not in the interests of the majority. I do not agree with that position, but I think it right that it should be debated.

I believe that the EU has enormous potential to spread peace, freedom and security, to promote and protect democracy and human rights—at home and throughout the world. It has the potential to be a true pioneer in the transition to low-carbon economies and living more rightly on the planet. I believe that to fulfil that potential, however, it has to change direction and put greater democracy and greater sustainability at the heart of its objectives. I think having a referendum would enable us to debate the end-goal or purpose of the EU. At the moment we have lots of debates about whether we want more or less EU without answering the question, “To what purpose the EU?”

For many Conservative Members, the answer will be that they want the EU, if they want it at all, to have far more of a free trade focus. For my party, we think it has too much of a free trade focus, but that is not the issue. The issue here is the right of the people to say what they want, the right to have that debate and the right for us to differ, as necessary, but none the less to have that debate about the advantages and, indeed, some disadvantages of the EU.

In my experience, many of today’s European citizens are simply no longer sure what the EU is for. In my view, the ambitious free trade project at the heart of its original treatise has become an end in itself. Debates about the future of the EU have been dominated by the idea that the overriding goals of European integration are economic and that the progress of the EU should be judged in terms of economic growth and the removal of market barriers alone. As a result, the EU has failed to address fundamental questions of political culture and strategic purpose and has therefore also failed to inspire the mass of citizens with a sense of enthusiasm and common cause, thus calling into question its own legitimacy.

In order to tackle the new threats and challenges we face today and to deliver a fair, sustainable and peaceful Europe into the 21st century and beyond, the EU must undergo radical reform. It must become more democratic and accountable, less bureaucratic and remote. It also needs to have a more compelling vision of its role and purpose, and a referendum would provide an opportunity to debate precisely those issues. To try to shut down that opportunity is, I think, very dangerous. It is possible to be pro a reformed EU and in favour of a referendum.

I agree that there are plenty of areas where the EU needs reform. The common agricultural policy is in many respects an environmental disaster. The common fisheries policy ends up with enormous over-fishing and the scandal of discards. Unaccountable corporate influence over decision making skews the outcome of many decisions. There is an extraordinary arrogance, for example, in dressing up the Lisbon treaty as something different from the repackaging of the constitution that it really was.

I believe that, more urgently than ever, we need the EU to fulfil its potential for strong environmental policy and for securing energy policy and energy security into the future. If it is to do that, however, it must have the consent of the British people. We need to make the case for a reformed EU. We should not be afraid of making that case. I believe that if we make it strongly, we will win it, which is why I support tonight’s proposal for a referendum.

8.27 pm

Glyn Davies (Montgomeryshire) (Con): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak in this very important debate. It is, in fact, a historic debate because it is the first that has been triggered by the public through the petitions system. I believe that that system is a wonderful one; it is absolutely right to hold this debate today. I also think it right in principle that this House should debate issues of particular importance to the public, of which this is one.

I shall oppose the motion, which fills me with disappointment. I would have liked to come to this debate to speak about the frustrations I feel—many of my colleagues have spoken about theirs today—over many of the decisions taken in the European Parliament, which I would have preferred to see taken in the British Parliament. There has been a trend for decisions to be made in the European Parliament since 1975. I should have liked to concentrate on that, and to speak in favour of a motion rather than against one.

I am a Eurosceptic and always have been. In 1975 I campaigned for an “out” vote. I remember one of my colleagues saying that at the start of that referendum we thought we would win, but in the event we lost by a ratio of 2:1, and that is a lesson that I have not forgotten. Perhaps my greatest contribution was that in 2001, during a Save the Pound rally in Monmouth at which the current Foreign Secretary was speaking, I was hit on the back of the head by an egg that was directed at him. I “took one” for the Conservative party.

Charlotte Leslie (Bristol North West) (Con): The motion is tragically timed, because it pits against each other the equally valid causes of ensuring that security and stability are maintained during a great euro crisis that will affect us here in the United Kingdom—even the discussion of a referendum on leaving the European Union will contribute to that instability—and giving the people the voice that they have been denied for so long in the determination of our role in Europe. It is a shame that that conflict has arisen today, but it makes our referendum lock and the conditions surrounding it all the more important.

Glyn Davies: I agree with my hon. Friend. I am in conflict with many of my colleagues who have spoken today about timing, and I am very disappointed not to be flying the Eurosceptic flag that I should like to be flying. I remember how appalled I was when the last Government reneged on what I saw as a promise to hold a referendum on the Lisbon treaty. That was the right time, but I believe that it may well come again and in similar circumstances.

Two issues matter greatly to me. One is the type of referendum that we are discussing. I think that if a referendum is to be held and is to engage the public, there should be two options rather than three, as the motion suggests. A “preferendum” would be a mistake because it would not be clear enough, and I therefore cannot support the motion. The second issue is timing. I think that to have a debate on a referendum would be a huge mistake while we in Britain must deal with huge financial and economic issues, along with another massive issue—the social dislocation felt by so many of our young people. A referendum on our future relationship

[Glyn Davies]

with the European Union would constitute a severe distraction from the two real missions of this coalition Government.

Ian Paisley: The hon. Gentleman knows that it would take at least 18 months to reach the point at which a referendum could take place. If this is not the right time, is 18 months from now the right time? As for the questions that would be asked in the referendum, that will be resolved during the negotiation period and in the Bill Committee. All the issues raised by the hon. Gentleman can easily be accommodated, and I appeal to him to change his position.

Glyn Davies: I accept what the hon. Gentleman has said, but I think we should be much clearer about both those issues before proceeding with a referendum. We need to know exactly what the position is. We should not say, "We are in favour of this", as if we were some sixth-form debating society; we should say, "This is what is being proposed", and then say whether we are in favour of it or not. What we need is a clear-cut question.

Many people have asked when will be the right time, but we cannot say when the right time will be. We have a Foreign Secretary and a Prime Minister who will conduct negotiations with the European Union, hopefully in order to restore powers to the United Kingdom. There may well be another treaty, as there was a Lisbon treaty, and in that event we as a Government would not renege as the last Government did. We would hold a referendum on an issue that the public could clearly understand, at a time when the people were ready to debate it. I hope that this debate will not lead to a referendum, because I do not think its focus would be clear, and clarity is what we need.

There has been a great deal of discussion about a free vote and the involvement of the Whips. I want to make it clear that I made up my mind as soon as I saw the motion. I had been looking forward to a motion on this issue and had been keen to speak in favour of it, but when I saw it, I concluded that it had been a mistake because it divided Eurosceptic opinion. Long before any Whip contacted me I resolved to vote against it, and to try to catch Mr Speaker's eye. I am glad to say that I did catch Mr Speaker's eye, and I am grateful for the opportunity to speak.

I believe that one day, following a serious negotiation, there will be a referendum on our relationship with the European Union, and that that referendum will ask a clear question enabling the public to say yes or no about our relationship with the European Union. I look forward to that day, but I shall be voting against the motion tonight.

8.34 pm

Michael Connarty (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (Lab): This is an interesting debate, and I apologise for having missed a few of the contributions. It is also a strange debate, however, in that many of the arguments being proposed in support of the motion do not, in fact, support it. My good friend the hon. Member for Stone (Mr Cash) is not in the Chamber at present. He talked about the £40 billion trade deficit, but anyone who voted for the Common Market voted for that to happen,

as, unfortunately, it is inevitable in a free market economy. For instance, 73% of our chemical industry is now owned by companies that are not based in the UK, and that will end up against us in the trade figures.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey) is also no longer here. She urged us to put our own logical or ideological assessments before the instructions of the Whips. I have always done that, which is why I am going to vote against the motion. It is not logical to vote for it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South West (Mr Davidson) has slipped away. He is not so much a friend as an ongoing further education project for me. I pointed out to him that the only way to get any of what he wants is to invoke article 50 of the Lisbon treaty, which states that we can leave the European Union. That has been put in place very deliberately. However, article 49 states that any country that leaves will be dealt with as if it is a new applicant, with no automatic right to rejoin and no special advantages. All this nonsense about renegotiating, repositioning and working on reform does not apply, therefore, and only a straight in/out referendum would be relevant. We could act upon that, but everything else would be left entirely to chance and to negotiations in the European Council and the European Parliament. That is the reality.

Andrew Percy: Surely the hon. Gentleman accepts that we can agree a new treaty that does exactly what many Members on the Government Benches wish. We can leave it to the treaty to achieve that.

Michael Connarty: Let me give the following advice to the hon. Gentleman, and to the Scottish National party Member who is present, the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart). The SNP thinks that if Scotland votes to separate from the rest of the United Kingdom, it can walk straight into the EU, but that is not the case. Scotland would get into the EU only if it agreed to one major condition: it would have to join the eurozone.

If the UK wanted to get back in, we would have to join the eurozone too. That is the reality, because that is now a condition for entering the EU, and it has been since before the Lisbon treaty. The position is as follows, therefore: we would have to decide in a referendum whether we wanted to be out of the EU, and if we wanted to go back in after that, we would then be at a great disadvantage because a decision would not come into force until after two years. It would have to be ratified by the other states; it would go ahead only if the European Parliament were to agree to it; and there would then be a vote to agree it in the Council under qualified majority terms. We are therefore tied up in knots by the Lisbon treaty, which I have described as a tipping point.

I am glad to see that the mover of the motion, the hon. Member for Bury North (Mr Nuttall), is back in his place. He argued that the closure of an accident and emergency department in his constituency was down to the European Union. If there is such a closure in a Member's area, the people who can deal with it are sitting on the Government Front Bench. The hon. Gentleman should ask SNP Members about that, because of what happened after their party was elected with a clear majority in the Scottish Government elections.

The first thing it did was overturn a proposal to close two accident and emergency units: one in Monklands and the other in Ayrshire. That illustrates the power of Government in this context. Such issues are nothing to do with the European Union, therefore, so the hon. Gentleman should not have made that point.

Some Members have also said that the call for a referendum expresses the settled will of the people. I respect, and am very fond of, my hon. Friend the Member for North East Derbyshire (Natascha Engel), but that is a very misleading claim to make. If we get 100,000 people writing in to say we should have a vote on a referendum on capital punishment, that would be more likely to be carried than the vote on this referendum. Are we really saying that 100,000 signatures would trigger a debate and vote in the House on a referendum on capital punishment? This is not about the settled will of the people, therefore. It just so happens that a lot of people have sent in some signatures on blogs, and I do not want to pay particular attention to them because I think that it is important that, like the Tunisian people, we respect parliamentary democracy.

Dr McCrea: If this referendum were held and its result clearly expressed the settled will of the people, would the hon. Gentleman be willing to accept that?

Michael Connarty: I voted in the 1975 referendum, and I voted yes. I did not vote in favour of the Common Market; I voted in favour of the aspirations that were so well described by the hon. Member for North Dorset (Mr Walter). Do we really think we have lasting peace? How long ago was Srebrenica? What state are the Balkans in at present? Do we really think the search for peace is finished business? It is not finished business by a long way.

I also voted yes because I knew there was a better way forward that was not on offer at that time. That was introduced by Delors, when he brought in the social chapter. That is what I joined the EU for—social agreement. I support most of what would be offered us in the justice and social packages; they would guarantee them for our people as well as for all the people throughout Europe. These are things that are done by negotiation.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Michael Connarty: I do not have time to give way, as I have given way twice and I know how the system works.

It is clearly important that we consider what the European Union is about. There are things to give up, such as our obsession with not wanting people in Europe to have the same rights when they are on trial. We are opposing translation rights and the right to legal representation—this Government are opposing them at the moment. How can anyone justify that? Europe has to be a better place to live. If it was not for the social chapter—

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con) *rose*—

Michael Connarty: The hon. Gentleman knows the rules. I have given way often enough and I have had my extra two minutes.

We need to think about Delors and what happened when the package for the social chapter came in. It protected the people I represent from Thatcherism in its

worst aspects; it was a chance to rebalance Europe and bring about a social Europe. So much has been said about that. I respect the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr Holloway), who decided to resign as a Parliamentary Private Secretary, as it is right that people should be able to put their principles before someone's attempt to give them a little bag-carrying job. I am not sure that he would be resigning quite as quickly if he was a Minister. The problem is that no Ministers have been saying that they will resign their ministerial position over this matter.

The Liberal Democrats say that they would vote for a referendum only on a fundamental shift, but there has been a fundamental shift. It has been away from voting Liberal, and their voting with the Government will damage them. I am sorry about that, but the Liberals did say that they would do something. The European Union still protects the three red lines: defence, tax and foreign policy. What we need to do in this place is give more power to the Backbench Business Committee and the European Scrutiny Committee to stop the Government voting things through in the Council, which they do at the moment.

8.41 pm

Mr Douglas Carswell (Clacton) (Con): For 40 years, we have left Europe policy to Ministers and to mandarins—to a tiny Whitehall elite. Look at the collective mess that they have made of it. We have a fisheries policy with no fish; red tape strangling small businesses; financial regulation that suffocates the City; and now we are being asked to spend billions of pounds bailing out a currency that we never even joined. We have lurched from one bad deal with Brussels to the next, and from one disastrous round of negotiations to another. That is the price we pay for leaving it to Ministers and mandarins to decide our Europe policy. It is time to trust the people. Today, every Member of this House faces a straightforward choice. They can either vote to give people a referendum on the EU or they can vote not to trust the people.

Mr Charles Walker: Would my hon. Friend like to expand on that point?

Mr Carswell: I shall try to do so over the next three minutes, and I am grateful for that thoughtful and erudite intervention.

This is a matter of principle: is it right, in principle, to put the question of EU membership to a popular vote? Too many people in Westminster—in SW1—try to second-guess how the voters may vote in a referendum and then work backwards to decide whether or not they favour a referendum. Instead we should start from the principle: is it right for the people to decide? Yes it is, and I believe that this issue qualifies for a referendum. The issue is of massive constitutional significance, it divides all three parties and it cannot be adequately settled in a general election.

Referendums can no longer be dismissed, as they have been for many years, as somehow alien to the British tradition. We have had dozens of referendums since 1997, including a national referendum on the alternative vote.

Richard Drax: Does my hon. Friend accept that the reason why we are having more and more referendums is that the people who put us here simply do not trust us?

Mr Carswell: My hon. Friend makes an important point. There has been a mood change in this country away from what one might call “deferential democracy”, where people leave it to the 650 people here to make public policy, to a new kind of democracy, where people want more choice and they want politics to be done by them, rather than to them by a remote elite. Some people in my party and in our own Whips Office have not truly understood that sea change.

If we are to have a referendum to decide how we elect Members of Parliament, surely we can have a referendum to decide whether or not those we elect should make the rules under which we live. Today’s motion has been put on the Commons agenda by the people. It is to this coalition’s immense credit that it has introduced a mechanism to allow voters to trigger debates—some 100,000 voters have triggered this debate. But we cannot say that we want to renew democracy if we shy away from the outcome of what the people say. We cannot claim that we want a new politics if we then use old-style whipping tactics from the 1950s to crush debate—or, rather, we could do all that but then we would have the credibility of a Greek Government bond.

Today’s vote is about change. I am voting for an EU referendum because I want change—change not only in our relationship with Europe but fundamental change in the way this country is run. I am not voting for a referendum in the hope that it will take us to some insular, mythical island past: I am voting for an open society—a truly global country. Ultimately, this is not about flags, anthems or identity, but about whether it is right for millions of people to have their lives arranged for them by deliberate design of technocrats. It is about democracy.

I ask each Member to cast their mind back to the day they were first elected to this House. I ask them to recall that sense of pride mingled with awesome responsibility when the returning officer read out the winner’s name. Most hon. Members will have felt in their bones that entering this House was one of the most exalted and greatest moments in their lives. Look at how today we are scorned. “MPs don’t keep their promises,” say the cynics. “You say whatever you say to get elected,” they cry. Today is our chance to show the cynics that they are wrong.

All three parties until recently promised the people a referendum on the EU. There is no point in clever wordplay or in reading the clever brief from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials—most people understood that we were going to give them a referendum. That is what MPs in all parties wanted the people to believe and it is the impression that we deliberately conveyed. This evening, we have a chance to keep our promises, to honour our word and to keep faith in our country. I will vote to let the people decide and I urge other hon. Members to do so. My hon. Friends the Members for Peterborough (Mr Jackson) and for Gravesham (Mr Holloway) are indeed honourable and it is a privilege to be their colleague on the Back Benches.

8.46 pm

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): Given what I want to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, I might, with all due respect, if I had had a choice, have preferred not to follow the hon. Member for Clacton (Mr Carswell).

They say that if you hang around this place for long enough nothing should surprise you, but recent antics do surprise me. The other week we were subjected to manoeuvres par excellence by the Government Whips and business managers to block discussion on a clause put forward by the hon. Member for Gainsborough (Mr Leigh) on the subject of freedom of speech in a Bill laughably called the Protection of Freedoms Bill. Tonight, the Government Whips—indeed, the Whips and business managers of all three main parties—have conspired to put a three-line Whip on a Back-Bench business motion, which effectively means that Parliament is being invited to talk about Europe but not to vote on it. So much for the mother of Parliaments!

Let me make it clear that I am not anti-European and that if I vote for the motion tonight I shall find myself in the Lobby with some strange bedfellows, including some people who, frankly, I think are mad. If there ever were an in/out referendum, I would almost certainly find myself arguing the case for trade and jobs in Europe. I think that is where I would end up. However, I also recognise that there is growing demand for reform in Europe. It is Lib Dem policy to have an in/out referendum, and most people understood it to be the Prime Minister’s policy to have a referendum if there was any significant change to the Lisbon treaty. Indeed, no one who has heard the Prime Minister over the past three years could think he was anything but a referendum man. And our esteemed Foreign Secretary once thought these issues were so important that he fought an entire general election on them.

Tonight, however, in a little Back-Bench business debate where the normally unimportant little people are expressing their views—views that strike a remarkable chord with the British public—the muscle men, the U-turn merchants and the bully boys, the Ministers and the would-be Ministers, are all out to force their say. What they are saying is, “All you little Cinderellas can go to the ball, but you can’t dance.” All the grand talk from this Government about greater respect for Parliament and Back Benchers, and the role that they have played in setting up the Backbench Business Committee, amount to nothing if the Government show tonight that they are scared to debate the topic.

A Back-Bench business debate is just that. It is about taking the temperature. This is not an Opposition day. We are not dealing with Government business. In a simple little Back-Bench business debate, I think I am entitled to vote how I damn well like.

8.50 pm

Mr Graham Stuart (Beverley and Holderness) (Con): It is a great pleasure to participate in tonight’s historic debate. We have heard many great, passionate speeches from both sides of the House, but none more so than from the Government Benches, many Members seeing this as an opportunity to strike out against over-whipped government and to seek a return to more democratic values.

I consider myself to be a Eurosceptic, so I find myself in a strange position: I will vote against the motion, but not because I have been leant on by any Whips. I came to that conclusion prior to the first call. It is an insight into the co-ordination of Whips that you tell one at length, then another one rings you up anyway. They could get more co-ordinated.

To follow on from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe), it is a shame that tonight has gone the way it has, though it is unfair to say that the Government have not allowed debate. From a party political management perspective, it may have been naïve to do what the Government have done. They brought the debate forward to today, the Prime Minister through his statement was able to participate, and the Foreign Secretary led for the Government. Far from stifling debate, therefore, the Government at the highest level have engaged with it. Whether that was wise party management I leave to others to judge, but I think it probably was not.

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Clacton (Mr Carswell), who gave a powerful speech, I believe in parliamentary democracy. I do not believe parliamentary democracy puts down the small people. I know my hon. Friend has strong beliefs, which he has espoused over many years, including a belief in direct democracy. He has an agenda for direct democracy. He does not believe in the representative democracy that I believe in.

I do not believe that we are delegates. I am not about the percentage of my constituents who believe a particular thing. I should be out there listening to them, and I was out there on Saturday at my street surgery. The previous weekend I spent all day going round the villages listening to people and hearing from them, but it is not my job to do whatever the percentage majority tell me to do. My job is to come to this place and do the best I can by the people whom I represent.

Mark Reckless (Rochester and Strood) (Con): Can representative democracy work only if we keep our promises to the electorate? On this issue, all three major parties promised a referendum and we are not giving it.

Mr Stuart: With the greatest respect to my hon. Friend, that is one of the great myths that has been peddled. He does a disservice to the party. As I said in an intervention earlier, I honestly believe that the Prime Minister was not reneging on the promise on Lisbon when it had been ratified. If I had promised a board meeting before a payment goes out and someone else pays it out, the cheque is cashed and I do not hold a board meeting to discuss the cheque that has already been cashed—I am not reneging on anything; I am simply recognising the reality. I do not believe that the Conservative party or the Prime Minister reneged on any promise.

The manifesto on which I and my hon. Friend stood in 2010 made no promise of any referendum whatsoever. What it did promise—I say this gently to my colleagues tonight—was to bring in a referendum lock if there was to be further treaty change. I recognise and my hon. Friends point out that some powers leak and leech away without a treaty in prospect. The passage of a European Union treaty, however, was historic in this Parliament and this democracy. There will come a time when a treaty triggers the provision, and it will not be far off—I do not believe that the Government can slip vast powers under it. The truth is that that time is coming and we are winning the argument. The last thing we need to do is fight among ourselves. We must recognise that we are carrying the British people, who are more Eurosceptic, with us.

I continue to believe that we are better off within the European Union, although I am open to persuasion that we could be better off out. Some colleagues who

believe that passionately are using today's debate as a Trojan horse. I respect their view, but I think that the three-part nature of the motion is confusion and that the suggestion that we can somehow mandate the Government to renegotiate is false. I do not see how we can do that. The Government must lead and get the best position they can. When they come back with a treaty, as I am sure they will in the not-too-distant future, it will be put to the British people. That will be the time to do it. I do not think that it is disingenuous to talk about timing.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): My hon. Friend touches on a central point, which is that not all of us feel that we would be better off out of the EU. Many of us want the common market we signed up for, more free trade and less of the baggage. Is that not the direction of travel in which we should be headed?

Mr Stuart: I agree. Colleagues might say tonight with a wry smile that they, too, like the Prime Minister, believe in nudge theory. They would say that the motion, the strong debate and the number of Members who will be in the Aye Lobby will tell the Government how seriously members of our party feel on the matter, and they may have a point. My constituents, whom I have sensibly been talking and listening to, are not telling me that this is top of their list of priorities. At the top of their list are jobs, employment and the need to ensure that we do not put people in the dole queue, particularly young people, as one of the Labour party's toxic legacies was to leave so many young people not in education, employment or training.

Our duty is to move very coolly on this subject. The time will come when we will have a referendum. We should not pass the motion tonight. We should absolutely listen to our constituents, who are telling us that they have priorities above and beyond the obsession in certain parts of the Conservative party with Europe above all other issues.

8.56 pm

George Eustice (Camborne and Redruth) (Con): May I say how good it is that we are having this important debate this evening, but how disappointed I am that the build-up to it has given the impression that the Conservative party is divided on Britain's approach to the European Union? The truth is that the only real division this evening will be over the wording of a motion, not the substance of our approach to the EU. In reality, Conservatives are united in believing that the EU has accumulated far too many powers, that the status quo is no longer an option and that we must renegotiate a new relationship with the EU and make a fresh start.

I think that three distinct steps need to be taken. First, we need a plan, and in my view the Government should be doing the work right now to identify which powers we would seek to repatriate. Secondly, we need to take every opportunity we have to negotiate and to deliver that plan. Finally, the end of the process should be the point at which we have a referendum and put the renegotiation to the people.

It is because I believe that a referendum should come at the end of the process, rather than the beginning, that I cannot support the motion as it stands this evening. However, I cannot support the Government by voting

[George Eustice]

against it, so I will abstain. The reason I cannot support the Government is that I want them to do far more than they have so far been willing to do to accelerate the plan for a renegotiation. That will be the main focus of my comments today.

It concerns me that the Foreign Office might be ducking the challenge here, and I have been very disappointed by the “jam tomorrow” nature of some of the Foreign Secretary’s comments. The urgent need to get our economy moving again becomes clearer by the day. There are no easy ways out of the current mess. We need radical thinking to get our country moving again, and that should include dealing with the morass of EU laws and regulations. I do not think that it is good enough to say that changing the EU is all too difficult and so nothing can be done for years to come. Sorting out the EU is not something that might be nice in the distant future; tackling the burden of EU regulation is an integral part of the solution to the current crisis and we must act now. We have to find a way of cutting the Gordian knot that has created a situation in which politicians talk about reforming the EU but can never find the moment to deliver real change.

Charlie Elphicke: Will my hon. Friend set out how exactly he would cut that Gordian knot?

George Eustice: I was about to come on to precisely that.

I do not accept the argument that nothing can be done until there has been an intergovernmental conference or a new treaty. Where there is the political will, there is always a way, and where needs must, the EU has shown itself able to react quickly and then sort out the lawyers and the legal basis for action later.

Mark Pritchard: I commend my hon. Friend for his long-standing convictions on these issues. He talks about a White Paper, renegotiating powers and then a referendum. What timetable does he envisage for that referendum?

George Eustice: It would come as soon as we had finished the negotiation, and if I had my way, it would happen very quickly and, certainly, within this Parliament.

The bail-outs in Greece and Ireland were technically against EU law, but the European financial stability facility was agreed and implemented within days; three years ago, the bank bail-outs breached EU state aid rules, but again exemptions were created when needs required it. Sweden has technically been in breach of the treaties for a decade, because it does not have an opt-out from the euro, but the EU has had to learn to live with it, as that is the political reality. The Danish Government have unilaterally introduced extra customs checks on their borders, which are in breach of the Schengen agreement, but, again, the EU has had to learn to live with it.

The lesson from those examples is that EU law is a flexible notion. In fact, the European Union Act 2011 explicitly states that EU regulations and directives have force in this country only when Parliament allows them to, so we must be far more willing to set aside the authority of the European Court of Justice, and

crucially we should not let dreary treaties and EU protocols get in the way of taking urgent action to stimulate our economy.

Let us say to the EU that we are going to delay the agency workers directive, making it clear to the institution that it will have to learn to live with that and that we will not accept an infraction procedure. Let us make it clear, during the current negotiations on the budget, that we intend to disapply, for instance, the working time directive, which was mentioned earlier, until we get this economy out of recession.

The European Union would complain, but, if the evidence of the examples I have cited is anything to go by, it would probably take it at least three years to get around to doing anything about it. Such a move might do something else, too. People keep saying, “These European politicians have no intention of having a treaty; they just won’t negotiate with us, so we have to give up,” but if we unilaterally did those things we would suddenly find that there was an appetite for a long-term solution to such issues. It would be a catalyst to get negotiations moving.

Bob Stewart: Will my hon. Friend give way?

George Eustice: I am sorry, but I have almost finished, and I do not want to eat into other people’s time.

Negotiators in the Foreign Office would probably wince at the idea of adopting such a stance, but it is the only way we can cut that Gordian knot, sort out the EU and get our economy moving again, and I very much hope that the Minister takes those comments on board.

9.2 pm

Kris Hopkins (Keighley) (Con): I, like many in the country, am angered at the continued erosion of our sovereignty, and at the shipping of our powers across the channel to Brussels. Businesses, the judicial system and citizens of this country are subject to a growing federalisation—to federalist power—that seeks to engulf not only the economy but our politics.

The unfolding eurozone disaster is an example of the chaotic and unaccountable actions that have been allowed to play out within the European project, and that in itself is bad enough, but the failure of eurozone members to take responsibility, to lay the facts before each other and to own up to mistakes is what concerns me more. I am a Eurosceptic, and I struggle to find anything to respect in an institution that cannot sign off its own accounts, let alone manage someone else’s.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): For 32 years the UK has been a net contributor, not a recipient, of EU moneys. If it were a pension scheme, everybody would say, “Let’s get out now.” Does that not underline the need for the people of the United Kingdom to make up their own minds in a referendum, and not to pay into a system that takes plenty but gives little?

Kris Hopkins: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I look forward to campaigning for such a referendum to be put into our next manifesto.

I welcome and support the referendum lock, and I look forward to seeing the work of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary to ensure that we bring

powers back from Brussels, and initiate reform of the European Union. That was part of our election promise, and we should see it through.

I watched the Conservative Government in the 1990s rip themselves apart over Europe. After 13 years in opposition, I am dismayed that after just 18 months in government, we are sitting here again with the same tension. There is an element of self indulgence here and, if we are not careful, it will be a route to self-destruction. We are facing the greatest economic upheaval in 100 years.

Justin Tomlinson (North Swindon) (Con): Will my hon. Friend explain why this was the second most popular issue on the e-petitions list?

Kris Hopkins: As I said in response to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), if there is such support for the matter, we should campaign to ensure that it is part of our party's next election manifesto.

Should we compromise on financial stability, growth and maintaining low interest rates for the sake of losing our ability to negotiate reform, and to negotiate to bring powers back to this country? If we compromise now, we will have a lame duck Government for a couple of years while the world watches, knowing that we will have a referendum that might compromise that position. We have the best hand in a generation, and we should play it to full effect.

This is the wrong motion at the wrong time for this country. This is Great Britain, and we do not run away when Europe gets into trouble. In fact, we have a reputation for sorting out those poor fellows. It is in Britain's interest to be at the table.

Richard Drax: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Kris Hopkins: No.

The global economy is changing rapidly, and the focus of power is moving east. We need to be able to use all the opportunities, including through the European Union, to participate in that growth of wealth. Some hon. Members have said today that it would not be democratic if the 100,000 votes do not win the day, but I have an opinion and other hon. Members have a different one. That is democracy, and I will vote against the motion.

9.7 pm

Mr Richard Shepherd (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): On 21 February 1992, there was a Second Reading debate on a private Member's Bill that I had introduced on a referendum on the Maastricht treaty. It was anticipatory, and the occasion was the last one on which Mrs Thatcher voted as a Member of this House. It is not because of vanity that I mention that, but because of a remarkable speech. This is an appeal to Labour Members. I will quote that remarkable speech, which was made by Peter Shore—those who knew him will understand why I say that—the then Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney. He said that a

“referendum...offers one of the few possibilities to remedy a fundamental weakness in our constitution. We have no written constitution and no procedures to protect and entrench features of our national and constitutional life. Everything can be changed by a simple majority. Many other countries, as we know, have

quite elaborate procedures requiring a majority of two thirds for changes in constitutional matters and arrangements, often backed up with public referendums.”

Then he comes to the burden of the argument:

“We have no such defence. Indeed, previously we did not need them, because only this generation of British parliamentary representatives has contemplated handing to others the great prizes of national independence, self-government and the rule of law under our own elected representatives. It would not have occurred to a previous generation to hand to others that which we prize most greatly and have given to other countries throughout the world in the past 50 years. That is the novelty of the proposition, against which, because we did not think it conceivable, we have no defences. A referendum is a major constitutional device for defending the rights of the British people and our constitution.”—[*Official Report*, 21 February 1992; Vol. 204, c. 590.]

I was personally moved by that because it described the thread that ran through our long march for liberty, with the ordinary people coming to effect the election of this House, and those who represented them knowing that only they could make the law by which we were governed. In this, the concept of the rule of law, there has to be proper due process. That debate, which took place immediately before the election, was very controversial. Subsequently, I moved the referendum amendment to the Maastricht Bill.

All the arguments advanced by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary amounted to what we have heard so often regarding ordinary and constitutional legislation: “It is not the right time.” My hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Jacob Rees-Mogg) put it very brilliantly as he dissected what that amounts to. A referendum essentially says, “Trust the people”, and that is the one thing that the Executive of this House are loth to do because they do not know what the outcome will be. However, we should respond to the generosity of the Government in allowing a Committee of this House to accept a petition from the public outside. We need a referendum.

9.11 pm

Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con): I have always been proud to be a moderate, one-nation Conservative and a supporter of this coalition Government. Like the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Kate Hoey), my Euroscepticism is driven by internationalism, and I fear the dangers of a “little Europe”.

I welcome the work that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary have done to limit our exposure to eurozone bail-outs, provide a referendum lock on future treaties and reduce the EU budget, and I strongly support what they say about the benefits of being in Europe but not run by Europe. However, I believe that all three major parties are mistaken in opposing the motion, and more greatly so in imposing harsh Whips on their supporters.

This cross-party Back-Bench motion reflects a profound disquiet in the country at the fact that, for decades, we have had no say on our relationship with Europe, and it reflects widespread popular support for an opportunity for people to have that say. I was born in 1978, and in no time during my lifetime, nor in the adult lifetimes of the vast majority of hon. Members, has there been an opportunity to debate publicly our membership, or even the terms of our membership, of the EU. Eight out of 10 people eligible to vote today have never had this opportunity. There should have been a referendum on

[Mr Robin Walker]

the Lisbon treaty. I am proud that Conservative Members voted against that treaty when Labour disgracefully broke its promise to hold a referendum on the constitution that it replaced.

There have been many debates in this House on aspects of European policy, but none has triggered a referendum or engaged the public in the way that today's motion could. Many hon. Members, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Montgomeryshire (Glyn Davies), have very reasonably criticised the idea of a three-way referendum. I would far rather have supported a straight yes or no question on renegotiating the powers of Brussels. That is why I would have unreservedly supported the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice). Sadly, as that amendment was not selected, I find myself faced with a dilemma. In a three-way referendum, there is a risk that the wrong answer can be achieved with a significant minority vote, as the Prime Minister has explained. I have never argued for an in/out referendum because I do not believe that that is the right question to ask.

Mr Gyimah: My hon. Friend makes a very passionate case. Was not repatriating powers from Brussels in our last election manifesto, and is it not therefore Conservative party policy and the Government's policy?

Mr Walker: I am grateful for that intervention. I agree that that was in our manifesto. Unfortunately, that does not appear to be the policy of the coalition Government. That is my concern.

I support the third option set out on the Order Paper: renegotiating our membership to base it on trade and co-operation. That is what we signed up for in the first place. The question comes down to whether one believes that the risks inherent in a three-way referendum outweigh the benefits of what in my view, in the view of the last Conservative manifesto and, I believe, in the view of the vast majority of the British people is the right thing to do. As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Ms Stuart) said, it comes down to whether one trusts the people, and I trust the British people. I believe that if they were offered such a choice and were engaged in a reasoned debate on the three options, they would do as they did with the AV referendum and come to a sensible conclusion.

Mark Pritchard *rose*—

Mr Walker: I will not give way again, I am afraid.

I do not buy the argument that now is the wrong time. The motion states that a Bill should be brought forward in the next Session of Parliament. If the eurozone crisis has not been resolved by then, we are all in much greater trouble than we thought.

In conclusion, I am no Euro-fanatic and have no great desire to earn the label of rebel because I strongly support many of the steps that the coalition Government have taken. As my hon. Friend the Member for Beverley and Holderness (Mr Stuart) pointed out, we are the representatives of our constituents, not just delegates. It is not right to vote on an issue simply because of the number of letters we have received or according to what we hear on the doorstep, but as representatives we should certainly take those things into account.

I spent much of my weekend talking to constituents about this issue, along with many others. Everyone I asked felt it was right that they should have a choice. I received many letters in support of the motion and only one against, from a retired Labour councillor. Among those letters, one that made an impression was from my constituent, Mr Raymond Cross, who wrote:

"I am almost 87 years of age, served and offered my life to my King and Country...in the army during the second world war. I still have the original 'Britain & Europe' booklet issued by the Ted Heath Government in July 1971. That is what we voted on in 1975.

There should be a free vote on this referendum. Members of Parliament are there to debate the pros and cons of the motion put forward not to obey slavishly the will of"

their parties. I profoundly regret that there is no such free vote. I am a passionate supporter of my party and this coalition Government, but it is a well-established convention that constituency should come before party and, still more importantly, that country should come before all. On that basis, I shall support the motion tonight.

9.16 pm

David Morris (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): I contribute to this debate as a Eurosceptic who believes that too many of our powers and freedoms and too much of our money have been handed over to Brussels.

For years, we have argued desperately and even begged to maintain our membership of the EU without being ruled by an undemocratic federal state. We failed largely because the whole basis of the European project was to have a federal country with its own currency. The assumption was that even countries such as Denmark and Britain would come round eventually and join the euro. After that, we would all become one big federal country like America. That situation made it almost impossible for people like me who want to co-operate in Europe, but to remain British.

Things have changed significantly in recent years. The euro is in turmoil. The dream, or perhaps the nightmare, of a federal state with one currency is nearly dead. It cannot now happen. That gives us an opportunity. For years we have talked about a two-speed Europe. There is now an opportunity for a two-system Europe. Those who want closer union can have it, while countries such as Britain, Greece and Denmark can be more loosely aligned. That is what my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary talked about when he used the phrase,

"In Europe, but not run by Europe."

It seems that there now have to be two systems, whether Brussels likes it or not. The good news for us Eurosceptics is that for the first time since the 1980s, we have a Government who are genuinely committed to negotiating for that. If negotiations fail on the two-system Europe, we will have to reappraise our approach.

For now, we must grasp the opportunity. This is the first time in decades when we have had the opportunity to be in Europe, but not in a federal state where we are dictated to by people with whom we disagree. We are now in a stronger position and we need to show strength. This window of opportunity will not exist for ever, so I want the Government to go back to Europe and get our powers back.

Most people who advocated this referendum would be happy if we got the benefits of Europe, namely free trade, without all the red tape. If we can do that, we can

put the issue to bed for ever. We would save ourselves from extra tax and bureaucracy. That is agreed across the House. Saving ourselves from both those things will be vital for economic growth. I think we now all agree that a federal Europe is dead. Britain will now never join the euro, and we have the chance to renegotiate—we have that assurance from the Prime Minister. Let us do that while the opportunity exists, and if that fails, we can have a referendum on leaving the EU.

The motion has the passion of a broad, belief-based ideology, and we can read it in any way we want depending on our own views. I believe that I signed up to point (c) in the motion—let us renegotiate. In Europe, but not run by Europe.

9.20 pm

Mark Lazarowicz (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op): I had not intended to speak in the debate, but having sat through some three hours or so earlier and heard a number of points of view, I thought I would take the opportunity to make a few points.

I fully accept that the House should take very seriously the number of signatures on the e-petition and the views that have been expressed to many MPs. I certainly accept that they are expressions of widespread concern. However, Members must accept that although some people feel very strongly about the issue, that does not mean that all people do. It is only a year and a half since we had a general election, and at that point none of the major parties stood on a platform of an in/out referendum of the type that is being suggested today. We must question how democratic it would be if we were to vote tonight for a policy that very few of us stood on in the last general election.

The motion is about leaving the EU, or changing our relationship with it in such a way that we would effectively no longer be part of it. My reasons for opposing it are simple, and some of them have already been stated. First, there is the powerful argument that the EU has been a defender and supporter of security and peace in Europe since it was established. If Britain were to withdraw from the EU, it would bring into question the EU's whole *raison d'être*, and I do not want us to a return to a Europe of instability and, ultimately, conflict between member states. We have been lucky over the past 70 years, but for many centuries Europe was riven by all sorts of terrible warfare, and we do not want to see that return.

Much more immediately, I support colleagues on the Labour Benches, and some on the Government Benches, who have pointed out that there would be a real danger to our economy, because there would be a danger to the European economy, if we were to begin negotiations over the next 18 months on Britain withdrawing from Europe or renegotiating our relationship in such a way that we would no longer be recognisable as part of the EU.

I have noticed this evening that the view put forward by the Eurosceptics seems to be that their ideal relationship with the EU would be something like that of Norway and Switzerland. Leaving aside the fact that there is no suggestion anywhere of that being a realistic option to put on the negotiating table, as has been said, everything that Norway and Switzerland do in the economic field is affected by the decisions of the EU. As part of their agreements they are required to accept most European

legislation. Where relevant, they have to accept the decisions of the European Court, and where they are not bound to accept EU legislation, they are certainly heavily influenced by it. The difference between those countries and us is that we would not have any voice, because we would not have representation in Europe either in the democratic institutions such as the European Parliament, in the European Council or elsewhere.

I believe that we need Britain to play a stronger role in Europe, and I want our Government to take an active role to defend our interests in Europe. I hope that one good thing, at least, will come out of tonight's debate, and that some of the politicians who have played with a Eurosceptic position over the years as a way of trying to win votes might recognise that they have played with fire and are responsible for the consequences of their action tonight, which is the rebellion by Tory Back Benchers. I hope that there will now be a more positive approach to Europe—criticism, yes, but at the same time let us recognise its benefits to our country. Let us ensure that we work in Europe to make it succeed, rather than go down a road that would lead to an economic downturn for this country and economic damage to Europe as a whole.

9.24 pm

Nick Boles (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): I have listened with great attention to all of the speeches for the past five hours, with the occasional break to take in and then expel a little liquid. I can tell the House that the passion and the idealism, and even the personal courage, has all been on one side of the debate—the side of those who support the motion.

I agree with much that those hon. Ladies and hon. Gentlemen on both sides of the House believe and want. I agree with them that Governments of all stripes have given too much power to the EU; that we need to renegotiate the terms of our membership, so that it focuses more on economic matters of trade and co-operation, and less on other issues that Europe was not set up to deal with; and that the British people should have the final say.

However, I will not vote with them tonight for the following reason. Although they have the passion, the idealism and the personal courage, I am afraid that they lack good sense. There will be only one time in the foreseeable future when we can hold a referendum on our membership of the EU—it has been 40 years since the last one, and we are likely to get only one shot in the next 40—and we must use it well. We must hold that referendum when it is most likely to assist us in getting the deal from Europe that we want.

Andrew Percy: I can predict exactly what will happen. If we propose a referendum at a time of economic growth, everyone will say, "Now is not the time to have a referendum, because everything is going so swimmingly."

Nick Boles: I thank my hon. Friend, but that was not my point. My point on timing is simply this: we need the promise—or, indeed, the threat—of that referendum to persuade our European partners to give us some of what we want in that negotiation.

Richard Drax: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Nick Boles: I will not give way again yet.

If an imminent referendum hangs over that negotiation, the Prime Minister has a hand to play. He can say, “If you don’t give me the concessions I need, and if you don’t meet the demands of the British people, I will not be able to win that referendum, and you will lose one of the biggest members of the EU for ever.” However, if we have the referendum now, we will entirely waste the whole exercise. If we have a referendum in the next three years, before we have completed that renegotiation, and on a muddled question with three options, we will entirely forfeit our best negotiating tool.

Mark Pritchard: I commend my hon. Friend for his consistency, and although I do not agree with him, I respect him for his convictions. Will he tell the House what timetable he envisages for a referendum? Would it be in this Parliament or the next one?

Nick Boles: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention, not least because he brings me to the conclusion that I probably would otherwise have forgotten. He asks exactly the right question, but I do not have news that will cheer up Conservative Members.

The first step before we start that renegotiation is, I am afraid, achieving a majority Conservative Government. We cannot start a renegotiation of our entire membership of the EU when the Government speak with two voices. We need a unified position, and we do not have it now, which I regret. I fought like all Conservatives for a majority Government, but we did not get it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Nick Boles: I will not be giving way again.

The second step is to start a renegotiation, which will probably take two or three years. We can promise that referendum in about year four of the next Parliament, after the Conservatives have won a majority. We might then get the Europe we want.

If we do what those brave hon. Ladies and hon. Gentlemen want us to do, we will waste our chance and get no clear answer to that referendum question. We might find ourselves in an unreformed and unreformable EU for the rest of my lifetime. I am not willing to risk that, which is why I will vote against the motion.

9.29 pm

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): Many Members have referred to the part that they played in the 1975 referendum, and sadly I am one of those who is old enough to have participated. It is interesting to note that that referendum followed a renegotiation of our terms with the Common Market, as it then was, and the question put to the electorate was: “Do we stay in or do we leave?” I voted to leave, and I am pleased that I did so, because I have been consistent throughout. On my selection as a candidate and on the doorstep during the election, I said consistently that I had voted no and that I had not changed my mind, and that the Government position was one thing but mine was another. I am not prepared to break that bond of trust with the electorate.

It has been mentioned that the electorate are becoming disconnected. To a great fanfare of trumpets, the Government introduced the e-petition system, but within

weeks they have destroyed the public’s confidence in it. It was as certain as night following day that a motion for an in/out referendum would result from an e-petition, but what have the Government done? They have cast it aside. There have been other distractions. We have been told that it is only eighth or 10th on the list of people’s concerns. This time last year, we were ploughing ahead with legislation on the alternative vote referendum. On the No. 45 from Cleethorpes to Immingham, people were not demanding a referendum on AV, but we allowed ourselves to be distracted.

I am pleased that my Member of Parliament, the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Austin Mitchell), is in his place, because he will know that the scars run deep in our part of the world following the destruction of the fishing industry which resulted from the sacrifice made at the negotiations to enter the Common Market in the first place.

Jim Shannon: Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the national opinion poll today showing that 81% of those who voted Conservative, 62% of those who voted for the Liberal Democrats and 61% of those who voted Labour would vote for the motion? We ignore the electorate and national opinion polls at our peril.

Martin Vickers: I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. The Government and the Opposition parties ignore the electorate’s view on this at their peril. We must consider the real people of England, as I like to call them. Yesterday I was at a civic service for a town mayor in Barton-upon-Humber. Members on both sides will have been to these occasions. The real people, those who run our community groups and churches—they are the big society—feel very deeply about this but think that they are being ignored and cast aside. Unless the Government come to terms with that in the near future, they will pay a high price.

I said earlier this year in the debate on votes for prisoners that all Governments take decisions that they know to be against the overwhelming views of those they represent. If they continue to refuse to grant the people a referendum, it will become one of those issues. In fact, it would be something more: it would take away two of their lives. The electorate are disillusioned and cynical about the body politic and the whole political process. If we deny them this opportunity again, the cynicism and disillusionment will grow. I am proud to say that I shall be supporting the motion this evening, and I urge all Members to do so.

9.33 pm

Mr James Clappison (Hertsmere) (Con): This has been a good debate with some outstanding speeches, particularly from my hon. Friends the Members for Gravelly Hill (Mr Holloway) and for Peterborough (Mr Jackson). There have been timing issues during the debate. I have to say to my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles) that to keep saying, “Now is not the right time”, is likely to engender frustration in the other member of the relationship. I believe that a referendum is long overdue. It has been a long time—1975—since we had a referendum. The world is a different place and the EU is certainly a different institution from what it was when we knew it as the Common Market.

There were a few lonely voices in that referendum campaign who said that Europe was a political project and not just an economic project. Others might take a different view, but I think that those who said that have been proved right in spades. The other case made in that referendum campaign has been comprehensively disproved by subsequent events. As the European Union has changed incrementally, granting more powers and competences to itself through successive treaties—the Single European Act, the treaty of Nice, the treaty of Maastricht, the treaty of Amsterdam and the treaty of Lisbon—it has changed beyond recognition.

We were right to offer the electorate a referendum on the treaty of Lisbon. Again on the timing, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made that commitment to hold a referendum until that treaty had been ratified and stayed absolutely true to its terms. His commitment meant that if a Conservative Government had come to power at any point before 3 o'clock on 3 November 2009, amidst all the events taking place in 2008 and 2009, we would have been obliged to hold a referendum. I am sure that my right hon. Friend would have stayed true to that commitment and held a referendum, but now the electorate feel that they have been promised a referendum many times. There has been no shortage of promises, and many electorates in other countries have been allowed to hold a referendum, but not the British electorate.

People today are waiting to have their say on the European Union. We have made our arguments about the European Union in this debate, and we have heard some arguments in favour of it from Opposition Members. Let them put those issues to the people and trust them to make the decision. We cannot be wrong to trust the people: that is why we are having these Back-Bench business debates. This is an excellent example of what can be achieved through such debates. We should send out the message in this debate that we are prepared to trust our constituents, who are the ones who sent us here.

Now is the right time. We have seen much power transferred to the European Union. We need to free ourselves from the dead hand of European Union regulation to give ourselves a chance of achieving the higher growth rates achieved by non-members of the European Union and give our industry a chance. All that makes this an ideal time to have a referendum and set out the terms of that referendum. I say to my right hon. and hon. Friends and to other Government Members that if we keep making these promises to the electorate and not fulfilling them, we will pay a heavy price in lost trust with that electorate. We have to remember that today.

9.37 pm

Mr Sam Gyimah (East Surrey) (Con): I have listened to the debate for the past five hours, and it is clear that we on the Conservative Benches are all Eurosceptics now. I speak in this debate as a Eurosceptic, and I could not put the case against the EU better than some of my colleagues have. However, I will not be voting against the motion, because I believe that anger and frustration are not enough to form our considerations; we need a clear-sighted, clear-eyed strategy to move forward.

Let me mention some of the considerations that we need to take. My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Mr Jenkin) said—I paraphrase, probably

poorly, in which case I am sorry—that we need to hold the Government's feet to the fire to ensure that something is done. However, we must remember that to lead the country on this issue we need to be a united rather than a divided party. In 2010, just 13% of voters described the Conservative party as divided, but at the height of the Maastricht rebellion 50% described us as divided. We can all stand for our principles and say that this is only about our consciences—or, as my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Jacob Rees-Mogg) said, that nothing is more important, including the coalition—but we need to remember that in the reality of the political world, if we want to achieve something we have to balance those factors. We know from the 1997 election result that we need to be mindful of that.

Why do I raise that point? Because when we were kicked out of office for being divided, we suffered the greatest setback in the European project. During those 13 years, the Labour Government opted into the social chapter, which was responsible for a lot of the regulations that have suffocated business and stifled growth, and in 2007 the Labour Government signed the Lisbon treaty. For all our high-minded principle in the mid-1990s, when we got kicked out of government because of division we set back our own project.

Zac Goldsmith: My hon. Friend is speaking as though this were a Conservative party issue, but we can see from the debate today that it is a cross-party issue. The question that we face today is: do we trust the people to make this decision or not? The pros and cons of Europe can be discussed later.

Mr Gyimah: I thank my hon. Friend for that. I am not speaking as though this were a Conservative party issue, but we can see that the media, in every interview, have pitted Conservative against Conservative. We need to be careful about divisions on our side.

Of course people need to decide, but we should be careful not to jump from responding to an e-petition that has been signed by a number of people to assuming that this issue is on every voter's mind. A number of voters will talk about the fact that they care about their jobs. A number will say that they want their streets to be secure. Others will say that they want their children to have a better life than their own. National polls show that when the issue of Europe is considered on its own, everyone is hostile to it, but in general elections, its salience disappears. We need to adopt a very clear-eyed strategy in dealing with this.

I will not be supporting the motion. It should be clear from the debate today, especially to those who are saying that we would be better off out, that, with the eurozone on its knees, we now have the best opportunity to negotiate the best conditions for Britain. It would be catastrophic for us to walk away from the EU, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr Hollobone) suggested, as that would result in our giving up influence.

9.41 pm

Mark Reckless (Rochester and Strood) (Con): I am sure that the constituents of East Surrey will have followed the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for East Surrey (Mr Gyimah) with great interest this evening.

[Mark Reckless]

In the 1975 referendum, the country was assured—by a Conservative Prime Minister, I am afraid—that there was no question of any erosion of national sovereignty. The people were told that we would have a veto over any important issue, yet those same people have now seen that what they were told was a Common Market has become a political union in which we can be outvoted, whether we like it or not. They see other countries not following the rules when our country does follow them, and they see an institution whose accounts have not been signed off for some 20 years, yet we continue to give it money year after year. In the coming year, we are giving the European Union £10.9 billion. That is the net contribution, taking account of what we get back. Indeed, in every year except one, we have given more money to the EU than we have got back. That one year was 1974, the year before we last had a referendum on this matter. That was the only year in which we received more money from the EU than we gave. Members who have yet to make up their mind might like to reflect, in the light of that £10.9 billion, that when putting pressure on the EU to reduce our budget contribution, nothing would concentrate its mind more than the knowledge that this country might hold a referendum on our membership of the EU.

There now has to be a referendum. The people have heard too many promises, made by too many parties over too many years. They now want to decide for themselves what our future in Europe, or as an independent country, might be. There has been significant movement on this side of the House during today's debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Kris Hopkins) asked why we were having this discussion, 18 months into the Parliament, and why there was so much disagreement. He wondered why the coalition did not agree on this matter. The reason is that the 57 Liberal Democrat coalition Members were given the referendum on the alternative vote that they wanted, yet a far larger number on the Conservative Benches have not been given the referendum that we want on our country's position in the EU.

Martin Horwood: We have discussed this already. The Conservative manifesto did not make a commitment to an in/out referendum; it committed to a referendum lock, which we have achieved through the European Union Act 2011.

Mark Reckless: The Conservative party had offered a referendum on Lisbon. The Liberal Democrats had offered a referendum with a choice between the EU with Lisbon and leaving the EU. However, what the country got, through the coalition agreement, was the Lisbon treaty and no referendum on anything. Three or four days ago, the Liberal Democrats' website was still campaigning for an in/out referendum, but that has now been removed. Not only have they gone against what they told the electorate on student fees, but they have done the same on Europe.

Sheryll Murray: I voted in the last referendum in 1974. It was the first time I had—[*Interruption.*] The question was whether we wanted to stay in the European economic area. We have never had a referendum on whether we want to be members of the European Union.

Mark Reckless: My hon. Friend is quite right. We have the opportunity this evening to give our constituents that referendum—to decide whether they want to be governed by people whom they elect, whom they can hold to account, whom they can throw out if they do not agree with how we vote, whether we make the decisions for them, or whether instead a qualified majority of 26 other countries will decide what the law of this country should be while we pay £10.9 billion a year for the privilege. That is the decision. It is no longer a decision that we can hope to keep within this Westminster bubble, without our constituents having their say. Sooner or later, that decision is going to be made.

We heard earlier that there was going to be a referendum and that a Conservative-led or a coalition Government of some stripe would renegotiate sooner rather than later. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary told us that they were going to bring back powers over social and employment policy, but what is key now is whether our constituents will get to vote on the outcome. Do they want to stay in with whatever improvements we have been able to negotiate, however great or otherwise they might be, or do they want to come out and be an independent country, trading with Europe but governing ourselves? I say to Members, particularly those who are undecided, that that decision must now be our constituents' decision. That is the way in which we will restore belief and trust in politics.

9.46 pm

Mr Aidan Burley (Cannock Chase) (Con): I support the principle of having an EU referendum, yet I will not support the motion. Let me explain why those two positions are not contradictory.

I am on record as saying that our membership of the EU should be put to the British people. I am 32, and I find it incredible that the last referendum took place four years before I was even born. One has to be 55 to have voted in it. It is therefore understandable that people of my generation do not feel that they have had their say on Europe. They see the EU interfering in our everyday lives, from how fruit and vegetables are packaged, to the number of announcements on trains and, most insidious of all, how long we are allowed to work in our jobs—for just 48 hours a week. [*Interruption.*] It is clear to me that what was put to the people in 1975—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. The hon. Gentleman has been waiting courteously; he deserves a proper hearing, and that is what he must get.

Mr Burley: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

It is clear that what was put to the people in 1975—we should remember that they voted yes—was the Common Market, but the European Union that exists today would be unrecognisable to those who voted then. When Britain joined the Common Market, it signed up to a free trade agreement. Since then, the power of European institutions has changed beyond all recognition. I am delighted that the Government have enshrined in law that a referendum must be held before any further powers are ceded to Brussels. This is a major step—one that I have supported with enthusiasm.

Frankly, given the EU's propensities for creating new treaties, I suspect it will not be long before the people get the vote that they desire and deserve. That vote will be important. If the public vote in favour of a future treaty, it will rule out for another generation any thought of us ever leaving the EU. If the public vote to reject it, I believe it would be difficult, if not impossible, for there not to be a subsequent vote on our withdrawal. Given that the referendum that I want is inevitable, as a result of the laws passed by the Conservatives, I must think carefully about the current motion and its impact on the people of Cannock Chase.

Andrew Percy: I respect my hon. Friend's views. Like him, I was born after the last referendum on the matter, but the problem with his argument is that it does not give us the opportunity to have a say on whether we want to be in the EU. That is what my and his generation want to have. We have never been asked that before, and it is about time that we were.

Mr Burley: I think that our generation will be given that choice.

I must consider the impact that passing this motion would have on my constituents. That is the key point. Business men have told me that there are signs that give cause for optimism, but that the recovery is fragile.

Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr Burley: No, I will not.

Those business men's fear, and mine, is that the announcement of a referendum, involving the campaign extending to 2013 for which the motion calls, could have a devastating effect on business confidence and investment. This morning I spoke to a business man from my constituency who had come here to be given a tour of the House of Commons. He works for an international company in the private sector which has invested heavily in the United Kingdom and employs several hundred people in my constituency, and he has already been told by the members of his executive board in America that the potential further instability caused by a referendum could cause them to question future investment not just in Cannock Chase, but in the United Kingdom and the whole of Europe.

Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr Burley: I will not.

At a time when business is crying out for stability, a referendum would move it in totally the opposite direction, creating yet more instability when what we need is foreign investment. While that business man would not oppose a referendum in principle, now is simply not the time for one.

I think that the referendum that we all want is coming, and will be a result of the policies that have already been backed by the Government and by the EU itself. However, I think that to hold that referendum now, regardless of the result, would create a significant risk for our economy and for Cannock Chase in particular.

I say to every Member who supports the motion, "Ask yourself one question: are you willing to jeopardise the recovery?" [*Interruption.*]

British people are worried—[*Interruption.*] Mr Speaker, British people are worried about bread-and-butter issues. They are worried about jobs and about their livelihoods. I do not want to do anything that puts my constituents' livelihoods at risk. The time will come for people to vote on whether we stay in the EU, but, in my opinion, that time is not today. This is a debate for another day. Voting for the motion would be an indulgence, and I hope Members will vote accordingly. [*Interruption.*]

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. The House must come to order. It will want to hear Mr Christopher Chope.

9.52 pm

Mr Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): In essence, the debate is about whether we are representatives of the people, or delegates of the Government or the shadow Government. I think that those who have argued today in support of our being representatives of the people have won the debate—a debate in which I am proud to have been able to participate, having sat here for the best part of five and a half hours.

This time last night I was at a polling station in Tunisia, observing the election results. People were queuing for more than three hours just to exercise their right to vote. It is vital that, in Tunisia and in this country, the people do not elect representatives and then find that those representatives go back on their word. There is a certain worry in Tunisia that that may happen in the case of the party with the most votes. I believe, however, that in this country participation in elections has been plummeting because on too many occasions we have promised something to the electorate and then let them down.

I do not think that we should hold a referendum until we have had a chance to conduct a proper evaluation of the costs and benefits of our membership of the European Union. In the last Parliament I tabled a Bill to achieve just that, which was supported by both the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Front Benches. Now neither of those Front Benches supports the idea of such an audit. Why not? I think that that is indicative of the present cynicism about the issue of Europe.

As for timing, many people have forgotten that the forthcoming seven-year budget presents us with a great opportunity. Once every seven years, we have a veto over the EU budget. I think it a pity that the Foreign Secretary effectively indicated today that he was satisfied that we would be doing very well if the next seven-year budget contained only an increase in line with inflation. We are telling local authorities and people working for Governments that they must make real-terms cuts. Why are the Government selling us short by not entering into those negotiations in a much more hard-headed way? If we pass this motion, or give it a tremendous amount of support, it will strengthen the Government's hand in their efforts to secure a better deal and negotiate a reduction in our contribution to the EU budget, rather than a real-terms increase. The Government have fallen short of their responsibilities to the people on too many occasions, and the message coming from the House

[*Mr Christopher Chope*]

tonight is that the Government must listen and the EU must listen and we, the people, must press the point home that we want a referendum. We want to trust the people.

9.55 pm

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): It is customary when summing up to say, “This has been a good debate,” but this has been an amazing debate. We must thank the hon. Member for North East Derbyshire (Natascha Engel) and the Backbench Business Committee for putting it on, and we must also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bury North (Mr Nuttall) for having opened it so sensibly so many hours ago. I have sat and listened to most of the debate, but as there were 52 speeches, I must apologise to the majority of contributors because I will not be able to respond to what they said.

Let me say at the beginning, however, that I must praise the Prime Minister. If it were not for him, we would not have the Backbench Business Committee. If it were not for him, we would not have petitions either, and it is the petitioning of this House of Commons that has brought this debate into being. I also thank the Prime Minister for his speech on 26 May 2009, when he encouraged returning power to the people. He said that in the past when debates were held in this House, the arguments went one way and the other, but then the bells rang and the Whips got into action and Members floated through the Commons like a herd of sheep. That is not going to happen tonight. I am going to take the advice of my Prime Minister when he encouraged every Member to be independent-minded, to put his constituents first, to put his country first, and to put narrow party interests last. I say, “Well done, Prime Minister,” and I will be voting in accordance with my conscience tonight.

It is unfortunate that some of the Whips have not quite got the Prime Minister’s message yet, but there is a rule of thumb in this House: if the three Front Benches agree on something, it is absolutely wrong. That is the situation tonight.

I say to my Whips that a mistake has been made tonight. The Backbench Business Committee was set up to test the will of Parliament, not in order for us to vote on party lines. This is exactly the sort of debate on which we should have a free vote. I am of the opinion that if there had been a free vote tonight, this motion would have been carried.

Lights have started flashing, instructing me to shut up early, although I thought I could go on for a little longer. I am afraid I must apologise to all 52 members who contributed for not having had time to comment on their speeches, but I will write to them.

Question put.

The House proceeded to a Division.

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Is there any reason why the vote is being delayed?

Mr Speaker: The Tellers are in. I say to the hon. Gentleman, who has been here a long time—[*Interruption.*] I do not know why people are referring to three-figure

numbers; the hon. Gentleman has not been here that long. His patience will be rewarded. He does not have long to wait and must calm himself. I like to see him in a state of permanent calm. That is my ambition.

The House having divided: Ayes 111, Noes 483.

Division No. 372]

[9.59 pm

AYES

Andrew, Stuart	McCabe, Steve
Baker, Steve	McCartney, Jason
Baron, Mr John	McCartney, Karl
Bingham, Andrew	McCrea, Dr William
Binley, Mr Brian	McDonnell, John
Blackman, Bob	McPartland, Stephen
Brady, Mr Graham	Mercer, Patrick
Bridgen, Andrew	Mills, Nigel
Brine, Mr Steve	Mitchell, Austin
Bruce, Fiona	Morris, Anne Marie
Byles, Dan	Morris, James
Campbell, Mr Gregory	Mosley, Stephen
Campbell, Mr Ronnie	Murray, Sheryll
Carswell, Mr Douglas	Nokes, Caroline
Cash, Mr William	Nuttall, Mr David
Chope, Mr Christopher	Offord, Mr Matthew
Clappison, Mr James	Paisley, Ian
Cooper, Rosie	Parish, Neil
Corbyn, Jeremy	Patel, Priti
Crouch, Tracey	Percy, Andrew
Cruddas, Jon	Pritchard, Mark
Cryer, John	Reckless, Mark
Davidson, Mr Ian	Redwood, rh Mr John
Davies, David T. C.	Rees-Mogg, Jacob
(<i>Monmouth</i>)	Reevell, Simon
Davies, Philip	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Davis, rh Mr David	Rosindell, Andrew
de Bois, Nick	Sanders, Mr Adrian
Dinenage, Caroline	Shannon, Jim
Dodds, rh Mr Nigel	Shepherd, Mr Richard
Donaldson, rh Mr Jeffrey M.	Simpson, David
Dorries, Nadine	Skinner, Mr Dennis
Drax, Richard	Smith, rh Mr Andrew
Engel, Natascha	Smith, Henry
Field, rh Mr Frank	Stevenson, John
Field, Mr Mark	Stewart, Bob
Fullbrook, Lorraine	Stewart, Iain
Godsiff, Mr Roger	Streeter, Mr Gary
Goldsmith, Zac	Stringer, Graham
Gray, Mr James	Stuart, Ms Gisela
Heaton-Harris, Chris	Sturdy, Julian
Henderson, Gordon	Tapsell, rh Sir Peter
Hermon, Lady	Tomlinson, Justin
Hoey, Kate	Turner, Mr Andrew
Hollingbery, George	Vickers, Martin
Holloway, Mr Adam	Walker, Mr Charles
Hopkins, Kelvin	Walker, Mr Robin
Jackson, Mr Stewart	Weatherley, Mike
Jenkin, Mr Bernard	Wheeler, Heather
Jones, Mr Marcus	Whittaker, Craig
Kelly, Chris	Whittingdale, Mr John
Leadsom, Andrea	Wilson, Sammy
Lefroy, Jeremy	Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Leigh, Mr Edward	Wood, Mike
Lewis, Dr Julian	
Lucas, Caroline	
Lumley, Karen	
Main, Mrs Anne	

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Mr Peter Bone and
Mr Philip Hollobone**

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Adams, Nigel
Abrahams, Debbie	Ainsworth, rh Mr Bob

Aldous, Peter	Campbell, rh Sir Menzies	Farron, Tim	Hoban, Mr Mark
Alexander, rh Danny	Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Featherstone, Lynne	Hodge, rh Margaret
Alexander, rh Mr Douglas	Carmichael, Neil	Fitzpatrick, Jim	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Alexander, Heidi	Caton, Martin	Flello, Robert	Hood, Mr Jim
Ali, Rushanara	Chapman, Mrs Jenny	Flint, rh Caroline	Hopkins, Kris
Anderson, Mr David	Chishty, Rehman	Flynn, Paul	Horwood, Martin
Arbuthnot, rh Mr James	Clark, rh Greg	Fovargue, Yvonne	Howarth, rh Mr George
Ashworth, Jonathan	Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth	Fox, rh Dr Liam	Howarth, Mr Gerald
Bacon, Mr Richard	Clarke, rh Mr Tom	Francis, Dr Hywel	Howell, John
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Clegg, rh Mr Nick	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Hughes, rh Simon
Bain, Mr William	Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Freeman, George	Huhne, rh Chris
Baker, Norman	Clwyd, rh Ann	Freer, Mike	Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Baldry, Tony	Coaker, Vernon	Fuller, Richard	Hunt, Tristram
Baldwin, Harriett	Coffey, Ann	Gapes, Mike	Hunter, Mark
Balls, rh Ed	Coffey, Dr Thérèse	Garnier, Mr Edward	Huppert, Dr Julian
Banks, Gordon	Collins, Damian	Garnier, Mark	Hurd, Mr Nick
Barclay, Stephen	Colville, Oliver	Gauke, Mr David	Irranca-Davies, Huw
Barker, Gregory	Connarty, Michael	George, Andrew	Jackson, Glenda
Barron, rh Mr Kevin	Cooper, rh Yvette	Gibb, Mr Nick	James, Margot
Barwell, Gavin	Cox, Mr Geoffrey	Gilbert, Stephen	James, Mrs Siân C.
Bebb, Guto	Crabb, Stephen	Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl	Jamieson, Cathy
Beckett, rh Margaret	Crausby, Mr David	Gilmore, Sheila	Jarvis, Dan
Begg, Dame Anne	Creagh, Mary	Glass, Pat	Javid, Sajid
Beith, rh Sir Alan	Creasy, Stella	Glen, John	Johnson, Diana
Bell, Sir Stuart	Crockart, Mike	Glendon, Mrs Mary	Johnson, Gareth
Bellingham, Mr Henry	Cunningham, Alex	Goggins, rh Paul	Johnson, Joseph
Benn, rh Hilary	Cunningham, Mr Jim	Goodman, Helen	Jones, Andrew
Benton, Mr Joe	Cunningham, Tony	Goodwill, Mr Robert	Jones, Mr David
Benyon, Richard	Curran, Margaret	Gove, rh Michael	Jones, Graham
Beresford, Sir Paul	Dakin, Nic	Graham, Richard	Jones, Mr Kevan
Berger, Luciana	Danczuk, Simon	Grant, Mrs Helen	Jones, Susan Elan
Berry, Jake	Darling, rh Mr Alistair	Grayling, rh Chris	Jowell, rh Tessa
Betts, Mr Clive	Davey, Mr Edward	Greatrex, Tom	Joyce, Eric
Blackman-Woods, Roberta	David, Mr Wayne	Green, Damian	Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
Blackwood, Nicola	Davies, Geraint	Green, Kate	Kawczynski, Daniel
Bleas, rh Hazel	Davies, Glyn	Greening, Justine	Keeley, Barbara
Blenkinsop, Tom	De Piero, Gloria	Greenwood, Lilian	Kendall, Liz
Blomfield, Paul	Denham, rh Mr John	Grieve, rh Mr Dominic	Kennedy, rh Mr Charles
Blunkett, rh Mr David	Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Griffith, Nia	Khan, rh Sadiq
Blunt, Mr Crispin	Dobbin, Jim	Griffiths, Andrew	Kirby, Simon
Boles, Nick	Dobson, rh Frank	Gummer, Ben	Knight, rh Mr Greg
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Docherty, Thomas	Gwynne, Andrew	Laing, Mrs Eleanor
Bradley, Karen	Donohoe, Mr Brian H.	Gyimah, Mr Sam	Lamb, Norman
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Doran, Mr Frank	Hain, rh Mr Peter	Lammey, rh Mr David
Brake, rh Tom	Dorrell, rh Mr Stephen	Halfon, Robert	Lancaster, Mark
Bray, Angie	Dowd, Jim	Hames, Duncan	Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
Brazier, Mr Julian	Doyle, Gemma	Hamilton, Mr David	Latham, Pauline
Brokenshire, James	Doyle-Price, Jackie	Hamilton, Fabian	Lavery, Ian
Brooke, Annette	Dromey, Jack	Hammond, rh Mr Philip	Laws, rh Mr David
Brown, rh Mr Gordon	Duddridge, James	Hammond, Stephen	Lazarowicz, Mark
Brown, Lyn	Dugher, Michael	Hancock, Matthew	Lee, Jessica
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Duncan, rh Mr Alan	Hanson, rh Mr David	Lee, Dr Phillip
Brown, Mr Russell	Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain	Harman, rh Ms Harriet	Leech, Mr John
Browne, Mr Jeremy	Durkan, Mark	Harper, Mr Mark	Leslie, Charlotte
Bruce, rh Malcolm	Eagle, Ms Angela	Harrington, Richard	Leslie, Chris
Bryant, Chris	Eagle, Maria	Harris, Rebecca	Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
Buck, Ms Karen	Edwards, Jonathan	Hart, Simon	Lewis, Brandon
Buckland, Mr Robert	Efford, Clive	Harvey, Nick	Lewis, Mr Ivan
Burden, Richard	Elliott, Julie	Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Burley, Mr Aidan	Ellis, Michael	Havard, Mr Dai	Lidington, rh Mr David
Burnham, rh Andy	Ellison, Jane	Hayes, Mr John	Lilley, rh Mr Peter
Burns, Conor	Ellman, Mrs Louise	Heald, Oliver	Lloyd, Stephen
Burns, rh Mr Simon	Ellwood, Mr Tobias	Heath, Mr David	Lloyd, Tony
Burrowes, Mr David	Elphicke, Charlie	Hemming, John	Llwyd, rh Mr Elfyn
Burstow, Paul	Esterson, Bill	Hendrick, Mark	Long, Naomi
Burt, Alistair	Evans, Chris	Hendry, Charles	Lopresti, Jack
Burt, Lorely	Evans, Graham	Hepburn, Mr Stephen	Lord, Jonathan
Byrne, rh Mr Liam	Evans, Jonathan	Herbert, rh Nick	Loughton, Tim
Cable, rh Vince	Evennett, Mr David	Heyes, David	Love, Mr Andrew
Cairns, Alun	Fabricant, Michael	Hillier, Meg	Lucas, Ian
Cameron, rh Mr David	Fallon, Michael	Hilling, Julie	Luff, Peter
Campbell, Mr Alan	Farrelly, Paul	Hinds, Damian	Macleod, Mary

MacShane, rh Mr Denis
 Mactaggart, Fiona
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Mann, John
 Marsden, Mr Gordon
 Maude, rh Mr Francis
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCann, Mr Michael
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McClymont, Gregg
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McGovern, Jim
 McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McKechin, Ann
 McKenzie, Mr Iain
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
 McVey, Esther
 Meacher, rh Mr Michael
 Meale, Sir Alan
 Mearns, Ian
 Menzies, Mark
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Michael, rh Alun
 Miliband, rh David
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, Andrew
 Miller, Maria
 Milton, Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Nicky
 Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
 Morris, David
 Morris, Grahame M.
 (*Easington*)
 Mowat, David
 Mudie, Mr George
 Mundell, rh David
 Munt, Tessa
 Murphy, rh Mr Jim
 Murphy, rh Paul
 Murray, Ian
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Nandy, Lisa
 Nash, Pamela
 Neill, Robert
 Newmark, Mr Brooks
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Mr Stephen
 O'Donnell, Fiona
 Ollerenshaw, Eric
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Osborne, Sandra
 Ottaway, Richard
 Owen, Albert
 Paice, rh Mr James
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Pearce, Teresa
 Penrose, John
 Perkins, Toby

Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Pincher, Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Pound, Stephen
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Randall, rh Mr John
 Raynsford, rh Mr Nick
 Reed, Mr Jamie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reid, Mr Alan
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ritchie, Ms Margaret
 Robathan, rh Mr Andrew
 Robertson, Hugh
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rogerson, Dan
 Rotheram, Steve
 Roy, Mr Frank
 Roy, Lindsay
 Ruane, Chris
 Rudd, Amber
 Ruddock, rh Joan
 Ruffley, Mr David
 Russell, Bob
 Rutley, David
 Sandys, Laura
 Sarwar, Anas
 Scott, Mr Lee
 Seabeck, Alison
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Sheridan, Jim
 Shuker, Gavin
 Simmonds, Mark
 Simpson, Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Slaughter, Mr Andy
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Miss Chloe
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smith, Sir Robert
 Soames, rh Nicholas
 Soubry, Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Stanley, rh Sir John
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Stride, Mel
 Stuart, Mr Graham
 Stunell, Andrew
 Swales, Ian
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Swinson, Jo
 Swire, rh Mr Hugo
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Tami, Mark
 Teather, Sarah
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thornberry, Emily
 Thurso, John
 Timms, rh Stephen

Timpson, Mr Edward
 Tredinnick, David
 Trickett, Jon
 Truss, Elizabeth
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Umunna, Mr Chuka
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vaz, Valerie
 Villiers, rh Mrs Theresa
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Walter, Mr Robert
 Ward, Mr David
 Watkinson, Angela
 Watson, Mr Tom
 Watts, Mr Dave
 Weatherley, Mike
 Webb, Steve
 Wharton, James
 White, Chris
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Wicks, rh Malcolm

Wiggin, Bill
 Willetts, rh Mr David
 Williams, Hywel
 Williams, Mr Mark
 Williams, Roger
 Williams, Stephen
 Williamson, Chris
 Williamson, Gavin
 Willott, Jenny
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Winnick, Mr David
 Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
 Woodcock, John
 Woodward, rh Mr Shaun
 Wright, David
 Wright, Mr Iain
 Wright, Jeremy
 Wright, Simon
 Yeo, Mr Tim
 Young, rh Sir George
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr Philip Dunne and
Greg Hands

Question accordingly negated.

Business Without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

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

FINANCIAL SERVICES AND MARKETS

That the draft Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (Exemption) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2011, which was laid before this House on 5 September, be approved.—(*Angela Watkinson.*)

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEES

Mr Speaker: With the leave of the House, I propose to take motions 3 to 8, all six of them, together. The motions are in the name of the Chair of the Committee of Selection.

Ordered,

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

That Dan Jarvis and Ian Murray be discharged from the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee and Julie Elliott and Ann McKechin be added.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

That Cathy Jamieson be discharged from the Culture, Media and Sport Committee and Steve Rotheram be added.

DEFENCE

That Mr Mike Hancock be discharged from the Defence Committee and Bob Russell be added.

HEALTH

That Yvonne Fovargue be discharged from the Health Committee and Barbara Keeley be added.

NORTHERN IRELAND AFFAIRS

That Ian Lavery be discharged from the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee and Mr David Anderson be added.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

That Stella Creasy and Mrs Anne McGuire be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Meg Hillier and Fiona Mactaggart be added.—(*Mr Mark Francois, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*)

Mr Speaker: We come now to the Adjournment. Just before I call the hon. Member for South Thanet (Laura Sandys), may I appeal to Members who are leaving the Chamber to do so quickly and quietly, affording the same courtesy to the hon. Lady that they would wish to be extended to them in similar circumstances?

Live Animal Exports (Port of Ramsgate)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Angela Watkinson.*)

10.20 pm

Laura Sandys (South Thanet) (Con): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

First, I should like to make a great apology to the Minister, whom I seem to keep up regularly at this time of night—on matters DEFRA.

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): And his Parliamentary Private Secretary!

Laura Sandys: Great apologies to his PPS as well.

Given the theme of the motion on which we have just voted—the European Union and the barriers that it sometimes puts up to our cultural and historical norms—I want to raise the issue of live animal exports leaving the port of Ramsgate.

We are a nation of animal lovers, and we maintain and have always maintained the highest standards of animal welfare. Indeed, as I am sure the Minister knows, we passed our first piece of animal welfare legislation almost 400 years ago, so is it not rather surprising that sheep and two-week-old calves are driven from as far away as southern Ireland, across the Irish sea to Ramsgate, across the channel and then as far as Greece? Should we in this country endorse such transport and trade?

Tens of thousands of animals have arrived at Ramsgate this year to be put on a Soviet ship—a roll-on/roll-off ferry that was designed for river and inland water transport. On to the boat they go in their trucks, with water spraying and in gales of up to force 6. The longest estimated channel crossing is five hours due to very adverse weather conditions. Those journeys are inhumane.

The Minister knows that the trade is deeply undesirable, but on these issues we are not in control of our destiny, because we are controlled by the EU, which views animals as goods rather than as sentient beings. This is not a new issue, however, because the stalemate was experienced under the previous Government. For 13 years, we had little or no progress on ensuring that we improved animal welfare and, in particular, transportation.

I should like to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that residents from all over Kent, including the Thanet Against Live Exports and Kent Against Live Exports groups and many individuals have written to me. I have received four times as much correspondence on this issue as I have on the EU referendum.

This debate is particularly important given the timely review of the EU's regulation on the transportation of live exports so I should like the Minister to outline what the Government will submit in response to the review, and I urge him also to take the evidence that my residents have gathered and to include it in our submission in order to show what really happens at the coal face of this trade.

We must revisit the number of hours an animal can be transported without lairage. Fourteen hours for sheep is too long, and a one-hour stopover is not long enough. Calves that are only 14 days old are taken half way across Europe on land and sea. That is an ordeal.

[*Laura Sandys*]

I commend the Government for aggressively pressing for revised labelling of meat products. Meat will have to show the country of origin, not just the country of slaughter, which in previous years has allowed much of our British beef to be designated as French, Spanish or Greek when the animals were born and bred in the UK or Ireland. Greater transparency will give European consumers the choice of whether to endorse live exports.

There is additional good news. The live export trade has diminished significantly over the past 20 years from more than 300,000 animals a year to around 50,000. But that tells its own story. Reputable meat wholesalers transport animals to Europe not on the hoof, but as carcasses. Today we have abattoirs in the UK that butcher meat to meet the unique tastes of any part of Europe, and that poses a question. Who are the small number of people who transport live animals, and exploit EU single market legislation? Who are the individuals who believe that transporting live animals is humane and financially viable?

DEFRA has responsibility for issuing export health certificates, and is the competent authority that licenses those who transport animals. Enforcement, even of the existing regulations, is crucial, and I ask the Minister to take further action. As the licensing authority, DEFRA must do more investigations as soon as possible into whether the wholesaler or the owner of the Ramsgate ship, *Joline*, have any connections with business men who have already been convicted of animal cruelty? Has the Department made the necessary inquiries to find out whether someone who was prosecuted in Folkestone for six offences against animal welfare has any connection with the current trade out of Ramsgate?

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): The hon. Lady referred to the fact that sheep, cattle and young calves come from Ireland to the UK mainland and then cross over to Europe. Does she believe that DEFRA should contact the Irish Republic's Agriculture Minister to ensure that what the hon. Lady wants to be stopped in England is also stopped in the Republic of Ireland?

Laura Sandys: I welcome that intervention, and I totally agree. There should be an EU-wide regulation on the transport of animals, but it is incumbent on us to enforce our existing domestic regulations. I urge the Minister to examine the matter.

It is understood that a former trader who has had several prosecutions is located in the same offices in Amsterdam as the company that holds the licence to operate the *Joline* for animal transport from Ramsgate. Coincidences may occur, but that feels a bit too close for comfort. More worrying are several reports of the operator not complying with the regulations. For example, it has sailed in a force 7 gale when the boat is licensed only for force 6. It has not provided adequate protection for the animals, and there have been discrepancies in the time spent in transport.

This weekend, I was horrified to hear that at 9 pm on Friday, eight lorries turned up, but the ship is licensed for and can accommodate only seven lorries. The lorry drivers dismantled their cabs and drove to Dover to cross by ferry. The animals were loaded on to the ship without their drivers, who are responsible for their

welfare. The ship did not leave the port until after 4 am. The animals then faced a four-hour trip across the channel taking them over the 11 hour regulated transport period. I understand that in addition, the ship was unable to dock at Calais for several hours because of the tides. The animals would then have had to be unloaded, and to leave Calais for a resting place.

The report indicated that the transporters of the animals—those with the lorry licences and the operators of the ship—contravened animal welfare regulations. I urge the Minister to ensure that the Department investigates such reports and that action is taken to revoke licences immediately while further evidence is gathered. We believe that these operators are, at best, cavalier with the regulations and, at worst, have little interest in animal welfare.

Action needs to be taken, and I hope for the Minister's commitment on these matters. I know that he and his Department, like me and the residents of Thanet, would like to end this trade. Yes, we might have to wait a while for it to be banned altogether, but we must stop any cruelty that is happening under the current regulations and ensure that our animal welfare enforcement is robust, including in the port of Ramsgate.

10.30 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr James Paice): Let me start by thanking and congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for South Thanet (*Laura Sandys*) on seeking this debate to raise an issue that is of great concern not only to her constituents and residents in the wider area of Thanet but to me and to my Department, and to many hon. Members on both sides of the House, some of whom I am pleased to see have stayed for the debate.

I emphasise that, as stated in the coalition agreement, this Government are committed to the highest standards of animal welfare, including their transport—how it is done and where it is done. Clearly, the Government would prefer animals to be slaughtered as near as possible to their point of production; and as far as breeding stock is concerned, we would like the trade to be only in meat or in germ plasm, because that is preferable to one based on live animals. That also has advantages in terms of animal welfare because it helps with our own domestic slaughter and in developing our own enterprise, business and industry. Moreover, as my hon. Friend rightly said, we now have all the butchery expertise to cater for whatever particular specifications overseas customers demand.

As my hon. Friend said, the previous Government recognised that such a trade in live animals is lawful provided that the safeguards laid down in the European Union and in our own national welfare-in-transport legislation are observed. Whatever we may think about this, the Government have to comply with our international obligations.

Naomi Long (Belfast East) (Alliance): Will the Minister give way?

Mr Paice: Very briefly.

Naomi Long: Would the Minister advocate the tightening of the international rules to allow for cross-border trade in the case of operators who neighbour a border—for

example, between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland—with another slaughterhouse on the other side in order to avoid long, arduous journeys such as those described by the hon. Member for South Thanet (Laura Sandys)?

Mr Paice: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, and I will come to some of those points. Yes, there is a distinction between cases where there happens to be a border, but it is a few miles to an abattoir, and the sort of journey to which my hon. Friend has referred.

The safeguards that I mentioned include the need for all commercial transporters of animals to be authorised and for drivers to pass a competency test. Indeed, I passed one myself. For long journeys, vehicles must be inspected and approved by qualified engineers working for authorised private vehicle inspection bodies. Also, for long journeys, transporters must apply for a journey log for each journey that provides the details of the proposed route, and these applications are checked by the Animal Health and Veterinary Agency before they are approved. More importantly, the journey logs have to be updated by the transporter as the journey progresses and returned once the journey is completed, and we then check whether the actual journey was in line with the original application. If there were any variations, they need to be investigated to see whether they were consistent with the legislation.

There are many other safeguards in the transport legislation, such as the fitness-to-travel rules in terms of the animal itself and technical requirements on space allowances, ventilation, water, and so on. I want to emphasise that the commercial transport of animals on journeys of more than eight hours is highly regulated. On top of all the checks before and after a long journey, inspectors undertake risk-based checks on consignments, either when the animals are loaded at the point of departure or on arrival at the port of Ramsgate. They have powers on discovery of any infringement by individual transporters—that has happened a number of times—and that can lead to suspension or revocation of the transporter's authorisation to transport animals or the withdrawal of their vehicle approval certificate. I emphasise and, in effect, give a warning that all those engaged in this trade must ensure that they are fully in compliance with all the regulations, because we will continue to be as tough as possible on this trade. It has been the subject of a number of legal challenges over the years by local authorities and port authorities.

The trade in live animals to the continent for slaughter has fluctuated markedly, as my hon. Friend said. There have been periods, such as during the outbreaks of BSE, foot and mouth and, more recently, tuberculosis, when the trade has been halted or interrupted. As she rightly said, the scale has dramatically reduced, so its impact on the economics of the UK livestock sector is now minimal, if anything at all. The present trade is tiny at just a few tens of thousands of animals and certainly fewer than 50,000 so far this year.

The concept of free trade is enshrined in national legislation in the Harbours, Docks and Piers Clauses Act 1847, and more recently in article 34 of the treaty of Rome. The latter states:

“Quantitative restrictions on exports, and all measures having equivalent effect, shall be prohibited between Member States.”

Some welfare lobbyists have suggested that changing the 1847 Act is the way forward. However, such a move would clearly be illegal as it would be contrary to article 34 of the treaty.

On the subject of EU treaties, I would like to lay to rest the idea that member states might deal with this issue through article 13 of the Lisbon treaty, which states:

“Member States shall, since animals are sentient beings, pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals”

Some suggest that that is a new requirement and that, therefore, long journeys can no longer be considered legal. That is not the case. The corresponding text of article 13 was previously set out in the binding protocol to the treaty of Amsterdam, which was agreed in 1997. It was therefore already a requirement to treat animals as sentient beings when the European Council agreed the terms of Council Regulation 1/2005. I am afraid that that is not a legal option open to us.

My hon. Friend raised a number of specific points. She rightly referred to the recent changes at European level to make labelling fresh meat with the country of origin mandatory. We are awaiting the detail of that, but I sincerely hope that it will have the effect that she and I want it to have. We have always supported the need for country-of-origin labelling to ensure that British consumers are properly informed. However, that same legislation must not deceive consumers overseas into believing that sheep—it is mainly sheep—born and reared in the UK are native to France, Spain or wherever they are bought.

My hon. Friend referred to the licensing of the ship and the lorries. She referred obliquely to a Mr Onderwater. There is no doubt that he is closely involved in this trade and she is right that he has been prosecuted for cruelty. I cannot comment on the authenticity of her comment about where his office is, but he is not the authorised holder of the shipping licence, which was issued in Latvia. We have asked the Latvian authorities for details of it and they say that his name is not on the licence.

My hon. Friend referred to what happened on Friday. I was not aware of the eight lorries that she referred to. However, there is no legal specification about the number of lorries allowed on the ship. The specification is about the number of people who travel. We believe that that is why some of the lorry drivers decamped and travelled via Dover. I am aware of the six-hour delay in loading to which she referred, which is clearly unacceptable. Whether it was illegal is questionable, because it could count as part of the rest period. The Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency issued a notice to sail to stop any further delay. I admit that I did not know until today that such a power existed. The AHVLA is considering the best course of regulatory action. We are seriously inclined to introduce a maximum period of two hours to load and sail, to prevent that from happening again.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): Many of us have constituents who have expressed concerns over the years, and who specifically want swift action on preventing the sail. I think that would help greatly.

Mr Paice: I think that preventing the sail might be counter-productive, because then the animals might face a longer journey back to where they came from if

[Mr Paice]

they had come from, say, the Republic of Ireland. However, we are taking measures to ensure that the ship sails quickly after loading, so that loading and sailing take place within two hours. I should also emphasise that it is a requirement of European legislation that all the necessary arrangements are made in advance, so that welfare is not compromised by insufficient co-ordination between the parts of the journey.

The motor vessel Joline, to which my hon. Friend referred, is licensed to sail in up to force 6 gales. We have recently had concern that she was sailing at what was considered to be the margin of that safety level. The captain was warned, but I emphasise that that is a maritime safety issue and not directly related to animal welfare, although clearly the welfare of the animals may be affected. There is no evidence that the captain has sailed in winds higher than force 6, but if I may use this phrase, he has sailed close to the wind.

There have been a large number of investigations by the AHVLA, but I need to emphasise that virtually all of them are about the vehicles rather than the ship. That is rather an important point, because it brings us to the enforcement of the existing legislation. That is an important consideration, particularly when we are discussing long journeys. The European Commission has spent nearly two years gathering data on the impact of the legislation and is due to report very shortly. It is too late for us to make any further submissions, as my hon. Friend suggested, but as soon as the report is published we will study it very carefully. We understand that it will have something to say about the level of enforcement across the Community, but will not make any recommendations of changes to the existing legislation. If that is the case, I can assure her that we will make further representations.

Whatever the report concludes, I will press the European Commission to come forward with proposals on both tightening the current enforcement of the existing rules

and reviewing the existing long journey requirements to encourage shorter, more sustainable journeys linked to available slaughter capacity. Whatever the eventual outcome, I am sure my hon. Friend will agree that it must be based on the available scientific evidence, not subjective opinion or belief. I have to say to her that many member states will be opposed to any such tightening of those rules, and because the European Commission appears reluctant to take any action, any changes to the current rules on long journeys are unlikely to be achieved in the immediate future. That brings the matter back to this country and to my Department.

I believe that a more sustainable approach to the transport of livestock on long journeys must be found, and I will push for that at every available opportunity in the framework of future EU discussions on animal welfare during transport. I can say to my hon. Friend that, as I implied earlier, we will use every measure available to us within the bounds of legislation to be as robust as we can in ensuring that the highest welfare standards that can be achieved are achieved. As I said, we want to ensure that all those involved in the trade, whether they be shipping people or those running the lorries that transport cattle and sheep, are under no illusion that we will deal with them as robustly as we possibly can and take whatever measures are possible whenever there is an infringement.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the issue. Although I have not been able to do what I know she and other Members would like me to do, which is to declare that we will ban the trade—I am not able to do that—I hope she will rest assured that we will take every measure we can within the legislative arrangements that we have.

Question put and agreed to.

10.43 pm

House adjourned.

Written Ministerial Statements

Monday 24 October 2011

TREASURY

HM Revenue and Customs - Discussion Document

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Mr David Gauke): HM Revenue and Customs is publishing today a discussion document on pay-as-you-earn (PAYE) pooling. Its purpose is to consult on HMRC's proposals to alter the PAYE system to give closely connected employers the option of being treated as a single entity for PAYE purposes (PAYE pooling).

The discussion document is available on the HM Revenue and Customs website at: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/consultations/>.

PRIME MINISTER

The Cabinet Manual

The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron): The Government have published today "The Cabinet Manual" on the Cabinet Office website: www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/cabinet-manual.

"The Cabinet Manual" is intended to be a source of information on the UK's laws, conventions and rules that affect the operation and procedures of Government.

A summary of responses received on the "Draft Cabinet Manual", which was published in December 2010, and a Government response to the reports of the House of Lords Constitution Committee, Political and

Constitutional Reform Committee and Public Administration Select Committee (Cm 8213) on "The Cabinet Manual" have also been published on the Cabinet Office website.

Copies of all documents have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and also in the Vote Office and Printed Paper Office.

TRANSPORT

National Policy Statement (Ports)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mike Penning): Having considered consultation responses and the report of the previous Select Committee on Transport, I am today laying before Parliament the national policy statement for ports in England and Wales, pursuant to section 5(9)(b) of the Planning Act 2008, together with the Government's response to the Committee.

I am also publishing, on the Department's website, a written response to the consultation and an updated version of the appraisal of sustainability that had been published as part of the consultation process.

The ports industry is a vital contributor to this country's economic recovery and success. Well over 90% of trade by tonnage passes through sea ports, and so the importance of a clear planning framework for their future sustainable development can hardly be overstated.

The NPS gives full prominence to the importance of development in sympathy with the environment, while also stressing the national need for developers' commercial judgments to be respected in what continues to be a successful, market-oriented and responsible sector.

It has been agreed with the House that the same procedure as proposed in the Localism Bill will be followed for the NPS. The Secretary of State intends to designate the NPS after a period of 21 sitting days has elapsed, or following a debate in the House of Commons if the House wishes one, and approves the NPS, within that period.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 24 October 2011

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Arab States: Islam

Neil Parish: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect of sectarian divisions between Sunni and Shia Muslims on political reform and democratisation within Arab states in the Gulf. [76588]

Alistair Burt: I am concerned about increasing sectarian tensions in the Gulf. We are monitoring the situation across the Gulf. The UK supports reform efforts throughout the region that include all sections of society.

Bahrain: Human Rights

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Government of Bahrain on the subject of human rights. [76338]

Alistair Burt: We have repeatedly raised the issue of human rights with the Bahraini Government and will continue to do so to ensure all human rights obligations are being met. Political freedoms, equal access to justice and the rule of law must all be upheld; these do not run contrary to security, but are integral to long-term stability.

Egypt: Politics and Government

Patrick Mercer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to encourage the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt to comply with the Camp David accords. [75788]

Alistair Burt: We have made clear publicly and privately with Egyptian interlocutors that we welcome statements made since February 2011, reaffirming Egypt's commitment to its international treaty obligations including the Camp David Accords. The accords are a cornerstone of regional peace and we encourage both sides to abide by their terms. Our priority remains a comprehensive negotiated solution to the middle east peace process.

Iceland: Debts

Mr Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what sanctions are available to the Government in its pursuit of the repayment of debts owed to UK businesses, local authorities and individuals by the Icelandic government. [75383]

Mr Hoban: I have been asked to reply.

Retail depositors of Icelandic banks have received their funds in full via the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (acting in part as the agent for HM Treasury).

The claims of other creditors are being considered under Icelandic insolvency law. That process is ongoing.

Libya: Human Rights

Anas Sarwar: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with leaders of the Libyan National Transitional Council on the treatment of (a) civilians generally and (b) persons of sub-Saharan origin. [76377]

Alistair Burt: During his recent visit to Tripoli, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), raised reports about the treatment of detainees, including those of sub-Saharan origin, with National Transitional Council (NTC) Chairman Mustafa Abdul Jalil, and urged him to take action to prevent abuses of human rights. The NTC have stressed their commitment to uphold human rights law and have already begun investigations into these reports.

Libya: Politics and Government

Mr Douglas Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice his Department is providing to the Libyan authorities on the security situation in that country. [73271]

Mr Hague: The UK is working closely with the National Transitional Council on a number of security issues in Libya, including providing technical advice through a senior police adviser deployed to Libya, equipment for the police and assistance in collecting and securing Man-Portable Air Defense Systems.

Middle East: Natural Gas

Patrick Mercer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the likelihood of the restoration of gas supplies from Egypt to Israel; and if he will make a statement. [75790]

Alistair Burt: We have received no reports on the likelihood of the restoration of gas supplies from Egypt to Israel.

Middle East: Pipelines

Patrick Mercer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has discussed with his Egyptian counterpart the recent bombings of the Arish-Ashkelon pipeline; and if he will make a statement. [75789]

Alistair Burt: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), has not discussed the recent bombings of the Arish-Ashkelon pipeline with his counterpart. However, we remain concerned about recent security incidents in the Sinai, and we welcome the statement by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces on 12 February and subsequently that Egypt would abide by all its regional and international treaty obligations.

Patrick Mercer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assistance the Government can provide to the governments of (a) Egypt and (b) Israel in respect of reopening the Arish-Ashkelon pipeline. [75791]

Alistair Burt: We have not offered any assistance to the Egyptian or Israeli Governments in respect of reopening the Arish-Ashkelon pipeline, and have no current plans to do so. However, we will continue to express our concern about the impact of security incidents on stability in the region.

Palestinians: Prisoners

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received on hunger strikes by Palestinians in prison in Israel; and if he will make a statement. [75814]

Alistair Burt: We are aware that Palestinian prisoners have been on hunger strike since 27 September. This was suspended for three days while awaiting confirmation that the Israeli Prison Service will officially end its policy on punitive isolation. Other demands, including education, seem to have been met as part of the prisoner exchange deal on 18 October.

The UK is continuing to monitor closely the situation with regard to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons. Palestinian prisoners should have access to a fair trial, and Israel should ensure that it treats detainees in accordance with international law. We continue to raise our concerns with the Israeli authorities and to issue statements when appropriate.

Palestinians: Recognition of States

Grahame M. Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of progress at the UN on the application by the Palestinian Authority for recognition as a state. [76142]

Alistair Burt: President Abbas submitted the Palestinian application for full membership of the UN on 23 September. No vote is imminent in the Security Council, while the membership committee considers its recommendation. So far we have not been presented with a detailed proposal on which to take a position. Whether the committee returns the issue to the Security Council, or whether President Abbas decides to turn to the General Assembly, the UK will use its vote in a way which increases the likelihood of a return to meaningful negotiations.

The UK's position on recognition of a Palestinian state is clear: a Palestinian state is a legitimate goal, and the best way of achieving this is through a comprehensive agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. The UK has deliberately reserved its position on the question of recognition of Palestinian statehood while we continue to urge all parties back to talks. Withholding our position in this way, along with other European partners, maintains the pressure on both sides to show the flexibility needed to enable a return to negotiations.

Sri Lanka: Politics and Government

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent reports he has received of the state of (a) emergency and (b) anti-terrorism laws in Sri Lanka. [76146]

Alistair Burt: We welcome the end of the state of emergency in Sri Lanka, but it remains unclear what this means in practice. The Sri Lankan Government have amended the Prevention of Terrorism Act to replace some of the powers that lapsed. We are especially concerned about the practice of prolonged detention without charge.

I raised these concerns when I met the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister on 23 September in New York. Our high commission in Colombo will continue to monitor the situation and to pursue this issue with the Government of Sri Lanka.

Western Sahara: Fisheries

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ask the European Commission to conduct an inquiry into whether the local Saharawi population has benefited from the EU-Morocco Fisheries Partnership Agreement. [76128]

Alistair Burt: During the negotiations for a new Protocol to the EU-Morocco Fisheries Partnership agreement, which began in December 2010, we requested evidence from the Commission on the socio-economic impact of the agreement in Western Sahara. Morocco submitted information to the Commission but we were unable to determine from that information whether or not the people of Western Sahara had benefited. We continue to press for more information to be made available.

WALES

Adam Werritty

Mr Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many times she met Mr Adam Werritty on official occasions. [76365]

Mrs Gillan: No such meetings have taken place.

Departmental Travel

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much her Department has spent on first class travel by (a) air, (b) boat and (c) train since May 2010. [75526]

Mr David Jones: Nothing. In May 2010, the Wales Office introduced a ban on all first class travel. As a result of that policy we cut costs by 53% and saved over £91,000 in 2010-11.

Offences Against Children

Mr Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions she has had with the Welsh Government on legislation on the smacking of children in Wales. [75769]

Mr David Jones: The Secretary of State for Wales, my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) and I have regular discussions with Welsh Government Ministers on a wide range of issues but we have not discussed legislation on the smacking of children in Wales. No legislation is being proposed at this stage and the Welsh Government have confirmed that it will not be bringing forward any legislation on this matter before the next Assembly election.

PRIME MINISTER

Departmental Voluntary Work

Paul Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what volunteering he has undertaken as part of the One Day Challenge; what the nature of the work undertaken was; on what dates it took place; and what the names were of the organisations assisted. [76231]

The Prime Minister: I have committed to the 'One Day Challenge' and I have undertaken work with various volunteering organisations, including "Street League" and "The Challenge Network".

Government Departments: Data Protection

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Prime Minister if he will order a review of Government document security. [76439]

The Prime Minister: Guidance on Government document security is available on the Cabinet Office website:
www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/security-policy-framework

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Animal Welfare

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent assessment she has made of the potential effect on animal welfare of the commercial breeding of dogs and cats. [72017]

Mr Paice: Under the provisions of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 all breeders of dogs and cats are required to breed dogs and cats in a way that takes account of welfare needs and does not cause an animal to suffer. The effectiveness of this Act has recently been reviewed and the findings submitted to the Efra Select Committee. In addition, under the Breeding of Dogs Act 1973, commercial breeding establishments have to be licensed.

Cheese

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment she has made of the effect of the recent growth of the cheese industry on the economy. [75075]

Mr Paice: UK cheese production increased by 5% in 2010 compared with 2009 and has continued to rise during 2011. The total value of the cheese market in Great Britain to December 2010 was about £2.5 billion.

Eggs: Origin Marking

Jeremy Lefroy: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what arrangements her Department has in place to enable the tracing of eggs and egg products back to the farm of origin for the purposes of ensuring compliance with European directives. [74521]

Mr Paice: We are in the process of drawing up an enforcement strategy on how to deal with illegal eggs and egg products from non-complaint producers. I recently met with industry representatives and retailers to discuss enforcement of the cage ban and on how best to take things forward.

I also met with the commissioner on 20 October to discuss his proposals for action against member states who do not comply on 31 December.

The British Retail Consortium has publically declared that Britain's leading food retailers are supporting UK egg producers and that there will be no eggs from Europe which fail to meet the welfare standards on their shelves or in their own-brand products.

Meat: Exports and Imports

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what steps she is taking to increase exports of meat; [75037]

(2) whether she has any plans to discuss with foreign governments the lifting of restrictions on the importation of British offal products. [75048]

Mr Paice: The Government are taking a number of steps to increase exports of food, including meat and offal.

The UK Trade and Industry strategy and DEFRA's business plan both contain commitments. During his recent visit to Russia, the Prime Minister personally placed discussions about lamb and beef exports high on the agenda, illustrating the priority the Government attach to the issue.

DEFRA works closely with a number of partners to identify and target resources on key market negotiations about animal and public health issues for countries outside the European Union. These partners include industry and foreign governments as well as other Government Departments in the UK. I am delighted to say that exports of meat and meat products rose in the first half of 2011 by 15%.

The rising figure is the comparison with the same period in 2010.

Sheep: Tagging

Simon Hart: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions she is having with her EU counterparts to ensure that farmers are not financially penalised due to technological failures of electronic identification for sheep. [73527]

Mr Paice: I have had a number of discussions with EU Commissioner Dalli about our concerns over the ability of electronic reading equipment to capture individual information on every animal sent to central point recording centres (CPRCs), particularly where this could impact on keepers' single farm payments.

The commission has since responded to a UK proposal for some flexibility with regard to cross compliance requirements relating to a keeper's farm records where sheep are electronically read at a CPRC. I am currently considering how to proceed in England.

The requirements for identification and traceability of sheep are EU obligations, but administration and implementation in their territories is an issue for the devolved Administrations.

HEALTH

Ambulance Services: Suffolk

Dr Poulter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what the average response time was for an ambulance to an emergency call-out in (a) Suffolk, (b) Mid-Suffolk district council area, (c) Babergh district council area and (d) Suffolk Coastal district council area in each year since 1997; [75618]

(2) how many ambulances in (a) Babergh district council area, (b) Suffolk Coastal district council area and (c) Mid-Suffolk district council area responded to emergency call-outs within (i) eight and (ii) 19 minutes in each year since 1997. [75619]

Mr Simon Burns: Information on average ambulance response times and the number of ambulances that have responded to emergency calls in specific locations is not collected centrally.

Data on performance against ambulance response time targets is collected at ambulance trust level only and is published annually by the NHS Information Centre for health and social care in the statistical bulletin "Ambulance Services England". These documents are available on the NHS Information Centre for health and social care website at:

www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/audits-and-performance/ambulance

The areas referred to within the question fall within East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust. Prior to 2006 East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust was made up of the following ambulance trusts:

Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Ambulance NHS Trust
Essex Ambulance NHS Trust
East Anglian Ambulance NHS Trust.

Data prior to 2004-05 was published by the Department. This data is available back to 1998 on the Department's website at:

www.dh.gov.uk/health/category/publications/reports-publications/

Arthritis: Physiotherapy

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will take steps to ensure that rheumatoid arthritis-related physiotherapy services are not disproportionately affected by plans to make efficiency savings in the NHS; [75869]

(2) if he will assess the (a) level of uptake and (b) efficacy of referral practice of rheumatoid arthritis-related physiotherapy in England; and if he will make a statement. [75870]

Paul Burstow: There are no plans to carry out a central assessment of referral practice to physiotherapy in England. It is for local national health service organisations to make their own decisions about routes of referral for physiotherapy, based on which route is clinically appropriate and of value to the health care system and local community.

Some organisations may include self-referral in their access routes. To help local organisations in making decisions about self-referral, the Department has collaborated with the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy to pilot and evaluate self-referral. The pilots identified a number of benefits including earlier presentation and supporting self-care by empowering patients to be more actively involved in managing their condition.

Information about this project can be found in the "Self-referral pilots to musculoskeletal physiotherapy and the implications for improving access to other AHP services". This document has already been placed in the Library and is available at:

www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_116358.pdf

The NHS has been asked to make up to £20 billion of efficiency savings by 2014-15 while simultaneously improving the quality of services it provides in order to meet rising demand resulting from an ageing population and new developments in technology and drugs. Local NHS organisations are best placed to decide on how to meet this challenge, according to local circumstances and priorities.

There have been a number of initiatives to improve access to physiotherapy and other allied health professional services including delivering services more efficiently. The Allied Health Professional Service Improvement Project demonstrated in a range of services, including physiotherapy, how service redesign can improve access and clinical outcomes, and release cost-savings back into the system. Details about this project can be found at:

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_126840

Breast Cancer: Health Education

Oliver Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to raise the awareness of women of the signs and symptoms of breast cancer. [76090]

Paul Burstow: Improving public awareness of the signs and symptoms of cancer and encouraging people to visit their general practitioner (GP) when they have symptoms is a key ambition of "Improving Outcomes: A Strategy for Cancer", published on 12 January. Last year we provided £9 million to support 59 local awareness campaigns to raise awareness of breast, bowel and lung cancer and early indications are that there has been a positive response to the campaigns.

In June this year we announced that we would be providing £2.5 million to support a further 18 local awareness campaigns, seven of which will seek to raise awareness of breast cancer in women over 70. Survival rates for women with breast cancer in this age range are poorer than in other comparable countries and this is why we are focusing on this area.

More generally, we encourage all women to be breast aware. The Department has worked with health professionals, patient groups and the voluntary sector to develop a set of key messages for breast cancer that include the signs and symptoms of the disease. These are available on the NHS Choices website and we encourage charities and other stakeholders to use them widely in awareness raising activities. The Department has also published “Be Breast Aware”, a leaflet which advises women to know what changes to look for and report them to their GP as quickly as possible.

Departmental Advertising

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department has spent on advertising job vacancies since May 2010. [75630]

Mr Simon Burns: The Department has spent £12,063.85 on advertising job vacancies since May 2010.

Health Professions

Dr Poulter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure health and wellbeing boards take account of the experience and expertise of allied health professionals in their work; and if he will make a statement. [75620]

Anne Milton: Beyond the minimum membership set out in the Health and Social Care Bill, local authorities and health and wellbeing boards will be able to invite other members with particular skills and expertise, including representatives of the allied health professions.

The membership of health and wellbeing boards should be determined locally. Too much prescription would prevent local membership from being determined in a way that reflects local needs and priorities.

Health Services: Armed Forces

Mr Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what services are available to armed forces personnel to assist them in dealing with alcohol abuse or other alcohol-related problems following their discharge from service. [75928]

Mr Simon Burns: My hon. Friend the Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison) in his report, ‘Fighting Fit’, made a number of recommendations in relation to access to mental health services. The Department of Health, working with the NHS armed forces networks, Combat Stress and others have put in place a number of initiatives aimed at improving access to mental health services for veterans. These include a 24-hour helpline through Combat Stress (working with Rethink), and an increase in the number of mental health professionals conducting veterans outreach, assessment and referral work (also with Combat Stress), set up a pilot of Big White Wall—an early intervention service for service personnel, veterans and families and launched an e-learning package for general practitioners with the Royal College of General Practitioners. In all of these areas, alcohol misuse is a key issue.

In addition to these veteran specific initiatives, most areas of England have access to the full range of alcohol treatment services including advice and information,

counselling and therapy, medical detoxification (both in the community and in-patient when necessary), and rehabilitation services (both residential and in the community day treatment services), as defined in the Department’s best practice guidance ‘Models of Care for Alcohol Misusers’ published in June 2006. A copy has already been placed in the Library.

Most areas operate a “stepped care” model where new patients are assessed, and initially receive the least intensive or prolonged intervention considered suitable for the level of need and complexity identified.

Health Services: Respiratory System

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his policy is on the provision of ventilation machines and related equipment for patients with muscle-wasting diseases who experience respiratory difficulties; and if he will make a statement. [75930]

Paul Burstow: Local health bodies have responsibility for ensuring adequate provision of ventilation machines and other health services are made available to those living with neuromuscular conditions.

Health: Finance

Emma Reynolds: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria his Department plans to use in distributing public health funding to local authorities as a consequence of his proposals to transfer responsibility for public health. [76101]

Anne Milton: The distribution of funding to local authorities for their planned new public health responsibilities will allow them to improve the health of their population and to reduce health inequalities. The independent Advisory Committee on Resource Allocation (ACRA) has been asked to develop the details of a formula to meet this objective. ACRA’s criteria include transparency, technical robustness and compatibility with objectives.

Hospitals: Admissions

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much the NHS spent on unplanned emergency admissions to hospital for people with neuromuscular conditions in the latest period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement. [75929]

Paul Burstow: Information on the cost of unplanned emergency admissions to hospital for people with neuromuscular conditions is not collected centrally.

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many emergency admissions there were to the Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust in each year since 1997. [76440]

Mr Simon Burns: The number of emergency admissions by finished admission episode in Brighton and Sussex University NHS Trust, 2002-03 to 2009-10 and Brighton Healthcare NHS Trust and Mid Sussex NHS Trust, 1997-98 to 2001-02 is in the following table.

	Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust	Brighton Healthcare NHS Trust	Mid Sussex NHS Trust
2009-10	41,844	—	—
2008-09	44,970	—	—
2007-08	38,893	—	—
2006-07	33,815	—	—
2005-06	29,994	—	—
2004-05	31,335	—	—
2003-04	30,244	—	—
2002-03	25,406	—	—
2001-02	—	19,831	6,976
2000-01	—	20,023	7,524
1999-2000	—	19,931	8,100
1998-99	—	19,930	8,133
1997-98	—	19,905	7,365

Notes:

1. In 2002-03, Brighton Healthcare NHS Trust and Mid Sussex NHS Trust merged to become Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust.

2. Figures relating to years 1998-99 to present have been taken from the published annual publications available on:
<http://www.hesonline.nhs.uk>

The figures provided relating to 1997-98 were not previously published.

3. It should be noted that these data should not be described as a count of people as the same person may have been admitted on more than one occasion.

4. Activity includes activity in English national health service hospitals and English NHS commissioned activity in the independent sector.

5. A finished admission episode (FAE) is the first period of in-patient care under one consultant within one health care provider. FAEs are counted against the year in which the admission episode finishes. Admissions do not represent the number of in-patients, as a person may have more than one admission within the year.

Emergency admissions include:

Emergency: via Accident and Emergency (A&E) services, including the casualty department of the provider

Emergency: via general practitioner (GP)

Emergency: via Bed Bureau, including the Central Bureau

Emergency: via consultant out-patient clinic

Emergency: other means, including patients who arrive via the A&E department of another health care provider

6. Hospital providers can also include treatment centres (TC). Normally, if data are tabulated by health care provider, the figure for an NHS trust gives the activity of all the sites as one aggregated figure. However, in the case of those with embedded treatment centres, these data are quoted separately. In these cases, '-X' is appended to the code for the rest of the trust, to remind users that the figures are for all sites of the trust excluding the treatment centres. The quality of TC returns are such that data may not be complete. Some NHS trusts have not registered their TC as a separate site, and it is therefore not possible to identify their activity separately. Data from some independent sector providers, where the onus for arrangement of dataflows is on the commissioner, may be missing. Care must be taken when using this data as the counts may be lower than true figures.

7. Assessing growth through time: Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) figures are available from 1989-90 onwards. Changes to the figures over time need to be interpreted in the context of improvements in data quality and coverage (particularly in earlier years), improvements in coverage of independent sector activity (particularly from 2006-07) and changes in NHS practice. For example, apparent reductions in activity may be due to a number of procedures which may now be undertaken in out-patient settings and so no longer include in admitted patient HES data.

Source:

Hospital Episode Statistics (HES), The NHS Information Centre for health and social care

Life Expectancy: Television

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research his Department has (a) commissioned and (b) evaluated on the potential effects of television viewing on life expectancy. [75935]

Mr Simon Burns: The Department has not commissioned research specifically on the potential effects of television viewing on life expectancy.

In 2009, the Department set up an expert group to review existing evidence on the impact of sedentary behaviour, including screen time, on overweight and obesity, and the impact on health and activity levels. The group has drawn up recommendations on limiting sedentary behaviour for all ages. These are reflected in Start Active, Stay Active, a report on physical activity for health from the four home countries' chief medical officers published in July 2011. The expert group submitted its report on 26 March 2010 and this is available on the Department's website at:

www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_128225.pdf

Mental Health Services

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions he has had with representatives of universities on research into mindfulness-based therapies; and what research projects his Department has funded into mindfulness-based therapies in the last three years. [75920]

Paul Burstow: The Department has had no recent discussions with representatives of universities specifically on research into mindfulness-based therapies. Research projects and research training awards directly funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) in the last three years relating to mindfulness-based therapies are listed in the following table.

Title	Start date	End date	Institution
A qualitative synthesis of patient experiences of mindfulness-based interventions followed by a feasibility study of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and/or asthma and co-morbid symptoms of anxiety and/or depression	1 November 2009	31 October 2012	University of Bristol
Preventing depressive relapse in NHS practice through mindfulness-based cognitive therapy	1 January 2010	31 March 2014	University of Exeter
A qualitative (feasibility) study of mindfulness-based stress reduction for the treatment of fatigue, anxiety and depression in women with metastatic breast cancer	14 June 2010	13 December 2012	University of Southampton

In addition, an NIHR-funded project on group mindfulness-based therapy for distressing voices, led by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, started in October 2011.

Mental Health Services: Finance

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department spent on (a) anti-depressant drugs and (b) mindfulness-based therapies to treat prisoner stress and mental illnesses in each of the last three years. [75917]

Paul Burstow: The Department has incurred no such cost for anti-depressants and mindfulness-based therapies to treat prisoners. Pharmaceutical and psychological therapies are provided by primary care trusts (PCTs) and are available for all who require these within a PCTs catchment area, including for prisoner. Each PCT is responsible for determining the type of services offered within its catchment area and the Department does not collect information on how much they spend on these services.

In February this year the Department launched its mental health strategy "No Health Without Mental Health". One of the commitments made in the strategy is to complete the roll out of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme and prisoners will benefit from this. The IAPT programme has produced good practice guidance on treating offenders, "Offenders: Positive Practice Guide", a copy of which has been placed in the Library, which can also be found at:

www.iapt.nmhd.org.uk/silo/files/offenders-positive-practice-guide.pdf

Midwives

Steve Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how the duties of local supervising authority midwifery officers will be provided after the abolition of strategic health authorities. [75908]

Anne Milton: The Local Supervising Authority (LSA) function is currently hosted in strategic health authorities (SHAs) where accountability is held by the chief executives with the SHA Director of Nursing as the executive lead. Each LSA appoints a practising midwife as the local supervising midwifery officer (LSAMO) who has responsibility for carrying out the LSAs functions. The LSA function and the role of LSAMOs in the future is being considered as part of transitional plans to deliver a reformed national health service, subject to the passage of the Health and Social Care Bill.

Pharmacy: Patient Choice Schemes

Dr Poulter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department is taking to promote patient choice in respect of pharmacy and dispensary provision. [75621]

Mr Simon Burns: We fully support patients having a choice of pharmaceutical services providers. Patients can take their prescriptions to any national health service pharmacy they wish to have their prescriptions dispensed.

However, in more remote and rural areas NHS pharmacies may not always be viable. That is why, to

ensure adequate access to NHS dispensing services, primary care trusts may authorise general practitioners to dispense to patients provided certain criteria set out in regulations are met. Under these regulations, such doctors provide a more restricted range of pharmaceutical services than pharmacies.

Postnatal Depression

Mr Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assistance is available to women identified as having postnatal depression. [76108]

Anne Milton: Midwives, health visitors, general practitioners, and other health professionals involved in the care of women following childbirth are trained to help women at risk or suffering from post-natal depression. Specialist Perinatal Psychiatric Services and Specialist Mother and Baby Psychiatric Units are available for seriously ill women whose needs cannot be met by primary care.

Mr Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of postnatal depression were diagnosed in each of the last three years. [76206]

Anne Milton: The majority of women diagnosed with postnatal depression will be treated in primary care. Information is not collected centrally about diagnoses for any condition in primary care, so reliable data are not available about the number of women with post-natal depression.

SCOTLAND

Clinical Trials

Ann McKechnin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has had discussions with (a) the Scottish Government and (b) NHS Scotland on joint working with the Scottish government on clinical trials. [76443]

David Mundell: Scotland Office Ministers have had no discussions with the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland on this issue.

Departmental Meetings

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many meetings he has had with representatives of (a) social enterprises, (b) charities, (c) large private sector businesses and (d) small and medium-sized private sector businesses since May 2010; and if he will make a statement. [75715]

David Mundell: The Secretary of State for Scotland, my right hon. Friend the Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (Michael Moore), and I meet regularly with a range of social enterprises, charities and private sector businesses. Information on ministerial meetings is published quarterly at:

www.data.gov.uk

Health Research Authority

Ann McKechin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he has had discussions with (a) the Scottish Government and (b) NHS Scotland on the formation of the proposed Health Research Authority for England. [76442]

David Mundell: Scotland Office Ministers have had no discussions with the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland on this issue.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Departmental Correspondence

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he has received representations concerning (a) the big society bank, (b) the Work programme and (c) volunteering since June 2011; and if he will make a statement. [75068]

Mr Swire: I am the Minister responsible for advancing the big society agenda in Northern Ireland.

The big society capital group has been a matter of discussion at meetings I have held with Peter Robinson MLA, First Minister for Northern Ireland, Arlene Foster MLA, Northern Ireland Minister for Enterprise Trade and Investment and Nelson McCausland MLA, Northern Ireland Minister for Social Development. I have also held discussions with Sir Ronald Cohen, now appointed interim non-executive chairman of the big society capital group and Nick O'Donoghue the first CEO of the group. I have also had discussions on this subject with Seamus McAleavey, chief executive of the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action. This was also considered at a seminar that I hosted in Hillsborough castle on 27 June that addressed this and other big society issues and which was attended by over 60 individuals representing the third sector in Northern Ireland.

At the seminar on the big society, which I hosted in June, there was consideration of the role that volunteers can play in our society. I also received written representations concerning how best to mark volunteers week in Northern Ireland.

My noble Friend the Lord Freud has engaged with Northern Ireland Ministers on the matter of the Work programme and other aspects of welfare reform during his recent visits to Northern Ireland.

Departmental Meetings

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many meetings he has had with representatives of (a) social enterprises, (b) charities, (c) large private sector businesses and (d) small and medium-sized private sector businesses since May 2010; and if he will make a statement. [75713]

Mr Paterson: In the course of my duties, I meet with representatives of social enterprises, charities and public sector business of all sizes.

Details of ministerial meetings with external organisations are published quarterly and can be obtained via the Northern Ireland Office website at:

www.nio.gov.uk/index/nio-publication

TREASURY

11 Downing Street: Official Hospitality

Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which charities have held receptions at No. 11 Downing street in the last 16 months. [74766]

Miss Chloe Smith: [holding answer 17 October 2011]: The charities that have held receptions at No. 11 in the last 16 months are listed below:

John Smith Memorial Trust (July 2010)
 Starlight's Children's Charity Christmas Party (December 2010)
 Evison Foundation (February 2011)
 Beat—Beating Eating Disorders (February 2011)
 Diana Awards—Young people who inspire the lives of others (February 2011)
 Times/Sternberg Active Life Awards for older people in Britain (February 2011)
 Breast Cancer Campaign (March 2011)
 Community Foundation for Lancashire (May 2011)
 Tommy's—Let's talk baby (May 2011)
 Anne Frank (May 2011)
 WAVE Trust—Ending child abuse to stop violence (May 2011)
 Royal Manchester's Children's Hospital (June 2011)
 First News Children's Newspaper (June 2011)
 John Smith Memorial Trust (July 2011)
 All Party Ladies Committee/Chelsea & Westminster Hospital (July 2011)
 Louise Gergel Fellowship (July 2011)
 Business in the Community (July 2011)
 Evalina Children's Hospital (September 2011)
 Norwood (September 2011)
 Great Ormond Street (September 2011).

Air Force: Scotland

Sir Menzies Campbell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will place in the Library a copy of each item of correspondence his Department has received from the Scottish Government in respect of the recent RAF basing review. [75239]

Danny Alexander: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the answer the then Secretary of State for Defence, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox), gave him on 11 August 2011, *Official Report*, column 1186.

Banks: Finance

Mr Bain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate his Department has made of the quantity of sovereign debt held by UK banks that has been issued by (a) Greece, (b) Ireland, (c) Portugal, (d) Spain, (e) Italy and (f) France. [76088]

Mr Hoban: Data on external claims of UK-owned monetary financial institutions, and of their branches and subsidiaries abroad, is available on the Bank of England website at:

<http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/statistics/Bankstats/2011/Sep/TabC4.2.xls>

This includes UK banking groups' direct exposures to the entire public sectors in Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Italy and France, as of end June 2011.

Business: Complaints

Mr Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on how many occasions (a) he, (b) Ministers in his Department and (c) his officials have discussed customer complaints with representatives of banks and other big businesses; and if he will make a statement. [76458]

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.

Child Benefit

Chris Leslie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 17 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 686W, on child benefit, what estimate he has made of the additional administrative cost of (a) the new child benefit cancellation arrangements at HM Revenue and Customs, (b) new self-assessment tax return provisions for child benefit recipient disclosure and (c) amending PAYE systems to allow taxpayer disclosure of child benefit receipt. [76378]

Mr Gauke: The preliminary indicative estimate for delivering the change to child benefit announced by the Chancellor on 4 October 2010 is £130 million over the four-year spending review period. This figure covers the changes required to existing IT systems and other administrative costs, such as staffing and communications.

Child Care Tax Credit: North Lanarkshire

Mr Frank Roy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of women in the Motherwell and Wishaw constituency likely to give up work following reductions in the level of refundable child care. [75863]

Mr Gauke: The assumptions made in the costing of changes to child tax credit and working tax credit from 2011-12 are set out in spending review 2010 policy costings, available at:

http://cdn.hm-treasury.gov.uk/sr2010_policycostings.pdf

The Government recently agreed the extension of child care provision to those working less than 16 hours through universal credit, which will enable the transition of parents into the labour market.

Child Trust Fund

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of the change in the average monetary value of child trust funds invested in share schemes over the last 12 months; [75764]

(2) whether any assessment has been made of the expected long-term performance of child trust fund investments; [75765]

(3) if the Government will consider the merits of reviews updating its advice to parents on how child trust funds are managed, in order to highlight lower-risk savings options; [75766]

(4) if he will investigate a change to the rules on child trust funds to allow parents to transfer existing funds into Junior ISA schemes. [75767]

Mr Gauke: The Child Trust Fund (CTF) scheme provided every eligible child with a tax-free savings account. There are currently around six million CTF accounts which are worth approximately £3.2million. The Government believe that a sizable CTF market exists, and expect that providers will continue to offer competitive CTF investments.

The Government have made no formal assessments of the expected long-term performance of CTF investments, but expect that investment growth in CTF accounts will be broadly in line with other investment products. CTF providers are not required to report to HM Revenue and Customs the annual investment returns on CTF stakeholder accounts they provide. Available CTF statistical information can be found at:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/ctf/stats.htm>

To ensure CTF account holders receive the best rate of returns for their investments, the Government would encourage parents to continue to shop around to obtain the best deals, including switching between CTF account types and providers.

Junior ISAs and CTF accounts will operate in different ways and the Government do not believe it is in the interests of the six million CTF account holders to rush into wholesale changes to the CTF scheme without consulting all interested parties first. Therefore, once Junior ISAs have been successfully launched, the Government will consider the future of existing CTF accounts, including whether CTFs should be converted into Junior ISAs.

In the meantime, to ensure that children with a CTF are not disadvantaged, on 1 November the Government will increase the CTF contribution limit to £3,600, bringing it in line with the Junior ISA limit. Through this the Government are providing support for all parents wishing to save for their children's future.

Community Investment Tax Relief

Damian Hinds: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the take-up was of Community Investment Tax Relief in each year since its inception. [75665]

Mr Gauke: The take-up of Community Investment Tax Relief in terms of numbers of individuals and amounts claimed each year are shown in the following table.

<i>Tax year</i>	<i>Number of claimants</i>	<i>Income tax relief claimed (£000)</i>
2002-03	650	170
2003-04	580	395
2004-05	930	905
2005-06	1,175	1,315
2006-07	1,155	1,335
2007-08	1,125	1,135
2008-09	1,025	1,090
2009-10	980	1,275

Each year a small number of companies (around 20 to 30) also claim the relief, but data on the amounts claimed are not available.

Damian Hinds: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether a target take-up level for Community Investment Tax Relief was (a) projected and (b) set as a target at the time of its inception. [75666]

Mr Gauke: Community Investment Tax Relief was introduced in 2002. There was no target take-up set at the time of inception. It was projected that £25 million a year would be claimed in tax relief over a 10 year period.

Departmental Location

Mr Weir: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer 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. [74917]

Miss Chloe Smith: HM Treasury has staff based in two sites, in London and Norwich. During the last 12 months no civil servants have been relocated from London to Norwich and fewer than five civil servants have agreed to relocate from Norwich to London. There are currently no further plans to relocate staff.

It is the Department's policy not to disclose further details of staff numbers fewer than five, where to do so could lead to the identification of protected personal data.

Departmental Meetings

Mr Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many meetings he has had with representatives of (a) social enterprises, (b) charities, (c) large private sector businesses and (d) small and medium-sized private sector businesses since May 2010; and if he will make a statement. [75717]

Miss Chloe Smith: A list of Treasury Ministers' meetings with external organisations can be found on the Treasury website:

http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/minister_hospitality.htm

Departmental Security

Mr Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps his Department is taking to improve cyber-security in relation to his Department's estate; and if he will make a statement. [75172]

Miss Chloe Smith: HM Treasury adheres to the IT security principles set out in the Government's Security Policy Framework (SPF):

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/hmg-security-policy_0_0.pdf

The SPF contains a number of mandatory measures dealing with best practice security standards for managing and protecting Government IT systems and devices, as well as business continuity. These measures include regular independent IT health checks.

In addition, HM Treasury make every effort to keep up to date with current developments in cyber security, reviewing security and business continuity policies accordingly and endeavouring to encourage a culture of security-risk-and-threat-awareness within the Department.

Employment: Public Sector

Chris Ruane: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps his Department is taking to support areas of the UK with high levels of public sector employment. [75919]

Danny Alexander: The public sector paybill accounts for around half of departmental resource spending, so deficit reduction will inevitably impact on the public sector workforce. Failing to tackle the deficit would cause more harm to job prospects in the public sector in the medium term.

Most public sector workforces are spread throughout the country so we do not expect major variations in job losses between regions. However, there may be more localised impacts.

The Government will monitor actively potential workforce reductions—looking to use the Jobcentre Plus Rapid Response Teams as appropriate.

The Regional Growth Fund will also support local projects with significant growth potential.

Excise Duties: Alcoholic Drinks

Brandon Lewis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of the cost to the Exchequer of alcohol duty fraud in the financial year (a) 2010-11, (b) 2009-10 and (c) 2008-09; [75644]

(2) if he will hold a consultation on introducing duty stamps on beer and wine. [75645]

Miss Chloe Smith: At Budget 2011, the Chancellor announced that the Government will explore potential legislative measures to tackle existing and emerging threats to alcohol duty receipts. HMRC are currently consulting with the alcohol industry informally on potential anti-fraud measures. All options remain under consideration, and a decision whether to consult formally on specific measures will be taken in due course.

Excise Duties: Fuels

Simon Hart: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress he has made on proposals for a rural fuel duty rebate; and when he expects to announce progress. [75888]

Miss Chloe Smith: The European Commission has agreed in principle to the adoption of such a scheme. On 8 September, the Commission published the proposal for the application of reduced levels of taxation on petrol and diesel across the inner and outer Hebrides, the Northern Isles, the islands in the Clyde and the Isles of Scilly.

The next stage of the process is to secure the unanimous agreement of other EU member states to the proposal and we will publish information on further progress in due course.

Financial Services Authority

Harriett Baldwin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Financial Services Authority on skilled persons reports; and how many such reports were issued to asset management firms in (a) each year from 2006 to 2010 and (b) 2011 to date. [75911]

Mr Hoban: Treasury Ministers and officials meet senior members of the Financial Service Authority (FSA) on a regular basis to discuss a wide range of economic and financial issues. As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government's practice to provide details of such meetings.

I understand that the FSA publishes information on the use of the power to commission "skilled persons" reports in its annual report. A breakdown of the use of this power at sector level could be provided only at a disproportionate cost.

Inheritance Tax

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of the number of charities that will benefit from the proposal to make estates liable for a lower rate of inheritance tax when 10 per cent. or more of their value is left to charities; [75862]

(2) how much revenue was raised from inheritance tax in Scotland in each of the last five years; [75913]

(3) what recent assessment he has made of the effect of the economic situation on revenue raised from inheritance tax; [75914]

(4) what proportion of estates at death were liable for inheritance tax (a) nationally and (b) in Scotland in each of the last five years; [75915]

(5) what estimate he has made of the likely financial effect on charities (a) nationally and (b) in Scotland of the proposal for estates to pay a lower rate of inheritance tax when 10 per cent. or more of their value is left to charities; and when he intends to publish details of the proposed scheme. [75955]

Mr Gauke: The consultation document "A new incentive for charitable legacies", published on the HMRC website at:

http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/downloadFile?contentID=HMCE_PROD1_031346

stated that there are over 300,000 charities in the UK. All of these bodies could potentially benefit from the proposal to reduce the rate of inheritance tax for estates which leave 10% or more of their value to charities.

However, we do not know how many of these charities will be left additional legacies as a result of this measure in any given year.

Numbers of estates liable for inheritance tax in the UK are published in National Statistics table 1.4 available from the HMRC website at

http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/tax_receipts/table1-4-march2011.xls

Numbers of taxpayers in Scotland and tax receipts from Scottish estates are published in Table 12.10 available from the HMRC website at

http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/inheritance_tax/table12-10.xls

Based on this data the proportion of estates liable at death for inheritance tax is given in the following table.

	<i>Taxpaying estates as a proportion of deaths</i>	
	<i>UK</i>	<i>Percentage Scotland</i>
2006-07	6	n/a
2007-08	4	3
2008-09	3	2
2009-10	3	n/a
2010-11	3	n/a

The tax receipts from Scottish estates as published in Table 12.10 are given in the following table.

	<i>Receipts (£ million)</i>
2006-07	n/a
2007-08	220
2008-09	231
2009-10	n/a
2010-11	n/a

Data for 2006/07 on taxpaying estates or receipts for Scotland was not published. Data for 2009-10 and 2010-11 will be published to our publication schedule which is available from the HMRC website at

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/updates/annual-plan.pdf>

A revised forecast of inheritance tax revenue which will take into account the effect of the economic situation will be published by the Office for Budget Responsibility in November 2011.

The tax impact assessment in the consultation document previously referred to contains an estimate of the likely financial effect on charities nationally from the proposal to reduce the rate of inheritance tax for estates leaving 10% or more of their value to charities. No individual assessment has been made of the likely financial effect on charities in Scotland.

An outline of the proposed scheme was published in the consultation document, which sought views on details of the policy. The next stage of policy development for this proposal will be to publish draft legislation for Finance Bill 2012 and explanatory notes, accompanied by a taxes information and impact note and updated tax impact assessment, in December 2011.

Money: Counterfeit Manufacturing

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the face value was of counterfeit coins removed from circulation in each year since 1997. [74486]

Miss Chloe Smith: The following number of counterfeit £1 coins have been returned to the Royal Mint:

	<i>Total withdrawals</i>
2003-04	85,000
2004-05	117,500
2005-06	84,500
2006-07	153,800
2007-08	97,000
2008-09	891,956
2009-10	1,973,000
2010-11	1,845,766
2011-12 (to 30 September)	1,376,436

The Treasury does not have figures on withdrawals prior to 2003, when the counterfeit rate was estimated to be less than 1%.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of counterfeit (a) £5, (b) £10, (c) £20 and (d) £50 bank notes in circulation. [74492]

Miss Chloe Smith: In 2010, 300,000 counterfeit Bank of England notes with a face value of £5.9 million were taken out of circulation.

Details of the number of counterfeit Bank of England notes taken out of circulation are published on the Bank's website:

<http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/banknotes/about/counterfeits.htm>

Pensioners: Income Tax

Rachel Reeves: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate has been made of the number of pensioners who paid income tax at the (a) 50 per cent., (b) 40 per cent. and (c) basic rate in each year since 2008-09; and what proportion of (i) all pensioner taxpayers and (ii) all pensioners these figures represented in each year. [73785]

Mr Gauke [*holding answer 12 October 2011*]: The requested information is shown in the following table.

	<i>Income taxpayers of state pension age</i>			
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
<i>Thousand</i>				
Basic rate	5,170	5,140	5,280	5,190
Higher rate	341	265	267	351
Additional rate	—	—	20	23
All pensioner taxpayers	5,510	5,410	5,560	5,570
<i>As percentage of total pensioner taxpayers</i>				
Basic rate	93.8	95.1	94.8	93.3
Higher rate	6.2	4.9	4.8	6.3
Additional rate	—	—	0.4	0.4
<i>As percentage of all pensioners</i>				
Basic rate	43.7	42.7	43.7	42.8
Higher rate	2.9	2.2	2.2	2.9
Additional rate	—	—	0.2	0.2
All pensioner taxpayers	46.6	44.9	46.1	45.9

The estimates are based on the 2007-08 Survey of Personal Incomes, projected using economic assumptions consistent with the OBR's March 2011 economic and fiscal outlook.

Pensioners are defined as taxpayers aged 65 years or older for men and 60 years or older for women in 2008-09 and 2009-10. The female state pension age is being increased gradually from April 2010 to be equalised with the male state pension age by November 2018. The female state pension age for the purposes of this table in 2010-11 is 60 years six months and in 2011-12 is 61 years.

Basic rate taxpayers are defined as all non-higher and additional rate taxpayers.

Pensioner population estimates are derived from the Office for National Statistics population projections.

Pensions

Mr Laws: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what recent estimate he has made of the annual cost to the public purse of the tax-free lump sum for pension payments; what assumptions he has made in reaching this estimate; how many such lump sums were paid in the most recent year for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement; [75925]

(2) what estimate he has made of the potential revenue yield from capping the tax free lump sum for pension payments at (a) £250,000, (b) £200,000, (c) £150,000 and (d) £100,000; and if he will make a statement. [75926]

Mr Hoban: There are no estimates for the cost of the tax-free lump sum for pension payments, nor an estimate of the potential revenue yield by capping it. There is no requirement on pension schemes to report to HM Revenue and Customs the amount or number of tax-free lump sum pension payments.

Pensions: Tax Allowances

Mr Laws: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the revenue yield from restricting tax relief on pensions to 20% from incomes of £100,000 to incomes of £150,000 in each of the first three years after implementation; and if he will make a statement. [75951]

Mr Gauke: HMRC estimate that the revenue yield from restricting tax relief on pensions to 20% on incomes from £100,000 to £150,000 would be £1 billion in each of the three years after implementation.

This is on an accruals basis and excludes behavioural effects.

Public Sector: Cooperatives

Mr Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer 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. [74786]

Danny Alexander: The Government support implementation of a right for public sector workers to form independent, mutual and co-operative social enterprises. The formation of public service mutuals is

an important piece of the Government's open public services agenda as set out in the Open Public Services White Paper this July. Treasury is actively engaged in implementing this agenda across Government and this includes enabling public sector employees the opportunity to run the services they provide.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer 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. [74813]

Danny Alexander: The Treasury is working with Cabinet Office to consider whether areas of central Government are appropriate for developing public sector mutuals. The formation of public service mutuals is an important piece of the Government's open public services agenda as set out in the Open Public Services White Paper this July. Treasury is actively engaged in implementing this agenda across Government and this includes enabling public sector employees the opportunity to run the services they provide.

Radio Frequencies

Andrew Percy: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of the likely level of revenue from an auction of 800MHz and 2,600MHz Spectrum; and whether such revenues have been included in the Government Accounts for the comprehensive spending review period; [75478]

(2) what his policy is on the allocation of the proceeds from any future auction of 800MHz and 2,600MHz Spectrum; and whether any announced spending commitments will be funded from the proceeds of such an auction. [75479]

Danny Alexander [holding answer 18 October 2011]: The Government does not comment on their estimates of receipts from asset sales, which are of a commercially sensitive nature.

The independent Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) is responsible for determining whether receipts from asset sales should be included in the fiscal forecasts. To date the OBR's policy has been not to include future receipts from the sale of spectrum licenses on the basis that they cannot be quantified with reasonable accuracy.

Consistent with this approach, the Government made no assumptions at spending review 2010 about the level of receipts from the award of 800 MHz and 2.6 GHz spectrum licenses and no spending commitments are contingent upon these receipts.

Stamp Duties

Steve Baker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he has considered the merits of raising the stamp duty threshold in order to increase levels of home ownership. [75907]

Miss Chloe Smith: The Chancellor keeps all taxes, including stamp duty land tax, under review at the Budget.

Stamp Duties: First Time Buyers

Mr Burley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his Department has considered the merits of extending the current relief from stamp duty for first-time buyers beyond March 2012. [75735]

Miss Chloe Smith [holding answer 20 October 2011]: The Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Mr Osborne), announced at Budget 2011 that the outcome of a review of the stamp duty land tax relief for first time buyers will be announced in autumn 2011.

Taxation: Business

Luciana Berger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the tax revenue raised from small businesses in the latest period for which figures are available; and how much and what proportion of such revenue was collected via (a) employee income tax, (b) employee national insurance contributions, (c) employer national insurance contributions, (d) business rates, (e) corporation tax, (f) Value Added Tax, (g) capital gains tax and (h) stamp duty land tax. [74605]

Mr Gauke: It is not possible to identify tax revenue raised from small businesses on a consistent basis as the necessary information on turnover, assets and employment is not routinely collected on tax returns for every head of duty. However, we are able to provide estimates for some taxes on a tax-specific definition of what constitutes a 'small business'.

(a), (b) and (c) We estimate that 21% (£45.4 billion) of pay as you earn (PAYE) received in respect of tax year 2010-11 came from small businesses. Small businesses are defined for this analysis as PAYE schemes with fewer than 50 employees. Businesses may have more than one PAYE scheme, so there may be cases where schemes have fewer than 50 employees but where the business itself has more.

(d) CLG statistics on national non-domestic rates are available using the following link. They do not have any information on receipts of business rates by size of business.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/1972031.pdf>

(e) Total corporation tax receipts across all businesses can be found on the HMRC website. Companies making profits for an accounting period at a rate of over £1.5 million annually must normally pay by instalments. Smaller companies will normally fall outside the instalment payment regime. Defining small company in this way, net small company payments in 2010-11 were £11.5 billion. The link is:

http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/corporate_tax/table11_1.xls

(f) Home VAT is VAT charged on supplies of goods or services made in the UK. For small businesses, defined for this category as those with turnover less than £10 million, the receipts from Home VAT is around £27 billion.

This is available on the UK Trade Info website. The link is:

<https://www.uktradeinfo.com/index.cfm?task=factvat>

(g) Capital gains tax statistics on assets by business and non business can be found in the HMRC website using the following link. However, we are unable to disaggregate these figures by business size. The link is:

http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/capital_gains/table14-6.pdf

http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/capital_gains/table14-7.pdf

(h) Stamp duty land tax statistics on all non-residential transactions can be found on the HMRC website. However, we are unable to disaggregate these figures by business size. The link is:

http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/stamp_duty/table15-3.pdf

Taxation: Gaming Machines

Mr Sanders: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if the Economic Secretary to the Treasury will meet representatives of the amusement games industry to discuss the conclusions of his Department's recent consultation on the introduction of a machine gaming duty. [75339]

Miss Chloe Smith: 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 discussions.

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Departmental Advertising

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how much his Department has spent on advertising job vacancies since May 2010. [75637]

John Penrose: No cost has been spent on advertising for job vacancies within the Department since May 2010.

£123,568.93 has been spent on advertising for public appointments. The Department follows the Commissioner for Public Appointments code of practice with regard to publicising appointments.

Departmental Manpower

Stephen Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how many civil servants work in his Department; and how many worked in his Department in (a) 2000, (b) 2005, (c) 2007 and (d) 2010. [76388]

John Penrose: The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in post at this Department as at 31 March for the years requested, is in the following table.

	<i>FTE staff</i>
2000	623
2005	509
2007	517
2010	469
2011	443

This information has been taken from the departmental resource accounts 1999-2000, 2004-05 and the departmental consolidated accounts 2010-11.

Museums and Galleries

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how many people have visited a publicly-funded museum in the last 12 months. [75844]

Mr Vaizey: This Department holds information about the number of people visiting their sponsored museums and the museums funded through the Renaissance in the Regions programme.

The number of people who visited this Department's sponsored museums from 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 is in the following table:

<i>Museum</i>	<i>Visits</i>
Tate Galleries (including Tate London: i.e. Tate Britain and Tate Modern combined, Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives)	7,296,933
British Museum	5,944,964
National Gallery	5,127,000
Natural History Museum (NHM) (including NHM South Kensington, NHM at Tring)	4,772,995
National Museum of Science and Industry (including Science Museum South Kensington, National Media Museum, National Railway Museum, Science Museum Swindon, Locomotion at Shildon)	4,176,967
Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) (including V&A South Kensington, V&A Museum of Childhood and V&A Theatre Museum)	3,042,231
National Museums Liverpool	2,899,189
Imperial War Museum (IWM) (including IWM London, HMS Belfast, Churchill Museum and Cabinet War Rooms, Duxford Air Museum, IWM North)	2,307,542
National Maritime Museum	1,931,797
Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (including all 13 branches) ¹	1,871,274
National Portrait Gallery	1,785,616
Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester	818,724
Horniman Museum (excluding visits to the garden) ¹	512,129
Wallace Collection	368,962
Royal Armouries (RA) (including RA Leeds and RA Fort Nelson)	288,633
Sir John Soane's Museum	109,325
Geffrye Museum ¹	106,105
National Coal Mining Museum for England	102,867

¹ The Geffrye, the Horniman Museum and Gardens and Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums are part of the Renaissance hub network and so visits to these museums will also be counted in the Renaissance in the Regions figures.

The latest available figures for the Renaissance in the Regions programme shows that between April 2010 and March 2011, 18,780,545 people visited the Renaissance museum venues.

Ofcom

John Thurso: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what procurement process was followed in respect of the contract between Ofcom and Equiniti on the programme making and special events funding scheme; and if he will make a statement. [76195]

Mr Vaizey: Ofcom followed a competitive procurement process under the “restricted procedure” as detailed in the Public Contracts Regulations 2006 (as amended). This involved inviting expressions of interest via a public notice in the Official Journal of the European Union and Ofcom’s own website from 21 December 2009 under the reference number ITT/83/09. Invitations to tender (including a draft contract and detailed award criteria) were issued to all expressing an interest on 15 February 2010 which resulted in the submission of three compliant tenders, and the contract being awarded to Equiniti Limited following detailed assessment of the three tenders received.

John Thurso: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what proportion of profits made by re-selling surrendered programme making and special events equipment will go back to (a) HM Treasury and (b) Equiniti, the scheme administrator. [76196]

Mr Vaizey: The contract between Ofcom and Equiniti contains a gain share clause whereby 54% of the resale value, not profit, is returned to HM Treasury. Equiniti must cover its own cost of sales from its share of the resale value.

Also Equiniti must bear the whole cost of disposal in accordance with environmental legislation of such equipment as cannot be resold.

John Thurso: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what safeguards have been put in place to ensure that surrendered equipment which is resold as part of the programme making and special events funding scheme will be either returned or destroyed by October 2012; and if he will make a statement. [76197]

Mr Vaizey: UK sales are being made only to lawful, licensed users of channel 69. The contract between Ofcom and Equiniti requires destruction in accordance with environmental regulations, return or modification for lawful use. Further, there is a requirement that any purchaser of surrendered equipment agrees to take the equipment out of use by the time licensed (and therefore lawful) use of channel 69 expires and confirm in writing to Equiniti that they have either modified the equipment to operate on Channel 38 or Channel 70, disposed of the Equipment under the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) regulations or returned it to Equiniti. Ofcom can request purchasers provide documentary evidence of disposal or modification (and to make equipment available for inspection on request in the case of modification).

John Thurso: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how much (a) Ofcom and (b) his Department have budgeted in order to police the use of Channel 69 by people who have bought surrendered equipment from Equiniti; and if he will make a statement. [76198]

Mr Vaizey: Ofcom has powers under the Wireless Telegraphy Act to take enforcement action against unlawful use of spectrum. It has not budgeted separately in respect of channel 69.

Philatelic Organisations

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport what support his Department gives to philatelic organisations. [75836]

John Penrose: The British Library holds the National Philatelic Collections of the United Kingdom. Following the spending review it was allocated the following budgets and grant in aid:

	Resource budget (£ million)			Total resource budget (DEL ¹) (£ million)	Capital budget (£ million)			Grant in aid (£ million)
	Programme (near-cash)	Admin (near-cash)	Ring fenced depreciation		Core capital	Projects	Total capital (DEL) budget (£ million)	
2011-12	85.153	8,314	17.700	111.167	2.906	11.100	14.006	107.473
2012-13	83.575	8.164	18.700	110.439	3.047	1.500	4.547	96.286
2013-14	82.311	8.044	18.700	109.055	3.189	0	3.189	93.544
2014-15	82.147	7.929	19.205	109.280	3.331	0	3.331	93.407

¹ Departmental expenditure limit.

Sportsgrounds: Safety

Jonathan Ashworth: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Olympics, Media and Sport how much he expects to save through the abolition of the Sports Ground Safety Authority. [76024]

Hugh Robertson: The role and remit of the Sports Ground Safety Authority has just been extended in a recent Act of Parliament. A number of options for their future are being considered, but no figures on costs or savings can be provided at this stage.

DEFENCE

Adam Werritty

Mr Kevan Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether Mr Adam Werritty has been present at meetings with each Minister of his Department since May 2010. [75498]

Ian Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with reference to the report by the Cabinet Secretary of 18 October 2011, what matters were discussed between the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for International Security Strategy and Mr Adam Werritty at the official meeting between them. [76580]

Mr Philip Hammond [*holding answer 18 October 2011*]: I refer the hon. Members to the Cabinet Secretary's report published on 18 October 2011. The report refers to contact between Mr Adam Werritty and two Ministry of Defence (MOD) Ministers: the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and Government spokesperson (Lord Astor of Hever) and the Under-Secretary of State for International Security Strategy, my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Mr Howarth).

Lord Astor had occasional social contact with Mr Werritty: contact as a result of their previous involvement with the Atlantic Bridge; and contact in passing when visiting Bahrain for the Manama Dialogue in December 2010. None of these meetings involved official MOD business.

Mr Howarth has met Adam Werritty on three occasions, two of which were large social gatherings. Adam Werritty was also present at a meeting between Mr Howarth and a representative of IRG Ltd regarding information that could be useful to the Department relating to Iraq. The discussion centred on the economic and political landscape in Iraq. No further contact or action has taken place.

Afghanistan: Hotels

Nick Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spent on hotel bills in Afghanistan in (a) 2007-08, (b) 2008-09, (c) 2009-10 and (d) 2010-11. [75418]

Mr Philip Hammond [*holding answer 18 October 2011*]: The Ministry of Defence has not incurred any costs from hotel bills in the years requested.

Afghanistan: Peacekeeping Operations

Richard Drax: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of helicopter support available to UK forces in Afghanistan. [76273]

Nick Harvey [*holding answer 21 October 2011*]: Helicopter support for UK forces in Afghanistan is regularly reviewed. The military assessment continues to be that commanders on the ground have access to sufficient helicopter flying hours to enable core tasks to be undertaken.

AlixPartners

Andrew George: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the business case relating to the appointment of AlixPartners. [73328]

Peter Luff: AlixPartners was chosen for their proven competence and experience in business turnaround. The Ministry of Defence's (MOD) renegotiation programme required a high level of professional skill which was not available within the MOD on the scale needed for an exercise of this scope within the timescales available, and it was clear that additional assistance was required. I am withholding the release of the business case as its disclosure would prejudice commercial interests.

The work carried out by AlixPartners is expected to realise hundreds of millions in savings through contract renegotiation.

Departmental Advertising

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department has spent on advertising job vacancies since May 2010. [75636]

Mr Robathan: Although the Ministry of Defence is reducing its civilian staff headcount and has imposed a freeze on most external recruitment, we still need to recruit for posts that are business critical or provide support to current operational commitments. The majority of the external recruitment carried out since May 2010 has been for Service Children's Education, to provide teachers overseas, and also for medical grades, including doctors, nurses and physiotherapists. We have also had to fill a number of senior civil service posts critical to driving forward our reform agenda. These posts are usually advertised across a range of specialist media, as well as on the civil service jobs website. The amount spent on recruitment advertising since May 2010 is £522,826.59. This does not include any expenditure by the trading funds and Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

Departmental Public Expenditure

Mr Jim Murphy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with reference to his Department's business plan 2011-15, how much is projected to be saved in (a) Resource DEL, (b) Capital DEL, (c) annually-managed expenditure and (d) in total from the reduction of the number of heavy armour platforms in each financial year from 2010-11 to 2014-15. [71290]

Mr Philip Hammond: Savings over the next four years are expected to be:

	£ million			
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Resource DEL (near cash)	5	10	10	10
Capital DEL	<5	<5	<5	<5

The figures include the currently projected savings for: Challenger 2 Main Battle Tank, the Challenger Armoured Repair and Recovery Vehicle, the Driver Training Tank, Titan, Trojan, and AS90.

They do not include any savings in depreciation or the costs of writing the assets down, which cannot be calculated until the future of the surplus equipment has been determined.

All figures are planning assumptions and are rounded to the nearest £5 million; the Capital DEL element of the savings is less than £5 million in total over the four-year period.

Ex-servicemen

Mr Davidson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether he has any plans for a public awareness campaign on difficulties faced by veterans. [75047]

Mr Robathan: The armed forces covenant underlines our commitment to ensuring that all the service community, including ex-service personnel, receive the support and recognition which they deserve. As part of this, we work very closely with other Government Departments, devolved

Administrations and voluntary sector organisations to ensure that the needs and circumstances of the ex-service community are known with the aim of improving veterans' access to services and to assist with their transition to civilian life. This includes the work undertaken by the Department of Health to inform GPs about the potential problems that may face veterans and the Department for Communities and Local Government programme to ensure that local authorities give priority to eligible veterans in relation to housing. Indeed, the publicity surrounding the implementation of covenant initiatives has succeeded in raising the profile of the needs of our service community among the wider public.

In addition, the Department aims to inform the public of the help and advice available to veterans. For example, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Veterans World*, which provides information on specific Government, devolved Administration and charitable initiatives aimed at assisting veterans. The MOD also regularly engages with news channels and documentary makers to publicly highlight the issues faced by some veterans and the steps the Government are taking to address these.

Graham Livesey

Nick Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the cost to the public purse was of employing Mr Graham Livesey as a military assistant. [75495]

Mr Philip Hammond [*holding answer 18 October 2011*]: Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) Livesey is a serving Army Officer. As a Lt Col his salary is in the range of £67,031 to £77,617. His appointment as a Military Assistant in the Defence Secretary's office was made under the same terms and conditions of service as to any other post.

Libya: Armed Conflict

Jeremy Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many personnel from the (a) Royal Navy, (b) Royal Air Force and (c) Army have been deployed in relation to the NATO operation in Libya since March 2011. [74314]

Mr Philip Hammond [*holding answer 13 October 2011*]: Information on the number of service personnel who have participated in the NATO operation in Libya is not held in the format requested. As at 10 October 2011 the number of service personnel deployed overseas in support of Operation Ellamy, the UK contribution to the NATO operation, was:

	Number of service personnel ¹
Royal Navy	350
Royal Air Force	770
Army	90

¹ Rounded to the nearest 10 personnel

The number of personnel overseas fluctuates on a daily basis for a variety of reasons including temporary absence for training, evacuation for medical reasons, the roulement of forces, and visits. We do not, therefore, publish actual figures for personnel deployed.

Military Bases: Radioactive Waste

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when his Department first received reports of radioactive pollution at Dalgety Bay in Fife; [75751]

(2) what surveys his Department has undertaken of Dalgety Bay in Fife; [75752]

(3) how many radioactive particles have been recorded at Dalgety Bay in Fife since his Department first received reports of pollution at that location. [75754]

Mr Robathan: Personnel from Rosyth Dockyard are reported to have first found contamination in June 1990 while carrying out ongoing environmental monitoring associated with nuclear submarine operations at Rosyth.

The most recent survey work undertaken by Ministry of Defence (MOD) contractors was on 12 September 2011 when over 30 items, sometimes referred to as radioactive particles or artefacts, were recovered. It is understood that the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) has recovered additional radioactive items. Previous to the September survey, the MOD has undertaken six monitoring surveys and three intrusive investigations of the foreshore area which recovered a total of 128 radioactive items. The results of these surveys along with locations at which buried radium fragments have been encountered are published in the (Entec) Completion Report, dated 19 October available on the following website:

<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/MicroSite/DIO/OurPublications/TechnicalDocuments/MTP/DalgetyBay.htm>

Recorded finds prior to MOD's support to SEPA via the Dalgety Bay Forum are detailed in previous Health Protection Agency and SEPA reports. SEPA's reports are available on their website at:

http://www.sepa.org.uk/radioactive_substances/publications/dalgety_bay_reports.aspx

These documents will be placed in the Library of the House.

In addition to the surveys details above, the MOD has also undertaken investigation, survey and recovery works in relation to properties on the land and these have been satisfactory resolved.

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what steps his Department plans to take to secure the foreshore at the location where radioactive pollution has been identified at Dalgety Bay in Fife; [75756]

(2) what discussions his Department has had with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency on the clean-up of contamination from military aircraft at Dalgety Bay in Fife; [75758]

(3) what estimate he has made of the cost of cleaning up radioactive pollution found at Dalgety Bay in Fife. [75760]

Mr Robathan: The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) have cordoned off the foreshore at Dalgety Bay following the recent finds.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has agreed to dispose of radioactive items recovered by SEPA as part of their ongoing investigative work. In addition the MOD has made a commitment to undertake a three-year programme

of monitoring and recovery at Dalgety Bay to give the public a greater level of protection while SEPA undertakes its additional investigations to identify the source(s) of contamination.

As the scope of any remediation has yet to be established it would be difficult to provide a realistic estimate of the remediation cost at this time.

The MOD continues to support SEPA in the accumulation and disposal of radioactive items recovered during their investigations and supports their work in protecting the public.

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consideration scientists of his Department gave to analysing radioactive contamination found at Dalgety Bay in Fife in 2009; and if he will make a statement. [75759]

Mr Robathan: All materials recovered by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) from Dalgety Bay have been assessed for radium content. The findings are available in the (Entec) Completion Report which is available on the MOD website at the following address:

<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/MicroSite/DIO/OurPublications/TechnicalDocuments/MTP/DalgetyBay.htm>

A copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

All material recovered by the Department has then been offered to SEPA so that further analysis can be carried out as necessary.

Military Bases: Risk Assessment

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when officials of his Department last met the Dalgety Bay Risk Assessment Group; and when this group next intends to meet. [75755]

Mr Robathan: Ministry of Defence (MOD) officials have attended one meeting of the Dalgety Bay Risk Assessment Group, chaired by the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency, in March 2009. Although the MOD has suggested a further meeting, we have no record of any taking place.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Afghanistan: Females

Graeme Morrice: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps he plans to take to support the development of women's rights in Afghanistan. [75812]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: The UK is working hard to support Afghan women's empowerment, including creating opportunities for economic growth and social wellbeing that are inclusive of both men and women. For example, we are working with a local Afghan partner to link women tailors and cloth merchants to female agents for markets to help them sell their products. This programme has worked with more than 2,000 Afghan women to date and its reach is to be extended.

On women's rights, Department for International Development works closely with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to help ensure that the Afghan Government and civil society uphold the rights of, and

demonstrate accountability to Afghan women, and to support the Afghan peace and reconciliation process as part of an inclusive and sustainable political settlement.

Departmental Billing

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what proportion of invoices from suppliers his Department paid within 10 days of receipt in July and August 2010. [74359]

Mr O'Brien: The Department for International Development paid 98% of invoices within 10 days of receipt in July 2010 and 93% of invoices within 10 days of receipt in August 2010.

Departmental Meetings

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many meetings he has had with representatives of (a) social enterprises, (b) charities, (c) large private sector businesses and (d) small and medium-sized private sector businesses since May 2010; and if he will make a statement. [75711]

Mr Andrew Mitchell: Information on meetings between the Secretary of State for International Development and external organisations; including charities, social enterprises and large and small and medium enterprises is available on the DFID website:

<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/About-us/Our-organisation/Ministers/>

This information covers meetings held since May 2010.

Departmental Sick Leave

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development 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. [75019]

Mr O'Brien: Details of the average numbers of days lost to sickness absence, by pay grade, within the Department for International Development worldwide during the 2010-11 financial year, are shown in the following table:

<i>Pay grade</i>	<i>Average days lost to sickness absence per employee</i>	<i>Number</i>
Senior civil service (SCS)		0.2
A1/grade 6		1.3
A2/grade 7		2.9
A2(L)/Senior executive officer plus fast stream staff		4.7
B1/Higher executive officer		7.9
B2/Executive officer		10.4
C1/Administrative officer		17.7
C2/Administrative assistant		8.6
DFID overall		5.3

Indonesia: Natural Resources

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether his Department's projects and programmes in Indonesia include the promotion of sustainable management of the earth's resources; and if he will make a statement. [76201]

Mr O'Brien: In April 2011 the Department for International Development (DFID) agreed with the Government of Indonesia to focus all future UK aid for Indonesia on issues related to climate change, which we believe is the most effective way we can help to improve the lives of poor people in Indonesia in the long term. This means that all of DFID's current and future programmes in Indonesia will contribute to the sustainable management of natural resources. They will do this by helping to reduce deforestation and promoting more sustainable economic growth and employment opportunities. This will also help Indonesia meet its target for reducing the growth of greenhouse gas emissions.

Israel: Overseas Aid

Patrick Mercer: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much his Department provided to (a) Israel and (b) Egypt in each category of expenditure in the latest period for which figures are available. [75793]

Mr Duncan: For the financial year 2010-11 my Department provided no assistance to the Governments of Israel or Egypt.

The Prime Minister announced in May this year that the UK would provide £110 million to North African and Arab Spring countries, including Egypt, over the next four years, to support political and economic reform and transition in the middle east, including Egypt over the next four years. £90 million of this funding will come from my department with £20 million supplied by the FCO. Programming of this funding is currently under way and will support areas such as job creation, economic and social inclusion, political reform and free and fair elections across Arab Spring countries.

My Department has no bilateral programme of assistance to Israel. In the financial year 2010-11 £500,000 of Conflict Pool funding was provided to Israeli NGOs working to address the causes of conflict and promote co-existence between Israel's Jewish and Arab populations and respect for human rights in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Middle East: Pipelines

Patrick Mercer: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what funding from his Department is available to assist in the reconstruction of the Arish-Ashkelon pipeline. [75794]

Mr Duncan: No funding is available to assist the reconstruction of the Arish-Ashkelon pipeline.

The Prime Minister announced in May this year that the UK would provide £110 million to North African and Arab Spring countries, including Egypt, over the next four years, to support political and economic reform and transition in the middle east, including Egypt over the next four years. £90 million of this funding will come from my Department with £20 million supplied by the FCO. Programming of this funding is currently under way and will support areas such as job creation, economic and social inclusion, political reform and free and fair elections across Arab Spring countries.

Mozambique: Environment Protection

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps his Department is taking to promote environmental awareness in Mozambique at the provincial and sub-district level; and if he will make a statement. [76203]

Mr O'Brien: The Department for International Development (DFID) promotes environmental awareness in Mozambique at provincial and sub-district levels, first, through Budget Support. This will help finance a nationwide campaign launched by the President of Mozambique last year and run by the Ministry for the Environment, which encourages, for example, every school pupil to plant a tree and every community to preserve their forests. It will help increase the number of local 'environmental educators' from 800 in 2010 to 5,000 in 2014.

Secondly, DFID promotes environmental awareness by mainstreaming environmental issues into the projects we deliver through multiple sectors for example, education, agricultural, livelihoods, water and sanitation and by supporting civil society to advocate on environmental issues. DFID also leads by example, including by cutting the carbon footprint of our office in Mozambique. For example, the office cut its electricity consumption by 34%, comparing the last two months' bills to the same period last year.

Public Sector

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (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; [74783]

(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. [74819]

Mr O'Brien: DFID staff have been made aware of the public sector-wide scheme which the Cabinet Office is taking forward in response to Government commitments. This scheme will give public sector workers new rights to spin out to form new enterprises and continue to deliver public services, including through new mutuals and co-operatives. These rights will not be uniform across organisations.

The Mutuals Support Programme is a fund of more than £10 million, administered by the Cabinet Office. It will be dedicated to supporting some of the most promising and innovative mutuals so that they reach the point of investment readiness. This will be supported by the Mutuals Information Service that will give help and guidance to potential and existing mutuals. These will be launched later in the autumn.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Animal Welfare

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions she has had with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on the role of the planning system in meeting the commitment in the coalition agreement to work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research. [75871]

Lynne Featherstone: No discussions have been held with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr Pickles), on the role of the planning system in meeting the commitment in the coalition agreement to work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research.

Contraband Goods

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases where contraband goods were seized at the port of Dover was (a) the vehicle transporting the goods permanently seized (and not returned to its owner) and (b) the driver or owner prosecuted in each of the years (i) 2007-08, (ii) 2008-09, (iii) 2009-10 and (iv) 2010-11. [75815]

Damian Green: The UK Border Agency does not hold all the information requested. The UK Border Agency prosecutes individuals attempting to transport prohibited and restricted goods into the United Kingdom. All excise seizures are referred to HM Revenue and Customs to action.

Records for permanently seized vehicles are available only from 2010 and statistics regarding prosecutions are not available.

The total number of vehicles seized by UK Border Agency in Dover for the years stated are as follows:

	Vehicles seized	Number Retained
2007-08	1,104	n/a
2008-09	947	n/a
2009-10	1,052	1355
2010-11	1,173	2859

¹ 2010 only.

² October 2011.

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date contraband goods were seized at the port of Dover in each year since 2007-08; what the (a) nature, (b) quantity and (c) estimated street value of the goods seized was in each case; and how much excise or other duties were forgone in each case. [75832]

Damian Green: The information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Advertising

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much her Department has spent on advertising job vacancies since May 2010. [75629]

Damian Green: The Home Office and its agencies have spent £20,935 on advertising job vacancies at senior civil servant level between 1 May 2010 and 30 September 2011. Information for posts below this level is available only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Pay

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the salary is of the UK Border Agency officials (a) Zilla Bowell, (b) Rob Yeldham, (c) Jonathan Sedgwick, (d) David Wood, (e) Martin Peach, (f) Matthew Coates, (g) Justin Holliday, (h) Joe Dugdale and (i) Brodie Clark. [75746]

Damian Green: The UK Border Agency has published the salaries of senior staff, as part our commitment to transparency. The data now in the public domain represents what we can provide while honouring the duty that we have to our staff under the Data Protection Act.

The information is set out as follows and is in table 3.13 of the UK Border Agency annual report and accounts 2010-11.

	2010-11			2009-10		
	Salary (£000)	Bonus payments (£000)	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)	Salary (£000)	Bonus payments (£000)	Benefits in kind (to nearest £100)
<i>Officials</i>						
Jonathan Sedgwick Deputy Chief Executive Acting Chief Executive (from 10 January 2011)	105-110	5-10	0	100-105	10-15	0
Brodie Clark Director Border Force	130-135	5-10	2,500	130-135	10-15	5,700
Matthew Coates Director Immigration Group	145-150	5-10	0	145-150	10-15	0
Justin Holliday Director Resource Management Group	130-135	5-10	0	130-135	5-10	0
Joe Dugdale Director HR and Organisational Development	130-135	5-10	0	130-135	10-15	0
Martin Peach Director Intelligence Group	105-110	0	0	105-110	0	0
David Wood Director Criminality and Detention Group	100-105	5-10	0	100-105	10-15	0
Robert Yeldham Director Communications	85-90	0-5	0	85-90	0	0
Zilla Bowell Chief of Staff (from 3 August 2009)	65-70	0-5	0	¹ 45-50	0-5	0

¹ 65-70 full year equivalent

Salary here includes gross salary; overtime; reserved rights to London weighting or London allowances; recruitment and retention allowances; private office allowances; and any other allowance to the extent that it is subject to UK taxation. This report is based on accrued payments made by the UK Border Agency.

This can also be accessed via the following link:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/annual-reports-accounts/>

Additionally, a list of SCS salaries (pay band 2 and above) and departmental organograms was published on 15 June 2011 showing a snapshot as at 31 March 2011. These are available on line at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/about-us/corporate-publications/ukba-structure-salary-march-2011/>

An updated list showing a snapshot as at 30 September 2011 is expected to be published by the 30 November.

Deportation: Offenders

Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the average length of time taken was for a foreign offender issued with a deportation order to be removed from (a) the issue of the deportation order and (b) since the offender left prison in each of the last five years. [75541]

Damian Green: The following table shows the average length of time for a foreign national offender to be removed from the UK following the issue of a deportation order. Please note that data prior to 2008 are not considered to be sufficiently reliable.

	<i>Average number of days taken to remove a foreign national offender following the issue of a deportation order</i>
2008	149
2009	149
2010	165
2011 (to September)	172

The following table shows the average length of time for a foreign national offender to be removed from the UK following the completion of their custodial sentence. Please note that data prior to 2008 are not considered to be sufficiently reliable.

	<i>Average number of days taken to remove a foreign national offender following the completion of their custodial sentence</i>
2008	131
2009	119
2010	95
2011 (to September)	77

Detention Centres: Children

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children have been held in detention at pre-departure accommodation Cedars since it opened. [75650]

Damian Green: The latest published figures show that no children have been held in the pre-departure accommodation at Cedars between when it opened on 17 August 2011 and 31 August 2011.

Since 25 November 2010, each month the Home Office has published a table specifically showing how many children entered immigration removal centres and short-term holding facilities. This excludes those in police cells, Prison Service establishments and short-term holding rooms at ports and airports (for less than 24 hours), those recorded as detained under both criminal and immigration powers and their dependants. From 29 September 2011, when figures for August were published, this table has included Cedars pre-departure accommodation.

The Home Office publishes monthly, quarterly and annual statistics on the number of children entering detention, solely under Immigration Act powers. Children entering detention figures relating to September 2011 will be published on 27 October 2011 and will be available from the Library of the House and from the Home Office Science, research and statistics web pages at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/science-research/research-statistics/migration/migration-statistics/>

Keith Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many children are being held in each immigration detention facility; and what the reason for the detention is in each case. [75677]

Damian Green: The latest published figures show that no children were being held in detention, solely under Immigration Act powers in immigration removal centres and short term holding facilities as at 30 June 2011. This excludes those in police cells, Prison Service establishments and short-term holding rooms at ports and airports (for less than 24 hours), those recorded as detained under both criminal and immigration powers and their dependants.

Quarterly figures published on children in detention are taken as a snapshot on the last day of each quarter. Additionally figures are published on children entering detention on a monthly basis.

The Home Office publishes quarterly and annual statistics on the number of children in detention, solely under Immigration Act powers. Children in detention figures as at 30 September 2011 will be published on 24 November 2011 and will be available 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-statistics/>

Entry Clearances: Domestic Service

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of the migrant domestic workers who renewed their visas in 2009 first entered the UK in (a) 2004, (b) 2005, (c) 2006, (d) 2007, (e) 2008 and (f) 2009. [75670]

Damian Green: The information required is not centrally recorded in the format requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many domestic workers accompanied diplomats on a (a) domestic worker (diplomat) and (b) Tier 5 International Agreement visa in 2010. [75672]

Damian Green: Since November 2008 overseas domestic workers accompanying diplomats can enter only through the tier 5 international agreement route.

There were 453 individuals issued with entry clearance visas under the points-based system, Tier 5 - International Agreement route in 2010. Figures for domestic workers accompanying diplomats cannot be individually identified within this category.

The latest Home Office immigration statistics on entry clearance visas issued in the calendar year 2010, together with earlier data, are given in table 'be.04' of the statistical release 'Immigration Statistics April to June 2011'. This publication is available from the Library of the House and from the Home Office Science website at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/science-research-statistics/research-statistics/immigration-asylum-research/immigration-q2-2011/>

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information is provided to migrant domestic workers during the visa issuing procedure on their rights in the UK. [75674]

Damian Green: The UK Border Agency does not advise applicants on the category of the immigration rules they should apply under. The onus is on the applicant to determine the category that is most applicable to their circumstances. The UK Border Agency website provides information on the UK immigration rules and informs applicants of their rights in the UK under every category, including domestic workers.

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information her Department holds on the number of embassies which have objected to migrant domestic workers they have employed changing their employer within the immigration rules. [75675]

Damian Green: Overseas domestic workers in diplomatic households are only able to switch employer within the mission. The Home Office is not aware of any embassies that have objected to overseas domestic workers switching in this way.

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many migrant domestic workers referred into the National Referral Mechanism had come to the UK on a domestic worker (diplomat) or Tier 5 entry clearance visa. [75781]

Damian Green: Between 1 April 2009 and 30 June 2011, 14 migrant domestic workers referred into the National Referral Mechanism had come to the UK on a domestic worker (diplomat) or Tier 5 entry clearance visa.

The figure quoted is internal management information only and is subject to change.

Entry Clearances: Overseas Students

Mr Yeo: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many student visas were granted to foreign nationals from (a) Uganda and (b) the East African community in each of the last five years. [R] [76071]

Damian Green: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Country	Sum of issued				
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Burundi	8	10	7	9	5
Kenya	1,001	912	1,038	954	914
Rwanda	60	70	70	55	58
Tanzania	1,095	911	947	582	476
Uganda	519	587	628	470	399

The data is based on management information. It is provisional and subject to change.

Government Procurement Card

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 13 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 505W, on the Government Procurement Card, (1) what items of procurement card spending are considered sensitive as a matter of policy; and for what reason such items are considered sensitive; [75816]

(2) which items of expenditure by her Department made on the Government Procurement Card require redaction on grounds of sensitivity; and for what reason the expenditure is considered sensitive in each case. [75833]

Damian Green: The Home Office does not have an overarching policy on the publication of transactions made on Government Procurement Cards (GPC). Each transaction would need to be assessed on a case by case basis to decide whether the information is sensitive, and therefore needs to be redacted. Information would be regarded as sensitive and redacted from publications, in the interest of national security, or if a release would breach data protection legislation.

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 13 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 506W, on the Identity and Passport Service: Government Procurement Card, (1) what the (a) date of purchase, (b) amount and (c) supplier of each transaction undertaken by the Identity and Passport Service using the Government Procurement Card was in March 2010; [75817]

(2) what the (a) date of purchase, (b) amount and (c) supplier was of each transaction undertaken by the Identity and Passport Service using the Government Procurement Card in 2009-10. [75818]

Damian Green: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (John Glen) on 13 September 2011, *Official Report*, column 1135W: It is not possible to provide a breakdown of each GPC transactions in these years without incurring disproportionate cost.

Table 1, placed in the House Library, provides information on spend by the Identity and Passport Service (formerly the UK Passport Agency) through the use of Government Procurement Cards (GPC) in 2009-10 by (a) date of purchase, by month (b) amount and (c) supplier.

The Home Department is currently working to provide a consistent method of reporting GPC spend data for transactions over £500 in value dating from 1 April 2011. We expect this information to be available on our departmental website by the end of the calendar year.

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer of 13 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 505W, on the Government Procurement Card, what estimate her Department made of the cost of providing the information requested; and what calculations her Department used in determining that the provision of the information requested would incur disproportionate cost. [75834]

Damian Green: The estimated cost of the Home Department providing a response to the answer of 13 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 505W, on Government Procurement Card spend is £3,938. The calculation used to estimate this cost is (staff time) multiplied by (hourly rate) for grade of staff involved. To provide a response to the answer would have required Home Office staff to consider over 164,000 lines of transactional data.

Hillsborough Stadium

Mr Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will make available to the Hillsborough Panel all of the briefing papers on the Hillsborough disaster which were submitted to Lady Thatcher when she was Prime Minister. [76159]

Mrs May [holding answer 21 October 2011]: As I said in the House of Commons on 17 October 2011, *Official Report*, columns 668-70, all Government papers have been made available, in full and uncensored, to the Hillsborough Independent Panel.

Human Trafficking

Emma Reynolds: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information her Department holds on steps being taken by the police to encourage hotels to assist in identifying perpetrators and victims of human trafficking. [76078]

Damian Green: The Government's strategy on human trafficking sets out a commitment to exploring what further role the private sector and the public can play in tackling human trafficking.

Combating human trafficking is part of core police business and the steps taken to identify victims and offenders are operational matters for individual police forces. All new police officers receive mandatory training on trafficking and existing officers have access to awareness material.

Identity and Passport Service: Liverpool

Mrs Ellman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress her Department has made in providing compensation payments for employees dismissed from Liverpool Passport Office on 21 March 2011. [76451]

Damian Green: Originally nine of the 14 staff who had their permanent employment terminated by the Identity and Passport Service (IPS) on 21 March 2011 submitted claims to the Employment Tribunal for unfair dismissal. There is a three-day hearing scheduled to commence on 8 February 2012. A case management discussion was held on 30 September and an order was made for the claimants to provide schedule of losses since leaving IPS employment by 11 November. Upon receipt of the schedule of losses, Treasury Solicitors who are acting on behalf of IPS will commence negotiations with the claimants' representatives with a view to settling the Employment Tribunal claims. Compensation payable will be considered on an individual basis.

Illegal Immigrants

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate she has made of the number of non-UK citizens entering the UK illegally or clandestinely who were not apprehended at (a) the Port of Dover and (b) the Port of Calais in (i) 2008-09, (ii) 2009-10 and (iii) 2010-11. [75831]

Damian Green: The UK Border Agency records detections of those attempting clandestine entry. Given that any persons who were not apprehended have evaded the controls there are no records of entry or estimates of those who may have done so.

Police: Harassment Warnings

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many harassment warnings have been issued by police officers to people of each (a) age group, (b) gender, (c) ethnicity and (d) region in each year since 2006. [75720]

Lynne Featherstone: The information requested is not recorded centrally.

Offences of harassment are governed by the Protection from Harassment Act 1997. However this legislation does not provide any formal statutory framework for Police Information Notices (also commonly referred to as 'PINs' or 'harassment warnings') and responsibility for issuing them rests with individual police forces. The Crown Prosecution Service and the National Policing Improvement Agency have published guidance on the use of PINs.

Police: Pay

Mr Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether she expects the Chancellor's commitment to increase the pay of police staff in England and Wales earning less than £21,000 to be implemented through the Police Staff Council for England and Wales; and if she will make a statement. [75785]

Nick Herbert: The Government's policy is to freeze the pay of public sector workers for two years except for those earning £21,000 or less, who will receive an increase of a minimum of £250. We would expect this to apply to police staff, although police staff pay is determined by police authorities and is subject to the usual negotiating processes.

Police: Pensions

Mr Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there was any change in the pension entitlement of (a) Sir Paul Stephenson and (b) John Yates following their resignation from the Metropolitan Police. [75880]

Nick Herbert [holding answer 20 October 2011]: The administration of police pension schemes is a matter for the relevant police authority. No information is held centrally on any individual police officer's pension entitlement.

Police: Rugby

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of the potential effect of planned changes to police budgets on the policing of Rugby Football Union matches at Twickenham stadium. [72356]

Nick Herbert: The police are able to charge for 'special police services' under section 25 of the Police Act 1996. The policing of sports events is defined as a special police service for which the organisers can be charged for the police services that they have requested. The provision of policing at a sports event is a matter for the individual police force and the event organiser to agree between themselves.

Restraint Equipment: Detainees

Shabana Mahmood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps she is taking to review the techniques used to restrain detainees on aircraft. [76049]

Damian Green: The UK Border Agency formally asked the National Tactical Response Group of the National Offender Management Service to conduct a review of the current restraint techniques being used by escort officers including those used during removals.

Officials expect to receive an interim report on the review in November 2011.

Shabana Mahmood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many detainees have been injured while being restrained during deportation from the UK in (a) the 12 months period ending on 1 September 2011 and (b) each of the previous five years. [76050]

Damian Green: Escort officers are trained in the use of control and restraint techniques, which are used only as a matter of last resort when all other alternatives of persuading a person to comply with their removal from the UK have failed or they need to be controlled for safety reasons.

The use of restraint is legitimate and lawful so long as its use is justified, proportionate and de-escalated at the earliest opportunity when the individual has complied. Escort officers are required to submit a report each time force has been used to restrain a detainee while being removed. However separate records are not held on injuries sustained. This could be determined only by examination of each use of force or incident report submitted at disproportionate cost.

JUSTICE

Burglary: Sentencing

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people in Finchley and Golders Green constituency who were convicted of burglary between September 2010 and September 2011 received custodial sentences of (a) under six months, (b) between six and 12 months, (c) between 12 and 18 months and (d) over 18 months. [76145]

Mr Blunt: The Ministry of Justice Court Proceedings Database holds information on defendants proceeded against, found guilty and sentenced for criminal offences in England and Wales. This centrally held information is not available at parliamentary constituency level.

Court proceedings data, broken down by police force area, are currently available for the calendar year 2010. Data for 2011 are planned for publication in spring 2012.

Burial

Stephen Phillips: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what steps his Department is taking to encourage the establishment of eco-burial sites. [75268]

Mr Djanogly: In 2009 the Ministry of Justice published guidance for operators of natural burial grounds with advice on the legal and regulatory framework governing natural burial and information to ensure operators provide a high quality service to the bereaved and the wider community. The guidance is available on the Ministry of Justice website.

Establishing and providing eco-burial sites is a matter for local authorities, non profit organisations or private companies.

Community Legal Advice: Finance

Sarah Newton: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what contribution his Department has made to the Cabinet Office review of advice services funding; and if he will make a statement. [75678]

Mr Djanogly: I can confirm that my Department is working closely with colleagues across Government, including the Cabinet Office, to support this work.

Coroners

Robert Flello: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many submissions to the consultation on reforming public bodies supported full implementation of the role of chief coroner as set out in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009; [76369]

(2) how many submissions to the consultation on reforming public bodies referred to the office of the chief coroner; [76370]

(3) how many submissions to the consultation on reforming public bodies supported the Government's proposals to add the chief coroner to schedule 5 of the Public Bodies Bill. [76371]

Mr Djanogly: The Ministry of Justice consultation on reforms proposed in the Public Bodies Bill closed on 11 October. Of the 2,742 responses received, 2,646 referred to the Office of the Chief Coroner. 2,607 of these were identical responses from members of the public received via the Royal British Legion campaign website.

The Department intends to publish its response to the consultation by the end of this year. This will contain a summary of the responses received.

Details of the consultation can be found on the Ministry of Justice website at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/consultations/reform-public-bodies.htm>

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Bridget Phillipson: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (a) how many and (b) for what reasons claims for compensation were rejected by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority in the last five years for which figures are available. [R] [75727]

Mr Djanogly: The information requested is outlined in the following table.

<i>Scheme paragraph</i>	<i>Criterion</i>	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2010-11</i>
6	Injury sustained before 1 August 1964	23	24	17	15	6
7A	Previous claim for same injury	330	515	775	447	543
7B	Injury sustained in family setting before 1 October 1979	0	274	145	136	78
8A	Mainly, injury did not result from crime of violence	4,594	4,262	3,648	4,183	3,566
9	Application did not meet restrictions in paragraph	231	205	221	322	380
11	Motor vehicle cases: mainly, vehicle not used as a weapon to injure	325	321	318	346	305
12	Accidental injury sustained in law enforcement: risk not justifiable	85	64	64	123	115
13A	Failure to report without delay	1,760	1,596	1,661	2,147	1,610
13B	Failure to cooperate with police in bringing assailant to justice	5,135	4,776	4,180	5,290	4,983
13C	Failure to cooperate with the Authority	1,729	1,451	1,531	3,685	2,126
13D	Conduct before, during or after the incident	3,478	3,157	3,106	3,898	3,200
13E	Applicants criminal record/character	4,147	4,472	4,003	4,929	3,864
16A	Assailant would have benefited from award	84	91	63	108	102
16B	Award would have been against a minors interests	1	0	1	9	5
17A	Assailant in family violence/abuse claim not prosecuted	1	2	7	3	2
17B	Violence between adults in the same family	43	33	33	79	58
18	Claim not submitted within 2 years of incident	587	469	535	1,371	1,196
25	Injury not serious enough to qualify for minimum award of £1,000	8,072	8,106	8,059	10,879	8,862
26	Pre-existing medical condition	564	524	433	576	580
Total		31,189	30,342	28,800	38,546	31,581

Bridget Phillipson: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many applications for compensation rejected by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority were referred to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Appeals Panel in each of the last five years for which figures are

available; and how many such applications were successful. [R] [75728]

Mr Djanogly: The information is as follows:

	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2010-11</i>
Volume of new applications	60,861	53,290	57,753	65,445	61,292
Total number of claims rejected by CICA and appealed to the First-tier Tribunal	1,756	1,795	1,902	2,758	1,883
Total decisions overturned from those cases that go to appeal	727	723	700	920	461

These figures reflect cases where the applicant has been refused compensation, appealed to the First-tier Tribunal and the decision has been overturned. Not all

appealed cases will have been heard and decided by the Tribunals Service—Criminal Injuries Compensation. The Tribunals Service may request further information, such

as special medical reports, and a case can only be heard on receipt of all requested information. Cases at appeal stage still under investigation are therefore excluded from these figures.

Bridget Phillipson: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the (a) number of claims and (b) total value of claims paid to residents of Sunderland local authority through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme was in the latest financial year for which figures are available. [R] [75741]

Mr Djanogly: The information requested is as follows:

	2010-11
Total claims (number)	346
Total value of awards paid (£)	922,354

These figures include applicants whose postcode is currently recorded as beginning SRI, SR2, SR3, SR4, SR5 or SR9.

Departmental Advertising

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how much his Department has spent on advertising job vacancies since May 2010. [75627]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The Ministry of Justice complies with the Government freeze on new advertising, marketing and communications spend. Under MOJ policy, no money can be committed to any advertising and marketing activity without a formal exemption from the freeze. Exemptions can only be provided by the Efficiency Reform Group (ERG) (for expenditure over £100,000) or from the MOJ Director of Communications (for expenditure below £100,000).

All external recruitment into MOJ, in line with the rest of the civil service, is also currently frozen. The only exceptions are front-line roles and business critical roles.

Given these controls, since May 2010, a total of £40,703.66 has been spent on advertising Ministry of Justice job vacancies. This includes all expenditure for MOJ HQ, HM Courts and Tribunals Service and the National Offender Management Service.

The 42 probation trusts and Ministry of Justice arm's length bodies are excluded from this response as their details are held separately and to gather it would exceed the cost limit. Information can be separately requested from the individual offices if required.

Departmental Pay

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) whether any member of the senior civil service in his Department received a salary increase between 2009-10 and 2010-11; what the posts concerned were; and what the salary paid in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11 was; [75822]

(2) whether any member of the senior civil service in his Department received a bonus in the year 2010-11; what the posts concerned were; and what bonus was paid in respect of each postholder in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11; [75823]

(3) whether any member of the senior civil service in his Department received a pay reduction in respect of poor performance in 2010-11; [75853]

(4) what the policy of his Department is on (a) paying members of the senior civil service bonuses for good performance and (b) pay reductions for poor performance; [75854]

(5) whether any members of the senior civil service for which his Department is responsible was paid more than the Prime Minister's ministerial salary in 2010-11; in respect of which posts such payments were made; and what the salary of such office holders was in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11. [75855]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The coalition Government announced in the 2010 Budget that all public sector pay would be subject to a 2-year pay freeze (except for staff who earn less than £21,000 per annum). This current freeze, which began in April this year, is in addition to the one-year freeze introduced previously by the previous Administration.

The SCS pay freeze has meant that there have been no increases to base pay awarded to senior civil servants working at the Ministry of Justice for the performance years 2009-10, 2010-11 and neither will there be for 2011-12.

For the 2010-11 performance year, 59 senior civil servants within the Ministry of Justice (including NOMS) were awarded non-consolidated performance-related payments (bonuses) as part of the end-year SCS performance management process, out of a total of 244 in scope for consideration. These 59 senior civil servants had been awarded Performance Group 1 marking as a result of the SCS end-year performance management process.

The Prime Minister, in a statement made on 16 May 2010, announced that for the senior civil service in 2010-11, the top 25% of performers (those in Performance Group 1) in each Department would be eligible to be considered for a non-consolidated performance-related payment (a bonus). For 2010-11, the Ministry of Justice awarded non-consolidated performance-related payments to 24.2% of those senior civil servants in scope for consideration.

(a) For the SCS performance year 2009-10, non-consolidated performance-related payments were awarded to those placed in Performance Groups 1 and 2 as part of the end-year SCS performance management process. In line with Cabinet Office guidance, non-consolidated performance-related payments were differentiated, for those in Performance Group 1 and those in Performance Group 2.

For 2009-10, 53 SCS pay bands 2 and 3 (Directors and Directors General) were awarded non-consolidated performance-related payments and 111 were awarded to SCS Pay Bands 1 and 1A (Deputy Directors). 18 members of SCS Pay Bands 2 and 3 (Directors and Directors General) were awarded Performance Group 1 and 35 were awarded Performance Group 2. 43 members of SCS pay bands 1 and 1A (Deputy Directors) were awarded Performance Group 1 and 68 were awarded Performance Group 2.

For the 2009-10 SCS performance year, the following amounts were payable to each pay band:

	Performance Group 1	Performance Group 2	£
Pay Band 1	7,500		3,500
Pay Band 2	10,000		6,000
Pay Band 3	10,000		6,000

(b) For the SCS performance year 2010-11, non-consolidated performance-related payments were awarded to only those awarded Performance Group 1. 16 members of SCS pay bands 2 and 3 (Directors and Directors General) and 43 members of SCS pay bands 1 and 1A (Deputy Directors) received Performance Group 1 and therefore were awarded non-consolidated performance-related payments.

For the 2010-11 performance year, the following amounts were payable to each pay band:

SCS pay band	Agreed non-consolidated performance-related payment (bonus) 2010-11	£
1/1A		7,500
2		10,000
3		12,000

No SCS members within the Ministry of Justice (including NOMS) received a pay reduction in respect of poor performance in 2010-11.

SCS staff are eligible for non-consolidated, performance-related payments. The Prime Minister, in a statement made on 16 May last year, announced that for the SCS in 2010-11, the top 25% of performers in each Department would be eligible to be considered for (could receive) a non-consolidated performance-related pay award so that in future only those making an exceptional contribution would be rewarded. This remains the position for 2011-12.

There is no mechanism under the current SCS remuneration system by which pay may be reduced for poor performance.

The Prime Minister's total remuneration package is £142,500.

In 2009-10 and 2010-11 there were 10 SCS members within the Ministry of Justice (including NOMS) who earned a basic salary of more than £142,500. In 2009-10, two were members of SCS pay band 2 (Directors), seven were members of SCS pay band 3 (Directors General) and one was the Permanent Secretary. In 2010-11, four were members of SCS pay band 2 (Directors), five were members of SCS pay band 3 (Directors General) and one was the Permanent Secretary.

For 2010-11, senior civil servant salaries for Deputy Directors, Directors, Directors General and the Permanent Secretary were published on the Ministry's website and this can be obtained through the following link:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/transparency-data/senior-civil-service-salaries-and-organograms.htm>

Departmental Procurement

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many meetings he has had with representatives of (a) social enterprises, (b) charities, (c) large private sector businesses and (d) small and medium-sized private sector businesses since May 2010; and if he will make a statement. [75712]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The Ministry of Justice publishes details of meetings that all Justice Ministers, including myself, hold with external organisations. This is published on ministerial gifts, meetings and hospitality returns on a quarterly basis and is available on the Ministry of Justice website at:

<http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/corporate-reports/moj/index.htm>

The next return (April 2011 to June 2011) has been collated and will be published in the near future.

Departmental Training

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice 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. [74384]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: No central records are held of either staff attending external training courses, or the cost of each course. Responsibility for training budgets and the booking of courses is devolved to business areas and local line managers. Collating detailed information on the number of courses and the cost of each course would incur a disproportionate.

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) commissions learning and development interventions to ensure that it meets its business needs, reinforces professional standards, provides high quality learning and represents best value for money. The vast majority of business specific training is developed 'in-house' because of the specialist skills required to either work in the custodial environment, or operate our specific business processes. Generic training is sourced from civil service learning. There are occasions when it is necessary for MOJ to procure learning from an external provider.

Departmental Voluntary Work

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what volunteering (a) he and (b) other Ministers in his Department have undertaken as part of the One Day Challenge; what the nature of the work undertaken was; on what dates it took place; and what the names were of the organisations assisted. [76234]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: The Giving White Paper published on 23 May 2011 outlines the Government's proposals to encourage charitable giving. As part of this, all Ministry of Justice Ministers have pledged to undertake a "One Day Challenge"—a voluntary commitment to give one day of their time to a charity or community group of their choice. I and my ministerial colleagues will fulfil this commitment over the coming months.

Disability Living Allowance: Appeals

Mr Frank Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many people in Motherwell and Wishaw constituency have won an appeal against the withdrawal of their disability living allowance at a tribunal in the latest period for which figures are available. [75826]

Mr Djanogly: Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service does not hold data specific to the Motherwell and Wishaw constituency. However, the majority of appeals against a Department for Work and Pensions

(DWP) decision on an individual's entitlement to disability living allowance, made by people in this constituency, are heard in the Social Security and Child Support First-tier Tribunal hearing venue in Hamilton. This venue also hears appeals from other nearby locations.

Between April 2011 and August 2011, the most recent period for which figures are available, there were 510 appeals against a DWP decision on an individual's entitlement to disability living allowance decided at hearing in the Hamilton hearing venue, of which 180 were found in favour of the appellant.

Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill

Sarah Newton: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to his contribution of 29 June 2011, *Official Report*, column 984, on the second reading of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill, when he plans to provide details of the fund for not-for-profit legal advice centres. [75680]

Mr Djanogly: Further to the announcement made by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), on 29 June 2011, *Official Report*, column 984, I can confirm that the Cabinet Office is responsible for the distribution of the England portion of the £20 million fund for not-for-profit advice providers. Cabinet Office officials are working with the Treasury and my Department on agreeing the criteria for funding. Further details of the funding criteria and process will be announced by the Cabinet Office in the next few weeks.

Magistrates: Training

Stephen Barclay: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how much his Department has spent on (a) the Judicial Studies Board and (b) training for magistrates in respect of new sentencing guidelines in the last 12 months. [76183]

Mr Kenneth Clarke: From 1 April 2011, training for judicial office holders in the courts and in most tribunals became the responsibility of the Judicial College. The Judicial College was created by bringing together separate arrangements that had previously existed for training judicial office holders in the courts (the Judicial Studies Board) and Tribunals Service (through the Tribunals Judicial Training Group).

The total expenditure for the Judicial Studies Board (JSB) for the period 2010-11 was £6,759,000. A summary of the expenditure for the JSB is shown in the annual report for 2010-11 which is available on the Judiciary website at:

www.judiciary.gov.uk

Financial data for 2011-12 will be available next.

The only new sentencing guidelines within the last 12 months that the Judicial College has provided training material for are the new assault sentencing guidelines which came into effect on 13 June 2011. Training materials were distributed to magistrates' courts in April and were then delivered locally by Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) trainers. Costs actually incurred

by HMCTS in the delivery of this training will not be provided to the Judicial College until the end of the current financial year.

Social Security Benefits: Appeals

Mr Frank Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many appeals against benefit decisions in (a) Scotland and (b) the UK are outstanding and awaiting processing. [75748]

Mr Djanogly: Appeals against benefit decisions made by the Department for Work and Pensions are heard by the First-tier Tribunal—Social Security and Child Support (SSCS).

There are always a number of 'live' appeals in the SSCS Tribunal at different stages of processing. The number of live SSCS appeals in Scotland at 31 August 2011, the most recent period for which statistics have been published, was 13,300. In the UK, excluding Northern Ireland where appeals are heard by The Tribunals Service Northern Ireland, there were 168,400 live cases at 31 August 2011.

These figures do not include cases that have been lodged with the Department for Work and Pensions for reconsideration of their decision but which have not yet been referred to the Tribunal.

Third Sector

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice 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. [73996]

Mr Djanogly: The Ministry of Justice funds many different civil sector organisations and has correspondence with many more. The number of letters referring to both successful and unsuccessful funding bids and to funding issues in general is not monitored by the Department.

The Department is funding various civil sector organisations over the three financial years 2011-14 in the policy areas of legal aid, reducing reoffending, victims and witnesses, coroners and international.

Victims' Levy

Alex Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) with reference to his Department's press notice of 26 September 2011, what methodology his Department used to determine the total sum to be raised from prisoners' earnings for the purposes of funding victim support services; [75639]

(2) what the average annual cash payment to an individual prisoner through the new victims' levy is likely to be in (a) the next 12 months and (b) each of the next five years; [75729]

(3) how many prisoners will have to pay the victims' levy from their earnings in (a) the next 12 months and (b) each of the next five years; [75730]

(4) what estimate he has made of the revenue likely to be raised for victim support by the levy on prisoner earnings in (a) the next 12 months and (b) each of the next five years. [75731]

Mr Blunt: Our expectation, that deductions under the Prisoner's Earnings Act 1996 will generate up to £1 million per year, was informed by prisoner earnings data that were collected from those prisoners working out of Category D prisons in summer 2010. This remains our best estimate of revenue for the next 12 months and we have assumed that this figure remains constant over time in real terms, which may not in fact prove to be the case.

Prisoner earnings vary considerably depending on hourly rates and hours worked; therefore there will be large variations in the amount each prisoner contributes, depending on their earnings. For a prisoner working full-time on the national minimum wage deductions through the Prisoners' Earnings Act would be approximately £65 a week or approximately £3,000 per year.

At the time of the prisoner earnings data collection in summer 2010 there were 459 prisoners in Category D prisons whose earnings would have been eligible for deductions under the Prisoners' Earnings Act 1996. This remains our best yearly estimate.

Alex Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) what mechanism he put in place to ensure the process for the allocation of proceeds from the levy on prisoners' earnings was transparent; [75726]

(2) what criteria he considered when deciding that the proceeds from the levy on prisoners' earnings would be given to Victim Support; [75732]

(3) what services Victim Support is contracted to provide from the proceeds of the levy on prisoners' earnings in (a) the next 12 months and (b) each remaining year of the arrangements under which they receive such funding; [75733]

(4) whether other organisations from the voluntary and charitable sector were given an opportunity to bid for a share of the proceeds from the levy on prisoners' earnings; [75734]

(5) whether he will place in the Library a copy of the contract his Department made with Victim Support in respect of the proceeds from the levy on earnings of prisoners; and if he will make a statement; [75736]

Mr Blunt: The Prisoners' Earnings Act (PEA) enables deductions from prisoners' earnings in certain circumstances pending the introduction of a wider power to do so which is contained in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill currently before Parliament.

It is a statutory requirement of the PEA that the recipient or recipients of its proceeds is/are formally prescribed by the Secretary of State. He has prescribed that the funds should go to Victim Support.

The Coalition programme for government and the Green Paper 'Breaking the Cycle', published by the Ministry of Justice in December 2011, committed to implementing the Act with the aim of deductions from the earnings of prisoners going towards services which support victims.

In deciding which organisation or organisations to prescribe we took account of the uncertainty about the amount of revenue the PEA would generate which results from the difficulty in predicting how many prisoners would be engaged in qualifying work. This uncertainty rendered the PEA revenue unsuitable for a competitive

funding process. It also meant that any prescribed organisation needed to possess sufficient capacity to deliver the project or projects the PEA was intended to fund if the revenue actually raised proved lower than anticipated.

As the PEA represents the first time prisoners have contributed in this way we wanted the proceeds to go to an organisation which worked nationally with a broad range of victims of crime. Victim Support is the principal provider of support for victims in England and Wales and has over 35 years' experience of the sector. Its national coverage and size made it the ideal choice.

The Ministry of Justice has not entered into a contract with Victim Support for the PEA revenue. Victim Support is currently considering a number of potential projects and will make a final decision once it is known how much revenue will be raised through the levy. A contract will be entered into at that time, prior to the money raised from the PEA being passed to Victim Support.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Adam Werritty

Hilary Benn: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether Ministers in his Department have met Mr Adam Werritty in an official capacity (a) with and (b) without officials present since May 2010. [76433]

Robert Neill: No Ministers in this Department have had meetings with Mr Werritty.

Council Tax: Arrears

Nicola Blackwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many times local authorities have taken people to court for the recovery of council tax arrears in the latest period for which figures are available. [76265]

Robert Neill: The Department for Communities and Local Government does not collect figures on the number of times local authorities have taken people to court for the recovery of council tax arrears.

Departmental Allowances

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much members of his departmental management board have claimed in expenses since May 2010. [74955]

Robert Neill: The expenses are published quarterly on the DCLG website as follows:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/transparencingovernment/staffdata/businessexpenses/>

The expenses are usually published within the month after the quarter ending. The expenses for July to September are currently being compiled and will be available at a later date.

Departmental Billing

Dr Whiteford: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what proportion of invoices from suppliers his Department paid within 10 days of receipt in July and August 2010. [74343]

Robert Neill: In July 2010 the Department for Communities and Local Government paid 90.85% of invoices within 10 days of receipt and in August 2010 90.24% of invoices were paid within 10 days.

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government 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. [74989]

Robert Neill: The average cost of processing the payment of an invoice, based on data for the last 12 months is £2.62. Of the invoices processed by DCLG in that period, 99.998% were made electronically with just 0.002% paid by cheque.

Departmental Consultants

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what procedures his Department uses when engaging external consultants. [73097]

Robert Neill: In line with Cabinet Office guidance, the Department has placed an immediate freeze on consulting expenditure, unless it is of operational necessity and the work cannot be undertaken by civil servants.

Procedures have been introduced whereby Ministers and the permanent secretary review all consultancy contracts of £20,000 or more on a three-monthly basis and ensuring that any proposals to extend contracts longer than nine months are jointly approved by the Cabinet Office Minister and Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Procurement procedures that can be used include:

- Use of the new Government Dynamic Marketplace;
- Call off from existing government frameworks; and
- Open restricted or other EU procedures for bespoke requirements above the EU threshold of approximately £100,000

Departmental Location

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government 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. [74901]

Robert Neill: The Department for Communities and Local Government has not relocated any civil servants, nor agreed to relocate any civil servants, in the last 12 months.

Departmental Meetings

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many meetings he has had with representatives of (a) social enterprises, (b) charities, (c) large private sector businesses and (d) small and medium-sized private sector businesses since May 2010; and if he will make a statement. [75702]

Robert Neill: Details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations are published on a quarterly basis, and are available at:

www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/transparencyin government/ministerialdata/

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many meetings he has had with (a) trade unions, (b) construction firms, (c) firms providing services to local authorities and (d) lobbyists since May 2010. [76102]

Robert Neill: Details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations are published on a quarterly basis, and are available at:

www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/transparencyin government/ministerialdata/

Departmental Pay

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will estimate the total monetary value of London weightings and London living allowances for staff in his Department. [74902]

Robert Neill: DCLG staff do not receive either a London weighting or a London living allowance. Like many other Departments, DCLG operates a London pay range (for staff based in London and surrounding areas) and a national pay range.

It would not be appropriate to calculate the cost of employing equivalent London staff working outside of London as this would be purely hypothetical.

Departmental Security

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what steps his Department is taking to improve cyber-security in relation to his Department's estate; and if he will make a statement. [75120]

Robert Neill: Government take cyber security very seriously and it has been categorised as a tier one threat to UK national security. £650 million is being invested over the next four years in a National Cyber Security Programme, working across Departments with the private sector, international partners and citizens to improve the UK's cyber security capability.

Department for Communities and Local Government routinely assesses the prevailing threats to its ICT systems and applies appropriate and proportionate measures in accordance with the government standards set out in the Cabinet Office's Security Policy Framework; these standards are aligned with industry best practice approaches.

Domestic Waste: Waste Disposal

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what methodology his Department used to cost the proposal for weekly bin collections; and whether the funding for the proposal will come from his Department's existing budget. [76344]

Robert Neill: The new weekly collections support scheme, announced on 30 September will make up to £250 million available to councils to help them deliver weekly collections of household waste. The scheme will be funded by money from DCLG's unallocated resource budget as reported in the annual report and accounts for 2010-11. This is therefore additional funding for local government over and above that already announced.

The funding will support councils which switch from fortnightly to better weekly collections, and will support weekly collection councils which wish to keep and improve the weekly service they offer, such as through better procurement, new technologies and reward schemes like Recyclebank and others.

In due course, we will make a further statement on the detail of this scheme and the details for inviting councils to submit innovative bids for funding. However, councils will be able to bid individually or in consortiums, and with the private sector, where that increases value for money. In order to encourage the most innovative and locally tailored solutions, authorities will be able to bid for a mix of revenue and capital funding.

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what steps his Department is taking to encourage local authorities to provide better and more frequent rubbish and recycling collections. [76733]

Robert Neill: As announced on the 30 September, we are launching a new Weekly Collections Support scheme worth up to £250 million to councils to help them deliver weekly collections of household waste.

The funding will support councils which switch from fortnightly to better weekly collections, and will support weekly collection councils which wish to keep and improve the weekly service they offer, such as through better procurement, new technologies and reward schemes like Recyclebank and others. Councils will be able to bid individually or in consortiums, and with the private sector, where that increases value for money. In order to encourage the most innovative and locally tailored solutions, authorities will be able to bid for a mix of revenue and capital funding.

We are funding this scheme from DCLG's unallocated resource budget, as reported in the Annual Report and Accounts for 2010-11. Further details of this scheme, inviting councils to submit innovative bids for funding, will be released in due course.

Furthermore, the Government have already moved to remove Audit Commission guidance and inspections which marked down councils who do not adopt fortnightly rubbish collections; and to abolish Local Area Agreements imposed by Whitehall which created perverse incentives to downgrade waste collection services.

Email

Jack Dromey: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether any (a) Ministers, (b) officials and (c) special advisers in his Department use private e-mail accounts for the conduct of Government business. [73219]

Robert Neill: 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.

Enterprise Zones: Staffordshire

Joan Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) if he will place in the Library a copy of the information his Department holds on the expression of interest relating to the Staffordshire/Stoke-on-Trent LE2 submission; [71203]

(2) if he will place in the Library a copy of the information his Department holds on the bid by the Staffordshire/Stoke-on-Trent Local Enterprise Partnership in respect of the LE2 Round 2 bid process. [71204]

Greg Clark [*holding answer 9 September 2011*]: The Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Enterprise Partnership have advised that their expression of interest and bid documents contain information that is commercially confidential. However, the summary document which the partnership shared with a number of local MPs, including the hon. Member, will be published on the Local Enterprise Partnership's website shortly.

Government Procurement Card

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the publication of his Department's Government procurement card data, which Ministers attended (a) Boisdales, (b) Brassiere 44, (c) the National Cafe and (d) the Wolseley using the Government procurement card between May 2006 and May 2010; and what the (i) cost and (ii) purpose was of each event. [73223]

Robert Neill: The events at the Wolseley on 2 December 2008 and 5 June 2009 were attended by Baroness Andrews and officials of the Department. I am informed that the first was to discuss the handling of forthcoming legislation, and the second was to discuss the handover of policy portfolios.

Detailed records for the event or attendance at the Boisdale on 3 April 2008 are not held. The transaction was made by the private office of Baroness Andrews.

No Ministers attended the other events.

My Department is committed to greater transparency over the use of the Government procurement card than under the last Administration, and has strengthened checks and balances to ensure protection of taxpayers' money.

Housing Benefit: Universal Credit

Mr Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether he plans to consult representatives of local authority trade unions on the plan for transition from housing benefit to universal credit. [75777]

Steve Webb: I have been asked to reply.

It is the responsibility of local authorities to engage with trade unions under agreed local arrangements for consultation. We are engaging with local authorities to understand the changes that will arise as a result of transition to universal credit, which will inform these dialogues.

Housing: Change of Use

Tim Farron: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if the Government will accept the recommendations in the Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing on allowing local planning committees to decide on change of use from local residency to holiday let or second home. [76068]

Robert Neill [*holding answer 21 October 2011*]: The Government response to the Taylor Review was published under the last Administration. That response stated:

“The Government does not agree that it is appropriate or desirable to seek to limit the occupation or ownership of second homes.”

The Community Right to Build Order set out in the Localism Bill will contribute to affordable housing in rural areas. It will allow communities to take forward small-scale development on a specific site so long as the proposal has received majority support in a community referendum.

Landlords

Shabana Mahmood: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what information he holds on the effectiveness of landlord accreditation schemes. [76046]

Grant Shapps: The Department does not hold information on the effectiveness of landlord accreditation schemes which are set up and run by local authorities. Local authorities are best placed to judge the needs and priorities of their own area and the effectiveness of local schemes. Information about schemes is also available from ANUK (Accreditation Network-UK) which was formed to publicise, promote and share good practice in accreditation.

Metals: Theft

Ian Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether his Department has issued guidance to local authorities on dealing with metal theft. [73150]

Robert Neill: DCLG does not issue any guidance to local authorities on dealing with metal theft. Guidance issued to address metal theft would be most associated with the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 1964 and this policy rests with the Home Office.

The Government recognise the severity of metal theft and the damage it causes to communities and businesses across the UK. It is clear that metal theft is a growing problem for many communities, and local authorities themselves are often victims from metal theft, in particular, with the theft of street furniture.

Discussions are now taking place across Government Departments to identify whether any legislative changes should be made to the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 1964 in order to address this.

Mortgages: Government Assistance

Neil Carmichael: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the mortgage rescue scheme; how many successful applications there have been since its inception; and what proportion of all applications this figure represents. [76035]

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. 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.

I refer my hon. Friend to the National Audit Office report of May 2011 (HC 1030, 2010-12) which was critical of the scheme that was introduced by the last Government, for not delivering value for money. Such criticisms vindicate the decision of the new administration to reform and improve the scheme.

Mortgage Rescue Scheme statistics published in May 2011 and covering the period up to the end of March 2011 show that 2,621 households have completed the process to remain in their home. These published statistics also show that almost 39,000 households had received free advice from their local authority about their mortgage difficulties.

The Homes and Communities Agency will publish the Scheme statistics for the period April to September 2011 in November. These will show the latest number of cases referred from providers (lead Housing Associations) and the number of cases which have led to completion.

Non-domestic Rates

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what definition of disproportionate benefit he plans to use when recouping business rates from local authorities as proposed in his Department's consultation on retention of business rates. [76612]

Robert Neill: The Government's proposals for business rates retention sought views on how a levy on disproportionate benefit might be calculated in order to help provide a safety net to protect authorities that see significant negative volatility in their business rates income. The consultation, which closes on 24 October, proposed three options. The Government will consider responses to that consultation before deciding how to take forward the proposals.

Planning Permission

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what steps he is taking to ensure that the national planning policy framework (1) meets the development needs of people, the environment and the economy; [73709]

(2) requires developers to take into consideration the effects of planning proposals on (a) communities, (b) nature and (c) the landscape. [73710]

Greg Clark: The draft National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It states that, for the planning system, delivering sustainable development means building a strong, responsive competitive economy; promoting strong, vibrant and healthy communities; and protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment. These three components should be pursued in an integrated way, looking for solutions that achieve multiple goals.

The draft framework also states that, when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity. Planning permission should be refused for development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss. If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

Property Development: Floods

Stephen Barclay: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will assess the merits of including internal drainage boards and water utility companies in North East Cambridgeshire as statutory consultees when assessing flooding risk associated with planning development. [76182]

Robert Neill [*holding answer 21 October 2011*]: The Department have no plans at present to amend the statutory consultation arrangements for planning applications, as set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010, to require consultation with drainage boards and water utility companies on planning applications.

The Government expect local planning authorities to work with infrastructure providers from an early stage in the local plan process to ensure that they are actively involved in shaping its proposals. Drainage boards and utility companies may also wish to work with local authorities to identify individual planning applications where consultation with drainage boards and water utility companies would be beneficial.

Rights of Way

Bridget Phillipson: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether his proposals under the National Planning Policy Framework recognise public rights of way; how such rights of way will be enforced under the Framework; and if he will make a statement. [75740]

Greg Clark: Paragraph 128 of the draft framework states that planning policies should protect and enhance rights of way and access. We are currently considering responses to the consultation on the draft framework before this is finalised.

Tenants' Rights

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will take steps to protect tenants in respect of (a) private rented sector landlords and (b) estate agents who are found to be in breach of his Department's guidance on the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants. [75659]

Grant Shapps: My Department's guidance on the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants reflects the existing legislative framework which already contains safeguards for tenants where landlords or agents fail in their responsibilities.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what steps he is taking to promote his Department's guidance on the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants among (a) landlords, (b) tenants and (c) estate agents in the private rented sector; and if he will make a statement. [75660]

Grant Shapps: My Department recently published fact sheets providing basic guidance on rights and responsibilities for both tenants and landlords on the departmental website:

www.communities.gov.uk

The fact sheets have been promoted to a range of industry and consumer groups, and we are encouraged to see that they are being well used. Where appropriate, landlords, tenants and agents are also directed to the fact sheets in all correspondence between my Department and the general public.

Tenants' Rights: Disability

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government pursuant to the answer of 13 September 2011, *Official Report*, column 1089W, on consumers, what support his Department offers to (a) blind and partially-sighted tenants and (b) tenants with a disability to make them aware of the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants; and if he will make a statement. [75978]

Grant Shapps: My Department's fact sheets for landlords and tenants were published on the departmental website:

www.communities.gov.uk

which complies with the Worldwide Web Consortium's (W3C) Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. The Department's published documents are always available in alternative formats—Braille, large print, easy read, British Sign Language and audio versions can all be provided on request.

Guidance for landlords and tenants is also available on the Government website Directgov, which is an accessible website. Details can be obtained from:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/H11/Help/Accessibility/DG_10016906

Directgov's content is written for a reading age of nine which aids understanding for those with learning difficulties.

TRANSPORT

Air Travel Organisers' Licensing Reform

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when she plans to publish her Department's response to the consultation on Air Travel Organisers' Licensing reform; [73941]

(2) how many responses her Department received in the consultation on Air Travel Organisers' Licensing reform; [73942]

(3) how many representations received during the consultation process on Air Travel Organisers' Licensing reform expressed concern about the date by which the Air Travel Organisers' Licensing certificate would be implemented. [73944]

Jim Fitzpatrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate she has made of the likely roll-out time for the proposed ATOL certificate. [74094]

Mrs Villiers: The Department received over 80 formal responses to the recent consultation on proposals for reform of the Air Travel Organisers' Licensing (ATOL) scheme.

After considering the consultation responses I plan to announce the decisions for the way forward for ATOL reform, including the timing of implementation. This announcement will be made later in the autumn.

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment she has made of the level of consumer awareness of the Air Travel Organisers' Licensing scheme. [73946]

Mrs Villiers: The Department has not conducted any research specifically into consumer awareness of the current Air Travel Organisers' Licensing scheme.

However, the 2011 ABTA Consumers Trends Survey showed that 74% of people believe that ATOL financial protection is 'essential or important' when booking a holiday.

Tom Greatrex: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether she proposes to widen the scope of the air travel organisers' licensing scheme to flight and hotel holidays sold by airlines. [73949]

Jim Fitzpatrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when she expects to bring forward legislation on including holidays sold by airlines within a scheme of financial protection. [74088]

Mrs Villiers: The ATOL reform consultation, which took place between 23 June and 15 September 2011, asked whether airline holiday sales should be brought under the protection of the Air Travel Organisers' Licensing (ATOL) scheme. To do so would require new primary legislation. We are analysing the responses and plan to announce the decision on this later in the autumn.

Jim Fitzpatrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when she plans to publish details on the information required on an ATOL certificate. [74093]

Mrs Villiers: The information requirements for the ATOL certificate are being decided through consultation with the Civil Aviation Authority's ATOL Certificate Working Group, which includes members of the travel industry. The CAA will publish full details on the appearance and content of the ATOL certificate later in the autumn.

Jim Fitzpatrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether she plans to exempt business travel from the reformed ATOL scheme; and if she will make a statement. [74097]

Mrs Villiers: The Government consulted on proposed reforms to the Air Travel Organisers Licensing (ATOL) scheme between 23 June and 15 September 2011. The treatment of business travel under the proposed reforms is an issue mentioned in a number of consultation responses.

I am currently considering all the responses and plan to make an announcement on the way forward with the reforms later in the autumn.

Air Travel Trust Fund

Jim Fitzpatrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport by what date she expects the Air Travel Trust Fund to return to surplus. [74092]

Mrs Villiers: The Air Travel Trust Fund (ATTF) meets the costs of refunds and repatriation assistance provided to the consumers of insolvent businesses under the Air Travel Organisers' Licensing (ATOL) scheme.

The Civil Aviation Authority run the ATOL scheme and believes that the ATTF should return to surplus within three years of the introduction of the proposed reforms which were recently consulted on by the Government. The actual timing depends on factors such as the cost of future insolvencies of ATOL licensed businesses and the Fund's income, both of which are difficult to predict with certainty.

Aviation

Jim Fitzpatrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what timetable she has established for the commencement of pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Aviation Bill. [74096]

Mrs Villiers: As the then Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), set out in his statements to the House on 21 July 2010, *Official Report*, columns 20-22WS and 3 March 2011, *Official Report*, column 42WS, we plan to introduce legislation early in the next session to reform the existing statutory framework for regulation at designated airports. We intend to publish draft legislation later this year. Further details will be announced in due course.

Aviation: Tickets

Joseph Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what representations she has received on (a) the legality of downgrading customers if a commercial flight is oversold and (b) the appropriateness of a statutory obligation to provide 75% compensation; [75546]

(2) whether she has considered steps to tackle overselling on commercial flights. [75547]

Mrs Villiers: Overbooking is a widespread practice among full-service scheduled airlines. In the comparatively small proportion of cases where an airline denies passengers boarding against their will, EC Regulation 261/2004 requires air carriers to provide prescribed minimum levels of financial compensation, in addition to offering passengers a choice between re-routing and reimbursement. These rules are enforced by the Civil Aviation Authority.

Channel Tunnel Railway Line: Freight

Maria Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether her Department is taking steps to increase the volume of rail freight that can be transported between Britain and Europe via the channel tunnel. [76483]

Mrs Villiers: UK channel tunnel freight paths became open access in 2006 and Eurotunnel subsequently agreed lower rates for rail freight. These initiatives have increased the number of rail freight services through the channel tunnel, some of which are operated by new open access operators. The continued development of rail freight through channel tunnel is a matter for the private sector operators.

Civil Aviation Authority

Joseph Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Civil Aviation Authority. [75545]

Mrs Villiers: Ministers and officials at the Department meet the Civil Aviation Authority regularly to discuss a range of issues including its duties and performance. There have been a number of changes to the CAA's internal arrangements following the report of the independent strategic review undertaken by Sir Joseph Pilling in 2008. Other reforms would require primary legislation.

Dartford-Thurrock Crossing: Olympic Games 2012

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many additional vehicles her Department expects will use the Dartford Crossing during the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games; and what plans she has to manage the change in the number of such vehicles. [75850]

Mrs Villiers: The Department does not anticipate significant increases in traffic volumes at the Dartford-Thurrock river during the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games.

The transport strategy for the 2012 games promotes the use of public transport and the Highways Agency is working closely with the Olympic Delivery Authority on the delivery of that strategy.

The plans for spectator transport include the provision of strategic park and ride sites either side of the crossing at Lakeside and Ebbsfleet—the latter providing a connection to the nearby Javelin rail shuttle from Ebbsfleet International station.

The crossing forms part of the 'alternative' section of the Olympic Route Network and as such will be used by

vehicles transporting athletes, officials and the media in the event that the main core and venue routes are not available for any reason.

East Coast Railway Line

Maria Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the annual cost has been to Directly Operated Railways of operating the East Coast mainline rail franchise; and how much was paid in subsidies to National Express in each year that it held the East Coast rail franchise. [76486]

Mrs Villiers: The cost to Directly Operated Railways (DOR) of providing management services to the East Coast Main Line Company Ltd is set out in DOR's annual report and accounts. These are available on the company's website at:

www.directlyoperatedrailways.co.uk

No subsidy was paid to National Express during the period that the company held the East Coast rail franchise

Great Western Railway Line

Maria Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport with reference to her Department's announcement of 14 July 2011, what the monetary value is of each project that forms part of her plans for the Great Western Main Line; and what the completion date is for each such project. [76597]

Mrs Villiers: The Government have committed to funding a significant upgrade of the Great Western Main Line between now and 2019.

Doubling of the Swindon to Kemble line will be complete by 2015 at a cost of £45 million. Reading station improvements will be delivered by 2015 at a cost of £850 million. Electrification will be ready for passenger service by 2017 at a cost of £1 billion.

High Speed 2 Railway Line

Mr Tom Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps she is taking to ensure that High Speed 2 will be used at maximum capacity from its first day of operation. [75197]

Justine Greening: We anticipate that demand for HS2 would be likely to continue to grow in the years after the line opens. Therefore, it is important to provide additional capacity at opening in order to accommodate this build-up. If, following my decisions later this year, the project is progressed, we will seek to ensure HS2 is designed so as to maximise its attractiveness to passengers.

Mr Tom Harris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many services she expects to run in each direction on High Speed 2 per (a) hour and (b) day on its first day of operation. [75206]

Justine Greening: Phase 1 of the proposed HS2 network, from London to the West Midlands, would operate with up to 14 trains per hour in each direction at peak times and 10 during off peak periods. Indicative timetables are set out in the "Technical Appendix", at

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/topics/high-speed-rail/key-facts/>

High Speed 2 Railway Line: Finance

Frank Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if she will estimate the saving on the costs of the HS2 project which would arise if the tunnel from Old Oak Common to Euston and the infrastructure and building works at Euston were omitted. [75501]

Justine Greening [*holding answer 19 October 2011*]: Appendix C of HS2 Ltd's 2009 Cost and Risk Model shows an indicative breakdown of costs for different sections of the route, including the route from Old Oak Common to Euston, and the works that would be required at Euston station. This can be found at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/rail/pi/highspeedrail/hs2Ltd/riskmodel/pdf/report.pdf>

London and South Eastern Railway: Rolling Stock

Rehman Chishti: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport from which companies the London and South Eastern Railway and its predecessor franchisees have leased rolling stock; how many and what types of rolling stock have been leased; and what the costs of such leasing has been in each year since 1994. [75868]

Mrs Villiers: Information on the numbers and different types of rolling stock leased by train companies, and from whom, is in the public domain. For example, the Rail Guide 2011 produced by Ian Allan Publishing.

Leasing costs are commercially sensitive. Inquiries on this subject should be directed to the rolling stock owners and train operators.

Motorways: Speed Limits

Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if she will withdraw her Department's proposals to increase the speed limit on motorways to 80 miles per hour. [75875]

Mike Penning [*holding answer 20 October 2011*]: On 3 October 2011, the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), announced his intention to consult on raising the national speed limit on motorways from 70 mph to 80 mph. The Government plan to launch a full public consultation on the issue later this year with a view to implementing any change in early 2013.

Railways

Mr Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps her Department is taking to support the domestic (a) train manufacturing industry and its supply chain and (b) onshore engineering skills. [75234]

Mrs Villiers: This Government have secured funding for a major programme of capacity enhancement for both National Rail and the London Underground. Moreover the Government are reforming the franchise system which is likely to lead to more train operators procuring new rolling stock. These are major opportunities for the train manufacturing industry and its associated supply chain, which will see around 2700 new carriages on the national rail network by 2019.

Moreover as part of our growth review the Government are examining issues around the approach taken in the UK to EU procurement rules. This is to compare our approach to that of other member states. We are looking at whether current procurement practice makes the best use of the rules. We are considering whether any changes should be made to place a sharper focus on the UK's strategic interests. The review is also looking at how the Government can support train manufacturing and related supply chain businesses and ensure that when they compete for work they are doing it on an equal footing with their overseas competitors.

Railways: Fares

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the average fare was for a standard class passenger rail ticket between London and Edinburgh in each year since 1997. [75786]

Mrs Villiers: The Department does not hold this information, however the present range of fares for the main ticket categories are set out as follows.

Fare Type	£	
	Minimum	Maximum
Advance single	14.50	179.50
Anytime return	292.00	292.00
Super off peak return	114.60	—
Off peak return	202.70	—

Typically over 90% of the longest distance rail journeys such as Edinburgh to London are made using discounted tickets. Under 5% of these longer journeys are made using anytime return tickets. The super off peak return between Edinburgh and London is a regulated fare. The full list and present prices of all these fares is available on the National Rail enquiries website.

Maria Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions her Department has had with train operating companies regarding the length of time that can be defined as peak hour when setting fare prices. [76493]

Mrs Villiers: The length of time that can be defined as peak is set out in franchise agreements for regulated fares.

It is up to train operators to work within the regulations when setting their peak time. Peak restrictions on unregulated fares are for train operators to determine.

Railways: Overcrowding

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent measures she has considered to alleviate passenger overcrowding and passenger standing on rail services. [74101]

Mrs Villiers: This Government have committed to a major new programme of introducing additional carriages across the most crowded parts of the rail network by March 2014 to meet the growing demand from passengers.

Looking beyond 2014, Thameslink and Crossrail routes have been funded with a commitment to electric new trains, releasing the existing electric trains for further

use. By the end of this decade we will have added around 2,700 new carriages to the rail network, of which around 1,800 will be additional capacity. However, passenger growth is forecast to continue and that is why we are considering the case for a new high speed railway for the next decade.

Railways: Safety

Maria Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps her Department is taking to improve (a) passenger safety at rail stations and (b) safety at railway level crossings following the Office of Rail Regulation's Health and Safety report 2011. [76482]

Mrs Villiers: Safety and the reduction of risks, so far as is reasonably practicable, at both stations and level crossings is the responsibility of the relevant duty holder such as the station or infrastructure operator.

This is a legal duty under the Health and Safety at Work 1974. Compliance is both monitored and enforced by the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR). The ORR noted the measures being taken by duty holders with regard to station and level crossing safety in their 2011 Health and Safety Report.

Separately the Department runs the Secure Stations Scheme. Over the past 13 years this scheme has put in place a best practice programme aimed at enhancing passenger safety at railway stations through security improvements. There are currently 1,263 accredited Secure Stations across the railway network.

Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what assessment she has made of the merits of establishing separate incentive schemes for biodiesel and ethanol under the renewable transport fuel obligation; [73028]

(2) what representations she has received on the merits of establishing separate incentive schemes for biodiesel and ethanol under the renewable transport fuel obligation; [73029]

(3) how she plans to mitigate the effects of fluctuations in certificate prices under the renewable transport fuel obligation on the sustainable biodiesel industry; [73030]

(4) how she plans to encourage obligated fuel suppliers to meet their renewable transport fuel obligation from biodiesel produced in the UK. [73031]

Norman Baker: The Department received representations on a number of issues related to the renewable transport fuel obligation (RTFO) during consultations on the renewable energy directive (RED). These included suggestions that the RTFO should distinguish between bioethanol and biodiesel, arguing that if it did, this might provide a mechanism to drive equal demand for both products. The suggestion has been taken into account through the consultation exercise.

The RTFO is a mechanism designed to reduce carbon emissions and promote the supply of sustainable biofuels. It does not seek to direct the market towards a particular biofuel product or method of production.

In respect of future incentives under the RTFO and assessments of the adequacy of that mechanism in driving a market for renewable transport fuels in the UK, I refer the hon. Member to the answers given to him on 5 July 2011, *Official Report*, columns 1172-3W.

In the consultation on proposals to implement the RED we proposed to provide additional support to waste-derived biofuels under an amended renewable transport fuel obligation. We expect to publish a Government response soon setting out both our plans and the timeline for implementation.

Trams: Level Crossings

Maria Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment her Department has made of the implications of the Law Commission review of level crossing legislation for the scope of heavy rail level crossing requirements to tramways. [76543]

Mrs Villiers: The Law Commission will present their formal recommendations from their review to the Department during 2012. At that time the Department will consider all of the Law Commissions' final recommendations, including those on tramways.

Vehicle and Operator Services Agency

Jim Fitzpatrick: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when her Department plans to publish the (a) environmental and (b) equality impact assessment in respect of its proposals for the VOSA Testing Transformation Project. [74090]

Mike Penning: The Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA) completed a generic equality impact assessment (EIA) for the station closure element of the Testing Transformation Programme (TTP) as part of the formation of the TTP business case which received final approval in July 2010. The TTP business case included an assessment of the environmental impact of the project, no separate environmental impact assessment was completed.

It is not our intention to publish this business case or the original (2009) impact assessment.

Once a site has been identified for closure, a more specific EIA is completed by the local management team, including action plans for the resolution of issues. These are living documents, addressing staff and customer issues, which will continue to evolve as the closure process progresses.

We are currently redesigning the generic assessment to take account of emerging guidance on new requirements, and will re-work all 'live' EIAs to take account of this advice. As they may contain specific and personal information (e.g. on individual members of staff), we have no plans to publish these EIAs, but they will be owned by local managers, and monitored centrally to ensure action plans address issues raised.

West Coast Railway Line

Maria Eagle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many full-time equivalent staff in her Department are working on the negotiations with Virgin Rail Group on the extension of the Intercity West Coast rail franchise. [76484]

Mrs Villiers: Approximately three full-time members of Department for Transport staff are working on the negotiations with Virgin Rail Group. However, this varies slightly from time to time.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Departmental Billing

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change 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. [74978]

Gregory Barker: The cost of processing an invoice through our outsourced service provider is estimated at £33 per invoice. 99% of payments are made electronically and 1% by cheque.

Departmental Official Visits

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department visited Israel on official business in each month since May 2010; what future visits to Israel are planned by (i) Ministers and (ii) officials in his Department in each of the next three years; and if he will make a statement. [R] [74708]

Gregory Barker: [holding answer 17 October 2011]: There have been no such meetings held since May 2010 and none are currently planned.

Departmental Press: Subscriptions

Mike Freer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much his Department spent on newspapers, periodicals and trade profession magazines in 2010-11. [74999]

Gregory Barker: The Department of Energy and Climate Change spent £80,200 on its press cuttings service during 2011-12. The Department does not record expenditure on newspapers, periodicals and trade profession magazines separately from overall expenditure on publications which includes the cost of the Department's own publications as well as purchased publications of all types. It would incur disproportionate costs to scrutinise all publication transactions to identify relevant amounts.

Departmental Responsibilities

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change if he will publish the (a) dates, (b) attendees and (c) agendas of meetings attended by the (i) Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, (ii) Minister of State for Climate Change, (iii) Minister of State for Energy and (iv) Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State between 10 October and 16 October 2011. [76610]

Gregory Barker: Details of meetings between DECC Ministers and external organisations are published quarterly on the DECC website. It has been the practice of successive Administrations not to release details of internal meetings.

Electricity

Dr Whitehead: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how many staff in his Department have been seconded from energy consultancies to assist with preparation of proposals on electricity market reform; and which companies have provided such secondees. [75905]

Gregory Barker: Six members of staff have been seconded from the energy consultancies identified to assist with preparation of proposals on electricity market reform:

Poyry Management Consulting
Deloitte
Bain and Company
Bright Futures NZ Ltd
Xero Energy

Electricity: Prices

Simon Hart: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (1) what information his Department holds on the number of prepayment meter customers who owe more than £200 to their existing supplier and are unable to switch electricity suppliers; [75409]

(2) what information his Department holds on recent trends in the number of prepayment meter customers who owe more than £200 to their supplier. [75410]

Charles Hendry: This Department does not hold the information requested. Ofgem monitors and publishes information about the number of prepayment meter customers repaying a debt (External Data Report Q1 2011). The data does not give details of the actual amount of debt repaid. During 2010, an average of 0.4 million (10%) of electricity prepayment customers, and 0.3 million (12%) of gas prepayment customers repaid a debt.

Ministerial Meetings

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change when (a) he, (b) Ministers in his Department and (c) officials in his Department last met representatives of the Government of Israel; what issues were discussed; and if he will make a statement. [R] [74710]

Gregory Barker: [holding answer 17 October 2011]: There have been no such meetings.

North Sea Oil

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the answer of 18 July 2011, *Official Report*, column 685W, on North Sea oil, whether he plans to send a representative to the first meeting of the Arctic Council's Oil Spill Response Taskforce; and if he will make a statement. [76702]

Charles Hendry: As a non-Arctic country, we only have observer status on the Arctic Council and therefore have neither representation on their working groups nor a role in determining their policies. However we keep in close touch with the Council, both to learn from their experiences and, where it is welcomed, to offer our advice.

Nuclear Installations

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what assessment he has made of the adequacy of (a) resources and facilities and (b) co-ordination and control in respect of clean-up and recovery in the event of a major accident at a UK civil nuclear installation. [75027]

Charles Hendry: The lead UK Government Department dealing with recovery in the event of a major civil nuclear accident in England is the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). In Wales, it is the Welsh Assembly Government, in Scotland, the Scottish Government, and in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Executive. The Government Decontamination Service also would play a key role across the UK during the recovery from such an incident, while local authorities and their resilience forums would collaborate with relevant Government Departments and agencies during this phase.

Proper attention has been given to the identification of the necessary resources and facilities required should the unlikely event of an emergency occur involving a nuclear installation. The National Recovery Guidance has been developed in line with and following the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 definitions. This national guidance was produced in 2007 by the National Recovery Working Group, commissioned by Ministers. New material is added to the guidance regularly as new information and guidance becomes available.

As part of the Department's ongoing assessment and enhancement of the emergency planning and response to such incidents, we are working closely with DEFRA and other partners across Government on issues relating to the transition from the response to the recovery phase.

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change with reference to the report by HM Chief Inspector of Nuclear Installations, September 2011, paragraph 490, on what dates and in which nuclear installations nuclear accident exercise scenarios have been extended to encompass severe accidents in order to facilitate training in Severe Accident Guidelines. [75031]

Charles Hendry: The two instances where exercise scenarios were extended into severe accident territory (paragraph 491 of the report by HM Chief Inspector of Nuclear Installations) were as follows:

Exercise Madonna took place in 1997 at Heysham Power Station. The scenario was based on the findings from the Hinkley Point C public inquiry, which recommended that a "beyond design basis accident" scenario should be adopted that would help to improve the ability of the police and the county emergency planning department.

Exercise Isis took place in May 2002 at Bradwell Power Station, and was conducted following 9/11. It tested a scenario significantly beyond the design basis and involved participation by all the

major organisations with an interest at both local and national level. The exercise was successful and showed that detailed plans could be extended to deal with larger events.

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change when the adequacy of arrangements for the pre-distribution of potassium iodate tablets to residents within the detailed emergency planning zone around nuclear installations was last reviewed; and what plans he has to undertake a future review. [75032]

Charles Hendry: The adequacy of arrangements for the pre-distribution of potassium iodate tablets to residents within the detailed emergency planning zone around nuclear installations, are being reviewed as part of the work undertaken by Department of the Energy and Climate Change on the UK's national nuclear emergency arrangements.

The distribution of iodate tablets in the vicinity of a licensed nuclear site is a matter for the site operator in liaison with the relevant regulators and health authorities.

Renewable Energy

Mr Weir: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change whether he proposes that local authorities will be restricted in how revenue generated through the sale of electricity to the Grid may be spent. [75230]

Charles Hendry: How local authorities spend revenue generated through the sale of electricity is determined by existing rules governing local authority expenditure.

Scottish Power: Carbon Sequestration

Zac Goldsmith: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change when he expects the contract to be signed with the Scottish Power consortium for the first carbon capture and storage demonstration project. [73955]

Charles Hendry: The Government announced on 19 October that a decision has been made not to proceed with the proposed CCS demonstration project at Longannet. The Government remain firmly committed to CCS. There are a number of promising CCS projects proposed in England and Scotland and we expect to commence a more streamlined selection process as soon as possible. The £1 billion made available for the first project will be set aside for this new process.

Sellafield

Ms Ritchie: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change how much has been spent on security at Sellafield in (a) 2011-12 to date and (b) each of the last five years. [76434]

Charles Hendry: DECC keeps security arrangements under constant review as part of a continuous process to ensure existing arrangements are robust and effective. For reasons of security, we do not comment on the detail of operational security matters at individual civil nuclear sites.

EDUCATION

Academies

Mr Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what assessment he has made of the performance of each academy sponsor; and if he will make a statement; [75252]

(2) what assessment he has made of the performance of each academy sponsor; and if he will make a statement. [76712]

Mr Gibb: Section 11 of the Academies Act 2010 places a duty on the Secretary of State to publish an annual report containing information on academy arrangements entered into during the year, and the performance of academies during the year. We intend to publish the first annual report in spring 2012 and this will set out our assessment of the progress made by academies and free schools.

Academies: Free Schools

Mr Andrew Turner: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the number of small schools that will become (a) academies and (b) free schools. [74073]

Mr Gibb: We have made no estimate of the number of small schools that will be established as free schools or become academies; this number will depend on the level of demand.

Academies: Kent

Gareth Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education which primary schools he expects to become

academies in (a) Kent and (b) Dartford constituency in the 2011-12 academic year. [74758]

Mr Gibb: As of 13 October 2011, four primary schools in the Dartford constituency have been issued with an academy order: Wentworth primary school, Joydens Wood infant school, Joydens Wood junior school and Wilmington primary school. Milestone school is an all-through school and has also received an academy order. A further 21 primary schools have been issued with academy orders in Kent, 11 of which have already opened as academies. The issuing of an academy order sets an expectation that the school will convert to academy status; however it does not set a specific date for conversion.

York Road junior school and language unit in Dartford and Bell Wood primary and Oak Trees community school, elsewhere in Kent, are in the process of becoming sponsored academies in the academic year 2011-12.

Full details of schools that have formally applied for academy status, as well as a list of academies that have opened in the academic year 2010/11 can be found on the Department for Education Academies website at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/typesofschools/academies/a0069811/schools-submitting-applications-and-academies-that-have-opened-in-201011>

Academies: Nottinghamshire

Gloria De Piero: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what budget his Department has allocated to academy schools in Nottinghamshire for 2011-12. [73027]

Mr Gibb: The following table sets out the funding allocated to academies in Nottinghamshire from September 2011 to August 2012. Further funding will be allocated to any new academy opening in this period.

<i>Academy</i>	<i>Open date</i>	<i>Funding allocated August 2011 to September 2012¹ (£)</i>
Samworth Church Academy	1 September 2008	5,628,048
Barnby Road Primary and Nursery school	1 October 2010	1,266,349
George Spencer Foundation School and Technology College	1 September 2010	7,429,937
Redhill School	1 December 2010	7,506,718
Serlby Academy	1 September 2011	5,108,336
South Nottinghamshire Academy	1 September 2011	3,624,678
Carlton Academy	1 September 2011	4,632,770
Worksop Norbridge Primary	1 September 2011	761,451
W/B St Edmund Champion R.C. Primary	1 September 2011	1,234,738
Wilford Becket RC School	1 September 2011	5,061,560
Arnold Hill School	1 October 2011	7,376,559
Carlton le Willows School and Technology College	1 April 2011	6,571,889
The West Bridgford School	1 April 2011	6,660,512
Toot Hill School	1 July 2011	6,968,123
The Manor School	1 August 2011	6,303,548
The National School, a C of E Technology College	1 August 2011	5,327,420
Tuxford School	1 August 2011	7,043,060
Total		88,505,694

¹ Includes: School Budget Share; Mainstreamed Grants; LACSEG; Rates; Devolved Teacher Threshold; Post-16 Funding

Free Schools: Pensions

Mr Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in respect of how many free schools support staff have access to the Local Government Pension Scheme. [75778]

Mr Gibb: All free schools are under a statutory duty to ensure that all the non-teaching staff they employ are provided with access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Free Schools: West London

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will (a) place in the Library and (b) publish the funding agreement for the West London Free School. [74004]

Mr Gibb: The funding agreement for West London Free School will be published on the Department's website in due course. We have no plans to place free schools' or academies' funding agreements in the Library.

GCSE

Mr Laws: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many schools were below the GCSE floor target in 2011; and what proportion of pupils achieved five GCSEs at A* to C, including English and mathematics in each such school. [75253]

Mr Gibb: We do not yet have validated school level data to make an estimate of the number of schools

below the key stage 4 floor standard in 2011. We expect this to be available in January 2012.

GCSE: Nottinghamshire

Gloria De Piero: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what average GCSE grade students in (a) Ashfield constituency, (b) Nottinghamshire and (c) England received in each of the last five years. [73379]

Mr Gibb: We do not calculate an average GCSE grade, but we do calculate Average Points Scores (APS) based on the qualifications taken by pupils until the end of key stage 4 (this is typically when the pupil is aged 15 at the start of the academic year). For example a GCSE Grade C is worth 40 points. The qualifications included in the APS are GCSEs and other qualifications considered to be equivalent, such as BTECs—the uncapped point score counts points from all such qualifications taken by pupils.

Information on this basis is shown in the following table:

Average GCSE and equivalents point score for pupils at the end of key stage 4 for (a) Ashfield constituency, (b) Nottinghamshire and (c) England. Years: 2006-10^{1,2} (final)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Ashfield ^{3,4}	305.2	337.9	378.5	406.9	451.6
Nottinghamshire ^{3,4}	344.4	361.5	387.1	418.4	456.3
England ⁵	365.1	378.2	390.2	413.6	439.0

¹ Figures for 2010 include accredited iGCSEs.

² Including attempts and achievements by these pupils in previous academic years.

³ Figures for Ashfield and Nottinghamshire do not include pupils recently arrived from overseas.

⁴ Figures for Ashfield and Nottinghamshire include all maintained schools (including CTCs and academies).

⁵ England averages also include independent schools as well as hospital schools and PRUs.

Source:

2006-10 Secondary School Performance Tables and National Pupil Database

Health Education: Sex

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what guidance his Department issues to schools about the type of (a) material and (b) publications relating to sex and relationships education in school libraries; what recent representations he has received from parents about the type of material placed in school libraries on such matters; and if he will make a statement; [R] [74683]

(2) whether his Department has funded the Christopher Winter Project in 2011-12; how many (a) primary and (b) secondary schools in each local education authority area use materials produced by the Christopher Winter Project; and if he will make a statement; [R] [74680]

(3) if he will bring forward proposals to require the head teacher of a (a) primary and (b) secondary school to show parents upon request the material used in their school to teach sex and relationships education; what recent representations he has received on this issue; and if he will make a statement. [R] [74687]

Mr Gibb: The Department does not issue guidance on the type of material or publications relating to sex and relationships education being deposited in school libraries. We have not had representations from parents about the type of material being placed in school libraries on any matters.

The Department's existing guidance on "Sex and Relationship Education" states that materials used in schools must be in accordance with the law. Schools should ensure that pupils are protected from materials which are inappropriate, having regard to the age and cultural background of the pupils concerned.

The Department for Education has not provided any funding to the Christopher Winter Project. We understand that the programme is being used in a number of schools but the Department does not hold information about which schools are doing so.

We are currently reviewing personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education which includes sex and relationships education (SRE). While we do not propose to change legislation in respect of sex education as a result of the review, we will be looking at simplifying the current departmental guidance on SRE. We have received representations, in the form of correspondence sent to the Department, that some parents have concerns about materials used in primary schools. The current guidance, to which all schools providing SRE must have regard, emphasises the need for schools to work with parents when developing their programmes.

Ultimately it is for schools to decide on what is taught and how it is taught. They should ensure that pupils are protected from teaching and materials which are inappropriate, having regard to the age, maturity and cultural background of the pupils concerned.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent assessment he has made of the effect of sex and relationships education on pupils aged seven to 11 years of age; and if he will make a statement. [R] [74684]

Mr Gibb: Ofsted produced a report on the teaching of personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education, which includes sex and relationships education, in July 2010. They found that sex and relationships education was taught less well than other elements of PSHE in both primary and secondary schools. Inspectors said

‘The picture in the primary schools visited was variable in terms of pupils’ age-appropriate understanding of sex and relationships education’.

The Department is reviewing PSHE, and will be looking at its current guidance on sex and relationships education as part of the review.

Mr Amess: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what evidence his Department has gathered on the effects of sex and relationships education in (a) primary and (b) secondary schools on the number of teenage pregnancies; and if he will make a statement. [R] [74686]

Sarah Teather: The under 18 conception rate in England is declining and is at the lowest level for nearly 30 years. It is not possible to identify a causal link between sex and relationships education in primary or secondary schools and England’s reduction in teenage pregnancies. However, international evidence and lessons from local areas where teenage pregnancy rates have fallen fastest, indicate that in order to avoid teenage pregnancies, young people need:

a comprehensive programme of SRE, which: promotes the benefits of delaying first sex; provides young people with the knowledge and skills to resist pressure from peers and the media; and informs them about contraception, so that they can avoid unplanned pregnancies and STIs when they do become sexually active; combined with

access to young people-centred contraceptive and sexual health (CASH) services, in locations and at times that fit with young people’s lives; and which offer the full range of contraceptive options, including long-acting contraceptive methods.

We still have high teenage pregnancy rates compared with many other western European countries. Local areas should maintain their efforts to reduce teenage pregnancy rates further as part of their ambition to tackle child poverty and health inequalities, and to learn from those areas which have achieved significant reductions. We will be saying more about this in the forthcoming Positive for Youth Policy Document and the Sexual Health Policy Document.

Postgraduate Education: Finance

Bridget Phillipson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what the (a) minimum and (b) maximum bursary is for PGCE students starting in (i) September 2011, (ii) 2012, (iii) 2013, (iv) 2014 and (v) 2015; and what criteria are applied to the awarding of such bursaries. [75737]

Mr Gibb: Details of the training bursary arrangements for PGCE trainees starting courses in September 2011 were announced by the Department on 31 January 2011

and set out in a letter from the Secretary of State for Education, my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), to the Chief Executive of the Training and Development Agency for Schools on the same date. The letter confirmed that in 2011/12 £9,000 bursaries are available for PGCE trainees in mathematics, physics, chemistry and engineering while those on biology, combined/general science and modern foreign languages courses can receive £6,000 bursaries. All PGCE students can apply for the same student support as undergraduate students, including maintenance loans and means-tested grants.

The cost of providing bursaries for postgraduate trainees that started courses in September 2010 is £151.3 million. The cost of providing bursaries for postgraduate trainees that started courses in September 2011 is £59.5 million.

Our discussion document “Training our next generation of outstanding teachers” sets out proposals for reforming initial teacher training, including providing bursaries designed to make training to teach more attractive to the most talented graduates, especially in shortage subjects, from 2012/13. The proposals set out a bursary rate of between £4,000 and £20,000 depending on the degree classification of the trainee and the subject specialism or phase of the postgraduate course. We expect to announce the final arrangements for 2012/13 shortly. The bursaries will continue to be adjusted regularly according to the size of the pool of potential teachers and the demand from schools for new teachers.

Pupils: Per Capita Costs

Gloria De Piero: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what the average budget per student is in maintained schools in (a) Ashfield constituency, (b) Nottinghamshire and (c) England. [75435]

Mr Gibb: Figures are not available for the parliamentary constituency of Ashfield as data are collected at a local authority level. The available information on the average budget per student in maintained schools in Nottinghamshire local authority and England is shown in the following table:

<i>Average budget share per pupil by phase of education for 2011-12</i>		
	<i>Nottinghamshire</i>	<i>England</i>
Nursery	4,920	7,541
Primary	3,686	4,024
Secondary	4,768	5,090
Special	19,837	18,026
Total	4,289	4,667

Schools: Armed Forces

Michael Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that military families are not disadvantaged by the schools admission code. [74055]

Mr Gibb: We are determined that those who serve in the armed forces, and their families, should not be disadvantaged when they seek to secure a school place for their children. That is why we consulted upon reforms to the admissions code that would allow admission

authorities to include the children of service families as an exception to the infant class size regulations. We have also changed the code to require local authorities and admission authorities to treat a service family as resident in their area as soon as proof of posting has been provided. In addition, we intend to remove the requirement that local authorities manage the processing of in-year applications, which would capture many service families. Instead, these families will be supported through information and paperwork by the local authority to enable them to apply directly to the schools in their area. This should mean a faster outcome for those parents in finding a place for their child than at present.

Subject to the parliamentary process, we expect the new admissions and appeals codes to come into force in February 2012 and to take full effect on applications for the September 2013 intake onwards.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Departmental Procurement

Mr Thomas: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister how many meetings he has had with representatives of (a) social enterprises, (b) charities, (c) large private sector businesses and (d) small and medium-sized private sector businesses since May 2010; and if he will make a statement. [75705]

The Deputy Prime Minister: I have had many meetings with a range of organisations in the last 17 months. Details of my meetings with external organisations are published on a quarterly basis with those for June 2011 to be published shortly.

Electoral Registration

Chris Ruane: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what assessment he has made of the potential for co-operation between the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, the Identity and Passport Service, Royal Mail and electoral registration officers on steps to increase the level of electoral registration; and if he will make a statement. [75897]

Mr Harper: The Government are assessing a range of measures they believe have potential to support the introduction of individual electoral registration and improve the completeness and accuracy of the electoral register.

The Government are currently running 22 data matching schemes. These schemes enable the participating local authorities to test the usefulness of certain public authority databases, including those of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and Royal Mail, in improving the accuracy and completeness of the electoral register.

With the schemes still in progress and the outcomes of the Electoral Commission, Cabinet Office and local authority evaluations still some time away, it is too early to draw any conclusions about the potential usefulness to electoral registration officers of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency and Royal Mail databases. Support from the Identity and Passport Service in the introduction of individual electoral registration is also being considered as part of the Cabinet Office's preparations.

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

Bankruptcy

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many (a) bankruptcy orders and (b) winding-up orders were made in each individual court in the five years up to 31 March 2011. [76133]

Mr Davey: The table, which will be placed in the Libraries of the House, provides a breakdown of the bankruptcy and winding up orders made in each individual court covering the period July 2008 until March 2011. Due to changes in the Insolvency Services IT systems no data (split by the court in which the order was made) prior to this date are available.

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many bankruptcy restriction orders and undertakings were obtained in each of the last five financial years; and how many of them in each such year were obtained for (a) less than five years, (b) five to nine years and (c) over nine years. [76134]

Mr Davey: The Insolvency Service does not record the data requested broken down according to the periods specified. However, the data is recorded broken down according to similar periods and is provided in the following table.

	<i>Bankruptcy restrictions by period</i>				
	<i>2006-07</i>	<i>2007-08</i>	<i>2008-09</i>	<i>2009-10</i>	<i>2010-11</i>
1-5 years	1,384	1,440	1,287	1,407	1,296
6-10 years	459	367	449	501	449
11-15 years	24	20	45	40	51
Total	1,867	1,827	1,781	1,948	1,796

Business

Steve Rotheram: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps his Department is taking to promote the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises. [74730]

Mr Prisk: We are promoting growth of small and medium-sized enterprises in a number of ways:

Removing barriers to growth

We have introduced an extensive public thematic review of the existing stock of regulation through the Red Tape Challenge website, providing businesses with the opportunity to tell Government which regulations are working and which are not. From 3 to 19 October the spotlight is on employment-related law. Retail was the first theme to go live in early April, resulting in the removal or simplification of over half the 257 retail regulations.

We have introduced a moratorium exempting micro (fewer than 10 employees) and start-up businesses from new domestic regulation for three years from 1 April 2011.

From 2012, the qualifying period for unfair dismissals will be extended from 12 months to two years.

Providing people with the advice and guidance they need to grow their business

We are transforming the way that we enable people to receive the information, advice and guidance they need to start and grow their business.

Our new approach to Government services and advice for business is based on:

- digital services which provide the best advice available and accessible when businesses need them; and
- advice provided by business people for business people, not by the public sector.

We have been working with the British Bankers Association (BBA) to launch:

www.mentorsme.co.uk

which provides a single, easy to use search engine to find organisations offering mentoring services to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). And we are supporting a massive expansion of the number of mentors available to SMEs.

In addition we are:

revamping the Business Link website:

www.businesslink.gov.uk

setting up a dedicated "My New Business" area on the website to provide training and information for those looking to start a business—with the best video and interactive advice produced by experts and available 24/7; and

setting up a new Business Coaching for Growth (BCG) programme to enable small businesses with high growth potential to realise their potential.

Finding new markets

Export markets are vital to growth. Under this Government, UKTI has introduced a comprehensive offer for SMEs to help them export. This includes:

Passport to Export—is a trade development programme offering new and inexperienced exporters help and support to build the capability to start exporting proactively and make their first visit to an export market. Launched in 2001, it is delivered by International Trade Advisers (ITAs) in England and has helped around 14,000 SMEs.

Gateway to Global Growth—offers experienced SME exporters the opportunity to increase their exporting skills and awareness of what is on offer from UKTI and private sector suppliers. The aim is to help them enter more difficult markets or expand in existing ones. The approach is similar to Passport, but aimed at innovative SME exporters with two to 10 years' export experience, ready to widen and diversify their overseas business. It was launched in 2009 and nearly 3,000 companies had been signed on to the programme.

The Overseas Market Introduction Service—provides assistance for businesses of all sizes from posts overseas and is chargeable but at a subsidised rate. This is available to all sizes of companies but approximately 85% of users are SMEs.

Market Visit Support—provides assistance to new to export and/or new to market SMEs visiting overseas markets, individually or in groups as part of their trade development process.

The Export Marketing Research Scheme—run for UKTI by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), provides free advice for SMEs on marketing research and a limited amount of grant is available for approved marketing research projects for SMEs and trade associations.

The Export Communications Review—also run for us by the BCC, provides SMEs with impartial and objective advice on language and cultural issues to help them improve their competitiveness in export markets.

Finance for growth

Ensuring the flow of credit to viable SMEs is essential for supporting growth and is a core priority for this Government. The Government are providing a comprehensive package of support for small businesses, including:

Continuation of the Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme until 2014-15, providing up to £600 million of additional lending to around 6,000 viable SMEs in 2011 and, subject to demand, over £2 billion in total over the next four years.

Trade finance:

A new Export Enterprise Finance Guarantee scheme, providing up to £1 million of lending to support viable SME exporters who are unable to access a commercial loan. A six-month pilot scheme commenced in April 2011.

A bond support scheme available from participating banks, freeing up additional working capital.

A widening of the eligibility of the existing short-term credit insurance policy, the Export Insurance Policy, by the Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD).

An export working capital scheme, facilitating exporting firms' access to pre and post-shipment working capital finance for specific export contracts.

A foreign exchange credit support product, to share risk with banks on their credit exposure arising from the foreign exchange hedging contracts provided to SME exporters, where there is some other form of ECGD support.

Continuation of the Government's Enterprise Capital Funds programme, increasing our commitment by £200 million over the next four years, providing for more than £300 million of venture capital investment to address the equity gap for early stage innovative SMEs with the highest growth potential.

Encouraging Business Angel investment by reviewing the regulatory framework affecting angels and through the establishment of a new £50 million Business Angel Co-Investment Fund.

A £1.4 billion Regional Growth Fund operating across England from 2011 to 2014 to support projects and programmes that lever private sector investment creating economic growth and sustainable employment. It aims particularly to help those areas and communities currently dependent on the public sector to make the transition to sustainable private sector-led growth and prosperity.

Business: Females

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) what support his Department provides specifically for women in business;

[75808]

(2) what support his Department provides to women's business centres.

[75809]

Mr Prisk: In the coalition agreement the Government made clear that they believe business is the driver of economic growth and innovation. This includes the need to take action to boost enterprise, including women's entrepreneurship.

The Government are committed to broadening the range of activities intended to promote enterprise and to ensuring that the needs of potential and actual women entrepreneurs are fully integrated into these activities. For example:

Challenging aspirations and capability—particularly seeking to embed enterprise awareness at an early age, as there is evidence that differences in enterprise aspiration between the genders start

to open up early in secondary education. We will therefore support every school to give pupils meaningful enterprise experience by helping them develop and run their own business and we will ensure that every school and college has access to positive local role models and enterprise champions—including female entrepreneurs.

A new approach to Business Improvement—as part of our work to transform the way that we enable people to receive the information and advice they need to start and grow their business (including the updating of www.businesslink.gov.uk, and establishing a new national helpline, a comprehensive start-up service and a new Business Coaching for Growth service), we have paid particular attention to ensuring the services are accessible to women and are designed and presented in the right way for a female audience.

Improving the business environment and access to finance—the Government are taking a number of steps which will benefit women-led businesses as well as other businesses, including: delivering long-term certainty and stability in the tax system; reducing regulatory burdens; encouraging a world-class skills base; ensuring the financial sector can supply affordable credit to viable businesses; and encouraging more diverse sources of finance for SMEs, including where appropriate, access to equity finance.

This Department does not provide any financial assistance for women's business centres.

The Government want to engage with small businesses and entrepreneurs to help make the UK the best place in the world to start and grow a business, and make the next decade the most entrepreneurial and dynamic in Britain's history. The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), has therefore created the Entrepreneurs' Forum, to provide him with an informal and personal source of advice on business and enterprise policies. There are 17 entrepreneurs on the forum, the majority of whom are women.

Copyright

Mike Weatherley: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills when he expects his proposed copyright small claims jurisdiction to be in place. [73525]

Mr Davey: The Government are examining the business case for the introduction of a small claims track in the patents county court. We intend to report on progress this autumn. Subject to an appropriate business case being established, the Government would look to implement the change as soon as possible thereafter, hopefully in 2012.

Credit

Damian Hinds: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment he has made of the potential effects of the March 2010 guidance from the Office of Fair Trading on irresponsible lending on lender practice in the (a) mainstream personal credit and (b) sub-prime personal credit market. [75548]

Mr Davey: The Irresponsible Lending Guidance is helping to raise standards in both the main stream and sub-prime sectors. For example, trade associations in both sectors have required their members to adopt practices and procedures that are compliant with the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) guidance. However, OFT intelligence suggests that lenders in both sectors need to do more to fully meet the standards set out in the

guidance—and where there is clear evidence that they don't meet these standards and consumers may be adversely affected, the OFT does, and will continue to, take action against the businesses concerned. In line with a commitment given at the time that it published the Irresponsible Lending Guidance, the OFT expects to commence a review of business compliance with the guidance shortly.

Departmental Allowances

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how much members of his departmental management board have claimed in expenses since May 2010. [74956]

Mr Davey: The Department publishes expenses claimed by all board members, in relation to their work for the departmental board as well as more generally, on its website. Quarterly updates covering the period from May 2010 to March 2011 are available at:

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/transparency/staff>

Subsequent updates will be published in due course.

Departmental Manpower

Stephen Hammond: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many civil servants work in his Department; and how many worked in his Department in (a) 2000, (b) 2005, (c) 2007 and (d) 2010. [76390]

Mr Davey: In June 2009 the Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) was merged with The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) to create The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Therefore we only have access to data from this date.

Our latest return to the Office for National Statistics shows that as at the end of September 2011 we employed 2,958 staff. In March 2010 we employed 3,728 staff. Please note these figures include UKTI and are based on staff on payroll.

Electricity Generation: Nigeria

Meg Hillier: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps his Department is taking to promote business links with the power supply sector in Nigeria. [75463]

Mr Prisk: UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) provides expert advice and practical support to UK companies, including those in the power sector, looking to export to Nigeria. In October 2010 UKTI Nigeria accompanied a delegation of UK power companies to the President of Nigeria's 'Presidential Retreat for Power Sector Investors' in Abuja at which it was discussed how all present could help improve the availability of power in the country.

Export Credits Guarantee Department

Mr Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how much was owed by developing countries to the Export Credits Guarantee Department in the latest period for which figures are

available; what proportion that figure represents of all developing country debts owed to the UK; and if he will make a statement. [76061]

Mr Davey [*holding answer 21 October 2011*]: Sovereign debt owed to the Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD) by developing countries, as of 30 September 2011, was £2.4 billion. This represents 90% of all debts owed to the UK through ECGD, the Department for International Development and CDC Group plc.

'Developing countries' has been defined as low and middle-income countries, as based on the World Bank's latest (2011) classification of gross national income per capita.

Green Investment Bank: Location

Julian Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) when he expects to make the final decision on the location for the Green Investment Bank; [74551]

(2) whether his Department has made any changes to the criteria for determining the location of the Green Investment Bank since May 2011; [74556]

(3) whether further cities have applied to be the location of the Green Investment Bank. [74557]

Mr Prisk: 16 cities and towns have indicated that they would like to be considered as the location for the Green Investment Bank. I will set out further details of the criteria and process for determining the location of the Green Investment Bank before Christmas, with a view to a final decision in 2012.

Hawk Aircraft

Mr Iain Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills whether his Department offered support to BAE Systems to ensure that the Hawk trainer aircraft would be built in the UK; and if he will make a statement. [75578]

Mr Prisk [*holding answer 20 October 2011*]: The Government consider that the most effective support they can provide in relation to the Hawk is by promoting exports of the aircraft from the UK. The Government are actively engaged in promoting exports of the Hawk, and in particular the UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) Defence and Security Organisation is supporting BAE Systems export campaigns in a number of overseas markets. Export customers for high value defence equipment frequently seek a level of local production and technology transfer, but export orders still deliver significant benefit and value for the many UK companies in the supply chain. The Government have not provided support directly towards production of the aircraft in the UK.

Higher Education Funding Council

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how much funding the Higher Education Funding Council has allocated for (a) 2008-09, (b) 2009-10, (c) 2010-11, (d) 2011-12, (e) 2012-13, (f) 2013-14 and (g) 2014-15 for capital investment at (i) Oxford University, (ii) Cambridge University, (iii) Imperial

College, London, (iv) University College, London and (v) the University of Manchester; and if he will make a statement. [74009]

Mr Willetts: The information requested is in a table produced by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. I will place a copy of it in the Libraries of the House. The only figures allocated are up to 2011/12. All figures beyond that date are indicative as no allocations have yet been made.

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how much funding the Higher Education Funding Council allocated for (a) widening participation in higher education, (b) the costs of being based in London, (c) the teaching of foreign languages and (d) capital investment; how much it plans to allocate for each purpose in each of the next three years in (i) 2010-11 and (ii) 2011-12; and if he will make a statement. [74010]

Mr Willetts: The only figures allocated are up to 2011/12. The Government have yet to make allocations for future years.

(i) Widening Participation

The final recurrent grant figures for Widening Participation and improving retention are shown in table 1.

Table 1

	<i>Widening access</i>	<i>Improving retention</i>	<i>Total</i>
2010-11	141,895,449	226,699,474	368,594,923
2011-12	141,630,239	226,514,863	368,145,102

(ii) London weighting

It is not possible to identify precisely how much grant is attributable to London weighting, because it is just one weighting factor in more complex formulae covering three other elements of recurrent grant: mainstream teaching grant; Widening Participation, and Teaching Enhancement and Student Success, and Quality Research funding. Estimates are provided in table 2.

Table 2: Estimated London weighting within recurrent grant

	<i>£ million</i>	
	<i>2010-11</i>	<i>2011-12</i>
Mainstream teaching grant	72.7	68.4
WP and improving retention	3.7	3.9
Research	44.5	44.4
Total	120.9	116.7

(iii) Foreign languages

The data requested on the spend on Modern foreign languages are not currently available. Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) provides institutions with a block grant to cover teaching costs and institutions have considerable flexibility to deploy this in line with their institutions needs. Precisely how they have done this for the years in question will be known following the publication of the final individualised student data from HESA for 2010-11 around December 2011.

(iv) Capital investment

The information provided by HEFCE on capital will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Higher Education: Admissions

Margot James: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many and what proportion of pupils attending (a) state funded schools,

(b) grammar schools, (c) non-selective state funded schools and (d) independent schools who achieved AAB or above at A-level received an offer to attend (i) a higher education institution, (ii) a Russell Group university and (iii) Oxford or Cambridge University in the latest period for which figures are available. [72155]

Mr Willetts: The information is in the following table and has been provided by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS).

Table: Number and proportion of UCAS applicants with A levels of AAB or better that received offers by centre type and institution

Institution type	(a) State excluding Grammar			(b) Grammar			(d) Independent School		
	Applicants	Received offers	%	Applicants	Received offers	%	Applicants	Received offers	%
(i) HEIs	21,292	20,751	97.5	12,519	12,192	97.4	16,759	16,111	96.1
(ii) Russell Group	19,510	17,259	88.5	11,934	10,813	90.6	16,336	14,613	89.5
(iii) Oxford or Cambridge university	5,293	1,394	26.3	3,514	1,119	31.8	6,496	2,115	32.6

The question asks for those with “AAB or above at A level” to be identified (therefore the wider specification of grades and qualifications proposed in the Higher Education Funding Council for England ‘Consultation on funding for teaching and student number allocation in 2012-13’ Annex C: AAB equivalences has not been used). Only the three highest grades have been considered in this analysis. The dominator for the calculation of the percentage is the number of applicants that made at least one choice to the type of institution.

The data covers UK domiciled applicants in the UCAS main scheme, Higher Education Institutions with UCAS membership and A levels reported through the 2010 Awarding Body Linkage (ABL arrangements only cover qualifications taken in the last 18 months). The school type reflects the centre through which the application was submitted and uses UCAS’ standard centre groupings. UCAS is not able to report on non-selective state funded schools as these are not identified in their data.

The AAB and better group will contain applicants with a range of attainment from AAB to A*A*A*A* for example. The mix of applicant attainment within the AAB or better group may vary across centre type and this is likely to account for some of the differences in the offer rate seen, for example for those that achieved exactly AAB, the variation in offer rate from Oxford or Cambridge universities is reduced to within 0.6% across centre types.

For a majority of these applicants, offers are made prior to A level attainment being known. Predicted grades have not been considered in this analysis. An institution’s decision to make an offer is likely to depend on subjects in addition to the potential grade profile. This data reports those who have achieved particular A level grade profiles without any filtering of the range of subjects. The mix of subjects offered may be associated with school type.

Higher Education: Charities

Paul Blomfield: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what research his Department has (a) evaluated and (b) commissioned on for-profit higher education providers; and if he will publish all such research. [73395]

Mr Willetts: There exists extensive research on the benefits of greater competition and choice. It is on such foundations that my Department’s higher education White Paper “Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System” is based. During the White Paper consultation phase, which ran from June to September of this year, we welcomed evidence from stakeholders to help quantify the possible impact of the policy proposals made. We are currently considering the responses received and will be issuing a formal response in due course. This will also include our response to the accompanying technical consultation “A New, Fit-for-Purpose Regulatory Framework for the Higher Education Sector” which is open until 27 October. Both documents are available at:

www.bis.gov.uk/hereform

Higher Education: Private Sector

Paul Blomfield: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what consideration he has given to providing private equity companies with degree-awarding powers. [73397]

Mr Willetts: Any organisation providing higher education is entitled to apply for degree awarding powers. The granting of these powers is subject to meeting specific criteria designed to establish that the applicant is a well-founded, cohesive and self-critical academic community that can demonstrate firm guardianship of its standards. As part of our proposed reforms to higher education we are currently consulting on a range of measures to encourage a greater diversity of higher education provision which is responsive to the needs of students.

Paul Blomfield: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what meetings (a) he, (b) the Minister for Universities and Science and (c) officials in his Department have had with private equity firms to discuss higher education. [73398]

Mr Willetts: The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my right hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable) and I meet regularly with organisations that have an interest in higher education.

A quarterly-updated list of all BIS ministerial meetings with external organisations is available at:

<http://data.gov.uk/dataset/disclosure-ministerial-hospitality-received-department-for-business>

BIS officials will also have had meetings with a range of organisations with an interest in higher education. A comprehensive record of these is not maintained.

Paul Blomfield: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what criteria were used to determine which organisations to invite to the December 2010 and January 2011 meetings between the Minister for Universities and Science and private higher education providers. [73399]

Mr Willetts: I held two meetings with a range of private higher education providers in December 2010 and January 2011 to discuss how more private investment in, and provision of, higher education could be encouraged. Invitations were extended to those organisations that we felt had knowledge and expertise to share on this agenda.

Insolvency

Mr Iain Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will bring forward

	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
OR (Comp) disqualifications	—	507	528	540	579
Total disqualifications	1,200	1,145	1,252	1,388	1,437

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many disqualification orders and undertakings were obtained in each of the last five financial years; and in each such year how many were obtained for (a) less than five years, (b) five to nine years and (c) over nine years. [76171]

	Disqualifications by period				
	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
One to five years	710	603	614	668	738
Six to 10 years	400	402	478	540	549
11 to 15 years	90	140	160	180	150
Total	1,200	1,145	1,252	1,388	1,437

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will place in the Library a copy of each document issued to Insolvency Service staff in relation to the proposed Insolvency Service delivery strategy. [76179]

Mr Prisk [holding answer 21 October 2011]: The full staff consultation document on the delivery strategy can be found on the Insolvency Service website at:

www.bis.gov.uk/insolvency/About-us/Strategy-and-Planning

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate he has made of the effect of staffing of the Insolvency Service delivery strategy on the staffing complement of the Insolvency Service in each region of England and Wales. [76180]

proposals to increase the proportion of businesses which are at risk of going into administration which remain trading as a going concern. [74639]

Mr Davey: The Government are committed to strengthening the framework for company rescue wherever this is possible.

In this regard, the Government are aware of the problems that can be caused for those seeking to rescue a struggling company by so-called 'termination clauses', and are currently considering this issue and the implications for all companies of any change to the existing law.

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many disqualification orders and undertakings were obtained in compulsory liquidations for each of the last five financial years; and in each such year how many were obtained for (a) less than five years, (b) five to nine years and (c) over nine years. [76170]

Mr Prisk [holding answer 21 October 2011]: The Insolvency Service does not record the data broken down according to the requested periods but has recorded total figures for the last four years which are provided in the following table:

Mr Prisk [holding answer 21 October 2011]: The Insolvency Service does not record the data requested broken down according to the periods specified. However, the data are recorded broken down according to similar periods and are provided in the following table:

Mr Prisk [holding answer 21 October 2011]: A key purpose of the delivery strategy is to enable the Insolvency Service to react more flexibly to fluctuations in demand for its services in the future. It does not seek to change the level of staff employed, therefore no such assessment has been made.

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Insolvency Service Delivery Strategy on the Insolvency Service's ability to investigate misconduct in bankruptcies and compulsory liquidations; and if he will make a statement. [76181]

Mr Prisk [holding answer 21 October 2011]: The Delivery Strategy does not propose any changes that

will impact on the ability of the Insolvency Service to investigate misconduct in bankruptcies and compulsory liquidations.

Kaplan UK: Higher Education

Paul Blomfield: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) what representations he has received from (a) Kaplan Inc., (b) Kaplan Europe and (c) Kaplan UK on the expansion of alternative providers in higher education; [73390]

(2) what meetings the Minister for Universities and Science has had with representatives of (a) Kaplan Inc., (b) Kaplan Europe and (c) Kaplan UK since his appointment. [73391]

Mr Willetts: I met with representatives of Kaplan UK on 8 September 2011. I met with representatives of Kaplan UK and Kaplan Inc. on 20 September 2011. I attended an event where a representative of Kaplan Europe was present on 3 May 2011. I attended an event where a representative of Kaplan UK was present on 17 May 2011. I have also received a number of written representations from Kaplan UK and Kaplan Europe regarding the role of alternative providers in UK higher education.

Ministerial Policy Advisers

Chi Onwurah: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what arrangements govern the payment of expenses to members of expert and advisor groups to enable them to attend meetings at his Department. [75803]

Mr Davey: The arrangements for the payment of expenses to members of expert and advisor groups attending meetings at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) are governed by the principles laid out in the Civil Service Code, the Ministerial Code and the BIS departmental travel policy.

Only travel and expenses costs that are necessary and additional to normal expenditure can be reimbursed. Expenditure should be both reasonable and within the guideline amounts set out within the BIS travel policy. All claims for reimbursement must be approved by an appropriate and authorised budget holder within BIS before any payment can be made.

All travel should be both proportionate and appropriate to the need and should demonstrate best value for money to the Department. Travellers should choose the most appropriate method of travel and make the best overall use of official time, fares and subsistence.

Within BIS, Ministers, the permanent secretary and top management team are expected to follow the guidance given in the Ministerial Code, for example by using public transport at standard class and this is extended to officials, those appointed to office, and those whose fares will be reimbursed from the public purse.

National Centre for Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what evaluation he has conducted of the work of the National Centre for Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research. [74271]

Mr Willetts: The National Centre for Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) is funded by BIS via the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC).

BIS asked the Medical Research Council (MRC) to lead a five-year (quinquennial) review of the NC3Rs which was undertaken in 2009. The aims of the review were to advise BIS, MRC and BBSRC on the continued importance of the NC3Rs; to examine the importance and quality of the work being carried out by the centre, including the research it funds; to examine the relevance and quality of the outputs and their translation; to advise on plans for the future including the level of resources necessary and the governance arrangements.

Public Houses: Rents

Mr Iain Wright: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will consider introducing a requirement for tenants to be provided with a breakdown of how their rent has been calculated in his code of practice for pub companies. [73735]

Mr Davey: The Government do not have a code of practice for pub companies. The Government are currently considering the recommendations made in the BIS committee's most recent "Pub Companies" report and will be responding in due course.

Royal Mail: Billing

Ian Murray: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) what representations he has received on proposals by Royal Mail to increase the period for paying invoices to suppliers from 45 to 60 days; [76372]

(2) what recent discussions he has had with Royal Mail on changes to their invoice payment system for suppliers. [76373]

Mr Davey: The Department has not received any representations or had any discussions with Royal Mail regarding their invoice payment practices.

Students: Loans

Shabana Mahmood: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what representations he has received from Muslim groups on the interest charged on student loans. [76048]

Mr Willetts: The Government have received representations from student representative bodies regarding this issue, including the National Union of Students and Federation of Student Islamic Societies.

Trade Union Officials

Jim Sheridan: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will estimate the contributions trade union representatives make to (a) the economy and (b) productivity in (i) public and (ii) private sector workplaces; and if he will make a statement. [76479]

Mr Davey: The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my right hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), fully recognises the contribution that trade union representatives can make in the workplace but it would be impossible to make any sensible estimate given the number of variables involved. The number and role of trade union representatives in a workplace will be determined between the union and employer.

Jim Sheridan: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what estimate he has made of the proportion of the national employed workforce that work as (a) full-time or (b) part-time trade union representatives; and if he will bring forward proposals to increase that proportion. [76480]

Mr Davey: The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my right hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable) has made no such estimate and has no plans to bring forward proposals to increase union representation.

The number of trade union representatives in a workplace and whether they are full or part-time will be determined between the union and employer. The Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 provides that reasonable time off be allowed for union duties and activities—and the ACAS code of practice provides practical guidance. This allows tailoring to the specific needs of the workplace.

UK Trade and Investment: Government Procurement Card

Charlie Elphicke: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what the (a) date of purchase, (b) amount, (c) supplier and (d) level 3 or enhanced transaction entry was of each transaction undertaken by UK Trade and Investment using the Government Procurement Card in (i) 2007-08, (ii) 2008-09 and (iii) 2009-10. [73496]

Mr Prisk: For the financial year 2011-12 and onwards, it is Government policy for all Departments to publish their GPC transactions over £500 on the Data.gov website. UK Trade and Investment's (UKTI) data for the first quarter covering April to June 2011 can be found at:

www.data.gov.uk

UKTI does not hold the information at the detailed level requested for the period 2007-08 to 2009-10. To obtain this would involve commissioning a bespoke report, which could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Utilities: Billing

Sir John Stanley: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he plans to take in respect of energy, utility and communication companies who do not state on their bills (a) that customers can pay by posted cheque, (b) to whom the cheque should be made and (c) the address to which the cheque should be sent. [73653]

Mr Davey [holding answer 17 October 2011]: There are no plans to require companies to state on their bills that customers can pay by cheque. The information printed on customer's bills about methods of payment is a commercial matter for the companies concerned. Energy suppliers, along with utilities and communications companies offer a range of payment options. Some suppliers have licence conditions that set out ways under which they accept payment including in some cases cash and prepayment methods.

WORK AND PENSIONS

State Pension

25. **John Stevenson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what progress he has made on the introduction of a single-tier state pension. [76008]

Steve Webb: In July this year we published the response to our April Green Paper. Three quarters of organisations who responded supported the single tier pension.

We are continuing to work closely with Treasury on state pension reform and will update the house as soon as we are in a position to do so.

Access to Work Programme

Margaret Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how much CDG will be paid for keeping one individual in employment for 26 out of the 104 weeks while they are participating in the Work programme; [74141]

(2) how much Seetec will be paid for keeping one individual in employment for 26 out of the 104 weeks they are participating in the Work programme; [74142]

(3) how much A4e will be paid for keeping one individual in employment for 26 out of the 104 weeks they are participating in the Work programme. [74143]

Chris Grayling: Work programme providers will be paid primarily for the results they achieve in supporting people into sustained employment.

Three main types of payment are available to providers:

a small attachment fee is paid early in the contracts for each person referred to the Work programme. This will reduce in the second and third years of the contracts and will no longer be payable at all in years four and five;

job outcome fees are paid once per participant after participants have been in employment for 13 or 26 weeks, depending on their participant group;

sustainment fees represent the bulk of available payments to providers. They are payable for each four-week period in employment after a job outcome is claimed, up to the maximums specified in the Work programme Invitation to Tender¹. They are designed to encourage providers both to find jobs that are appropriate for their claimants in the long-term and to continue to support them in work.

The maximum possible level and timing of each of these payments for the different participant groups on the Work programme are set out in the Work programme Invitation to Tender¹ (see page 10).

As part of the procurement process, providers were asked to offer discounts on the maximum possible level of the job outcome payments in their bids (see paragraph 3.08 of the Invitation to Tender¹ for details).

¹ Work programme Invitation to Tender:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/work-prog-itt.pdf>

Access to Work Programme: North Lanarkshire

Mr Frank Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many people have been successfully placed in jobs by Work programme contractors in Motherwell and Wishaw constituency in each of the last three months; [75827]

(2) how many people claiming employment and support allowance have been referred into the Work programme in Motherwell and Wishaw constituency in the latest period for which figures are available. [75828]

Chris Grayling: The Work programme was launched in June 2011, to deliver sustained employment that can change people's lives; providers have longer than ever before to make a difference.

The Department is working to guidelines set by the UK Statistics Authority to ensure we are able to publish statistics that meet high quality standards at the earliest opportunity.

Statistics on referrals and attachments to the Work programme will be published from spring 2012 and job outcome data will be published from autumn 2012. The Department's publication strategy for Work programme statistics was placed in the House of Commons Library and is also available at:

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/index.php?page=wp>

Access to Work Programme: Sign Language

Anas Sarwar: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what forms of sign language interpretation are available for sign language users through the Access to Work programme. [76374]

Maria Miller: Access to Work has provided assistance for a number of physical interpretation solutions including; British Sign Language, Sign Assisted Speech, Note takers, Palantypists, Lip Readers, Palm Speakers, Deaf Relay Interpreters and Sign Supported English. There are also a variety of technical interpretation options including; Remote Interpreting, Minicom, Textbox, Video Phones, Sign Video, Tynetalk, Electronic Note taking and Remote Captioning.

Anas Sarwar: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many interpreters who use a sign language other than British Sign Language are employed as part of the Access to Work scheme. [76375]

Maria Miller: The information requested is not routinely collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Anas Sarwar: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many sign language users requested interpreting services in a sign language other than British Sign Language through the Access to Work scheme in the last year. [76376]

Maria Miller: The information requested is not routinely collected and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Children: Day Care

Chris Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his most recent assessment is of the potential effects of the universal credit on child care costs. [75553]

Chris Grayling: No estimate has been made of the impact of universal credit on the cost of child care.

We are investing more than the current spend on child care. Extending support to parents working fewer than 16 hours will allow around 80,000 families who are currently not eligible to receive help with child care costs, increasing their financial incentives to take work.

Families will be able to recover 70% of monthly child care costs up to £760 for one child or £1,300 for two or more children. This is equivalent to the current arrangements in tax credits of £175 for one child and £300 for two or more children per week.

Children: Maintenance

Gloria De Piero: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many mothers in (a) Ashfield constituency, (b) Nottinghamshire and (c) England receive financial assistance from the Child Support Agency. [75434]

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:

In reply to your recent Parliamentary Question 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, how many mothers in (a) Ashfield constituency, (b) Nottinghamshire and (c) England receive financial assistance from the Child Support Agency. [75434]

The Commission does not provide financial assistance directly. However the Child Support Agency (CSA) operates the two existing statutory child maintenance schemes. If a parent opens a case the CSA will work out how much child maintenance should be paid and can also collect and pass on child maintenance payments.

In the quarter to June 2011 there were 1,600 cases with a female parent with care benefiting from maintenance in Ashfield Constituency, 9,400 in Nottinghamshire and 544,300 in England.

Cases benefiting from maintenance are referred to as cases with a positive maintenance outcome. In addition the table below provides the number of cases, with a female parent with care in the specified areas, where maintenance was due and the number and percentage of these cases with a positive maintenance outcome in the three months to June 2011.

<i>Cases benefiting from maintenance, June 2011</i>			
	<i>Maintenance due</i>	<i>Positive outcome</i>	<i>Percentage with positive outcome (%)</i>
Ashfield constituency	2,000	1,600	78.5
Nottinghamshire	12,100	9,400	77.7

Cases benefiting from maintenance, June 2011

	Maintenance due	Positive outcome	Percentage with positive outcome (%)
England	701,300	544,300	77.6

Notes:

- Figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.
- Areas are provided by matching the residential postcode of the parent with care to the Office for National Statistics Postcode Directory.
- Cases are classed as having maintenance due if an ongoing liability to pay maintenance exists or arrears of maintenance have been requested. This group of cases consists of assessed not charging, compliant, nil compliant, maintenance direct and others with receipts.
- Cases are counted as having a positive maintenance outcome if they have received a payment via the collection service in the quarter or have a maintenance direct agreement in place. Cases are classed as maintenance direct if this is their status at the end of the quarter.

I hope you find this answer helpful.

Departmental Procurement

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions 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. [75178]

Chris Grayling: The numbers and values of contracts awarded to third sector organisations since May 2010 are detailed in the following table:

	Contracts awarded	Total value (£)
May 2010	3	569,421
June 2010	1	25,000
July 2010	0	0
August 2010	2	229,185
September 2010	4	2,031,629
October 2010 ¹	25	265,677,775
November 2010	1	69,090
December 2010	0	0
January 2011	3	1,116,590
February 2011	0	0
March 2011	0	0
April 2011	6	226,325
May 2011	0	0
June 2011	2	96,920,210
July 2011	0	0
August 2011	0	0
September 2011	0	0
Total	47	366,865,225

¹ Including 20 Workchoice contracts.

Notes:

- DWP does not have complete coverage of the third sector status of every supplier who has been awarded a contract in this period.
- We have 15 other contracts in the period where the supplier's third sector status is unknown.
- DWP awarded 1,129 contracts in total in this period (of which, CIT low level contracts total 598). Third sector suppliers represent 4.1% of the overall total.
- The data includes DWP and its NDPB's.
- The data is extracted from the BMO Contracts database using the contract start date as the filter.
- Some contracts have a nil value because there is no firm contractual commitment to spend.
- The period covered by this response is 1 May 2010 to 30 September 2011.

Departmental Travel

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much his Department has spent on first-class travel by (a) air, (b) boat and (c) train since May 2010. [75531]

Chris Grayling: The expenditure for first class travel¹ by DWP since May 2010 is as follows:

¹ There was no first-class air or boat travel undertaken in the period in question and therefore all of the above figures relate to rail travel.

	£	Percentage reduction (%)
May 2010 to June 2010	934,094	—
July 2010 to March 2011 ¹	420,652	-55
April 2011 to September 2011 ²	22,034	-95
Total	1,376,781	—

¹ An initial review of DWP's travel policy undertaken during this period allowed 1st class rail travel only for journeys over two hours and even then only in exceptional circumstances when a business case had been signed off by the budget holder.

² A further review of DWP's travel policy, undertaken during this period to ensure taxpayer's money was being used in the most efficient manner, introduced an outright ban on first class travel from 4th April 2011, save for very exceptional circumstances e.g. travel by a disabled employee who cannot be accommodated in standard class.

It is important to note that first-class travel reduced from 24% of the total number of rail journeys in May 2010 to 0.3% in September 2011.

DWP's business travel policy actively discourages travel, where possible, and encourages the use of video conferencing or call conferencing for meetings instead. Where travel is deemed necessary, DWP supports the use of the most cost-effective modes of transport only.

The figures provided should be read in the context of a geographically dispersed Department of over 100,000 staff.

Travel by civil servants is undertaken in accordance with the principles of Managing Public Money and the Treasury handbook on Regularity and Propriety. The Civil Service Management Code sets out regulations and instructions to Departments and agencies regarding the terms and conditions of service of civil servants and the delegations which have been made by the Minister for the Civil Service under the Civil Service (Management of Functions) Act 1992 together with the conditions attached to those delegations.

The code can be accessed at:

<http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/about/resources/civil-service-management-code>

Paragraph 8.2 of the code deals with travel and under this section Departments and agencies must ensure that staff use the most efficient and economic means of travel in the circumstances, taking into account any management benefit or the needs of staff with disabilities.

Disability Living Allowance: Coventry

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many (a) men and (b) women aged 16 to 24 claimed disability living allowance in Coventry in (a) 1992, (b) 2002 and (c) the latest period for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement. [76380]

Maria Miller: The information is not available in the format requested but such information as is available is contained in the following table.

As at February:	Men aged 16 to 24	Women aged 16 to 24
1993	¹ 200	¹ 100
2002	¹ 300	¹ 300

Disability living allowance cases in payment for 16 to 24-year-olds in Coventry local authority at February 1993, 2002 and 2011, by gender

As at February:	Men aged 16 to 24	Women aged 16 to 24
2011	880	440

¹ Numbers are based on very few sample cases and are subject to a high degree of sampling variation.

Notes:

- Figures from February 1993 and February 2002 are taken from 5% sample data. They have been up-rated to be consistent with WPLS data and are rounded to the nearest 100.
- Figures for February 2011 are taken from WPLS 100% data and are rounded to the nearest 10.
- Figures show the number of people in receipt of an allowance, and exclude people with entitlement where the payment has been suspended, for example if they are in hospital.
- Disability living allowance was introduced in April 1992, but published tables by local authority are not available prior to February 1993.

Sources:

- DWP Information Directorate: 100% Work and Pensions Longitudinal Study (WPLS)
- DWP Information Directorate: Sample data (5%) (February 1993 and 2002)

Housing Benefit

Caroline Dinanage: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent assessment he has made of the likelihood of implementing reforms to housing benefit by April 2013. [76205]

Steve Webb: Clause 68 of the Welfare Reform Bill will enable the introduction of size criteria for claimants receiving housing benefit in the social rented sector. From April 2013 housing benefit for working-age people who are living in a larger property than they need will be restricted. We are working closely with the Department for Communities and Local Government and others as we develop our implementation strategy. The consumer prices index measure for the local housing allowance will also be introduced from April 2013.

Housing Benefit: EU Nationals

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what guidance his Department provides to local authorities on assessing eligibility for housing benefit for A8 nationals. [75658]

Steve Webb: Since 1 May 2011, A8 nationals have had the same access to housing benefit as nationals of other, longer established European Union member states.

Detailed guidance on the benefit position of A8 nationals from 1 May 2011 was made available to local authorities in a housing benefit and council tax circular, A10/2011. This circular was published in May 2011. DWP also offers further support to local authorities on such matters by operating a dedicated e-mail inquiry point.

National Insurance Contributions

Stephen Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much was paid in employers' national insurance contributions for employees aged (a) under 20, (b) between 20 and 25, (c) between 25 and 55, (d) between 55 and 60, (e) between 60 and 65, (f) between 65 and 70 and (g) over 70 years old in the latest year for which figures are available. [74454]

Mr Gauke: I have been asked to reply.

Information on the amount of employer national insurance contributions payable in respect of the 2009-10 tax year by age of employee is shown in the following table.

Age	Employer NICs (£ millions)
Under 20	200
20-25	2,400
25-55	43,300
55-60	4,700
60-65	2,600
65-70	500
Above 70	400
Total	54,200

Estimates are based on a 1% sample of NICs and PAYE Service data and exclude Class 1A and 1B national insurance contributions.

Occupational Pensions

Brandon Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what (a) incentives and (b) options the Government are providing for short-term employees to contribute under the auto-enrolment system. [75958]

Steve Webb: The information is as follows:

The reforms ensure that all temporary workers, whether agency workers or employees directly employed by a company on a fixed short term contract are on an equal footing for the purposes of workplace pension saving.

Employers will be required to enrol all workers eligible¹ for automatic enrolment into a qualifying workplace pension scheme.

To ensure a balance of costs and benefits for individuals and employers the independent Making Automatic Enrolment Work review recommended the introduction of an optional three month waiting period before a worker has to be automatically enrolled as an easement for employers. Individuals who know that they want to save into a workplace pension saving will be able to opt in during the waiting period if they wish to do so.

Eligible workers who do not opt out will benefit from a minimum 3% employer contribution² and tax relief which will effectively double their own contributions offering a powerful incentive to save for retirement.

In addition workers who are not eligible for automatic enrolment but aged at least 16 and under 22 or have reached state pension age and under 75 and earning more than £5,035 will be able to opt in to workplace pension saving and qualify for an employer contribution.

Workers earning less than £5,035 will be able to opt in to a scheme designated by their employer. Their employer may choose to make a pension contribution but is not obliged to do so.

¹ Employers have to automatically enrol workers if they are (subject to pending legislation) someone: aged at least 22 and under pensionable age, who ordinarily works in Great Britain under the worker's contract and earns more than the earnings threshold (£7,475 in 2011-12).

² The 3% contribution is payable on defined contribution arrangements. Minimum employer contributions will be phased in starting at 1%, rising to 2% from October 2016 reaching 3% from October 2017.

Pensions

Brandon Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the additional number of people who will start saving towards

a pension as a result of automatic enrolment into pensions at work. [76052]

Steve Webb: The Department estimates that nine to 10 million workers will be eligible for automatic enrolment into a workplace pension and that the reforms will result in five to eight million people newly saving, or saving more, in a workplace pension.

This estimate is taken from the impact assessment for the Pensions Bill 2011:

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/pensions-bill-2011-ia-annexb.pdf> which was published in January 2011.

Pensions: Fire Services

Dr Wollaston: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether his Department has conducted an impact assessment of the potential effect on firefighters of the provisions of the Pensions Bill [Lords]. [75724]

Steve Webb: The impact assessment published when the Pensions Bill was introduced into Parliament on 13 January 2011 did not cover specific occupations. It did consider the impact of the proposed increase in state pension age for people previously employed in manual occupations.

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/pensions-bill-2011-ia-annexa.pdf>

Pensions: North Lanarkshire

Mr Frank Roy: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the number of women in Motherwell and Wishaw constituency who will spend longer in employment as a result of the legislative proposals in the Pensions Bill. [75912]

Steve Webb: The information requested is not available. However, 4,200 women in the Motherwell and Wishaw constituency will have their state pension age affected by the proposals in the Pensions Bill 2011.

In Motherwell and Wishaw constituency in 2010-11, the employment rate of women aged 50-64 was 63.5% compared to a UK figure of 58.4%.

Social Security Benefits

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of households in receipt of out-of-work benefits for more than 12 months had (a) seven or more, (b) six, (c) five and (d) four children in the latest period for which figures are available. [75921]

Chris Grayling: The information requested is not available as it could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will take steps to uphold the right to reside benefits test against any demand for abolition by the European Commission. [76194]

Chris Grayling: The Department for Work and Pensions is considering all the details of the European Commission's Reasoned Opinion against the right to reside test and is committed to taking the necessary steps to ensure the UK retains control of its welfare policies.

The Government accept their responsibility in supporting EU citizens who work here and pay their taxes, but it is clearly completely unacceptable that we should be asked to open our welfare system to people who have never worked or contributed in the United Kingdom and have no intention of doing so.

Unemployment

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the percentage change in the level of unemployment has been in each local authority area since May 2010. [76218]

Chris Grayling: The DWP does not hold this information. The responsibility for this area sits with the Cabinet Office.

Unemployment: Vacancies

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of any correlation between unemployment levels and job vacancies in each region. [75940]

Chris Grayling: The following table sets out the average number of vacancies notified to Jobcentre Plus each month for the three months to September 2011¹, alongside the average jobseeker's allowance claimant count level over the same period.

¹ The Office for National Statistics' measure of total vacancies in the economy is not available at a regional level, and Jobcentre Plus vacancy figures are not available for Northern Ireland.

	<i>Three months to September 2011</i>	
	<i>Average number of vacancies notified to JCP</i>	<i>Average JSA claimant count level</i>
North East	15,874	88,200
North West	46,405	196,000
Yorkshire and the Humber	32,060	158,300
East Midlands	29,292	106,667
West Midlands	40,829	168,833
East	31,961	115,367
London	37,276	233,467
South East	44,950	141,367
South West	30,210	87,933
Wales	17,254	77,467
Scotland	25,812	145,033

Source:
nomisweb.co.uk

Jobcentre Plus vacancies will represent only a proportion of the total vacancies available in each region, as further vacancies will arise through other recruitment channels. Moreover, this proportion will vary between regions as Jobcentre Plus's market share is not geographically uniform.

Work Capability Assessment

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people subject to a work capability assessment who had been diagnosed as (a) terminally ill, (b) having Parkinson's disease, (c) having multiple sclerosis and (d) requiring open heart surgery were assessed fit for work in the last 12 months for which figures are available. [75934]

Chris Grayling: The information is as follows:

(a) The Department considers a person to be terminally ill if they suffer from a progressive disease with a prognosis of six months or less. Those with terminal illnesses are among a small minority of claimants who are fast-tracked into the support group without having to attend a work capability assessment (WCA).

People considered to be terminally ill by the Department are assessed to have limited capability for work-related activity and therefore cannot be assessed to be fit for work or placed in the work related activity group.

The Department recently published an ad hoc analysis of WCA outcomes at initial assessment for employment and support allowance (ESA) claims by detailed medical condition based on the International Classifications of Diseases (ICD10). This analysis was published on 21 September 2011 and can be accessed using the following link:

http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/index.php?page=adhoc_analysis_2011_q3

This shows the outcomes of the initial WCA for new ESA claims starting between October 2008 and November 2010 (the latest data available), after the effect of appeals. This shows that there were:

(b) 200 fit for work decisions out of 1,200 new claims where the primary condition was classed as Parkinson's disease.

(c) 700 fit for work decisions out of 4,900 new claims where the primary condition was classed as multiple sclerosis.

(d) The term 'requiring open heart surgery' is not defined by the International Classifications of Diseases (ICD10) published by the World Health Organisation; as a result we are unable to provide information in the format requested.

Entitlement to employment and support allowance (ESA) is based on functional capabilities, not on condition per se. The medical condition recorded on a claim form does not in itself confer entitlement to ESA. So, for example, a decision on entitlement for a customer claiming employment and support on the basis of alcoholism would be based on their ability to carry out the range of activities assessed by the work capability assessment, or on the effects of any associated mental health problems. It is also important to note that, where someone has more than one diagnosis or disabling condition, only the predominant one is currently recorded.

CABINET OFFICE

Central Office of Information

Alun Michael: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) if he will publish the business case for closing the Central Office of Information; [75564]

(2) what estimate he has made of the potential savings to the public purse from the proposed closure of the Central Office of Information; and what assessment he has made of the implications of that estimate for the conclusions of the Tee Review; [75567]

(3) what estimate he has made of the cost implications for individual Government Departments of the closure of the Central Office of Information (COI); and what impact assessments he has made of the decision to close the COI. [75568]

Mr Maude: The closure of the Central Office of Information is part of a programme to reform Government communications as a whole. This builds on the success of the moratorium on marketing and advertising, which saw external spend through COI fall from £532 million in 2009-10 to £168 million in 2010-11 and central Government Departments cut their communications budgets by half. These reductions in spending mean that COI is no longer viable as a trading fund.

The decision on the full package of reforms was made on the basis of the information contained in the former Permanent Secretary for Government Communication's 'Review of Government Direct Communication and the Role of COI' and the Government's response to this report. The original report was published on the Cabinet Office website in March and can be seen at:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/review-government-direct-communication-and-coi>

Following this I made a ministerial statement on 23 June 2011, *Official Report*, 22WS.

These changes will lead to cost savings in Government Departments: they will work together more closely, align activity and share resources.

Alun Michael: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether the transfer of work from the Central Office of Information to other Government Departments will be managed as a machinery of government change. [75566]

Mr Maude: The reform of Government communications and the closure of COI do not include any changes of ministerial responsibility, so therefore there is no machinery of government change.

Central Office of Information: Cardiff

Alun Michael: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what assessment he has made of the potential effects of the closure of the Central Office of Information Office in Cardiff on staff employed at that office. [75537]

Mr Maude: The closure of the Central Office of Information means that all its staff are at risk of redundancy. The Cabinet Office is working to minimise the number of redundancies.

Civil Servants: Internet

Dr Huppert: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will provide further guidance for civil servants who take part in online discussions and debates under personal social media accounts outside of their normal work areas (a) in their own names and (b) anonymously. [76253]

Mr Maude [*holding answer 21 October 2011*]: The guidance on the use of social media by civil servants is currently being updated to include guidance to civil servants on their participation in social media in a personal capacity. Revised guidance will be published shortly.

Civil Servants: Manpower

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many full-time equivalent civil servants there were in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11; how many he expects there to be in (i) 2011-12, (ii) 2012-13, (iii) 2013-14 and (iv) 2014-15; and if he will make a statement. [76277]

Mr Maude [*holding answer 21 October 2011*]: Official estimates of the number of full-time equivalent civil servants are produced by the Office of National Statistics at a point in time rather than over a financial year. As such the number of full-time equivalent civil servants as at 31 March 2009, 31 March 2010 and the 30 June 2011, the latest published position, is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Number of full-time equivalent civil servants, 31 March 2009 to 30 June 2011

	Number
31 March 2009	490,000
31 March 2010	492,000
30 June 2011	453,000

Source:

Public Sector Employment Statistics, ONS.

Cabinet Office is currently working with Departments to understand their future work force plans and projections. Information on finalised estimates of numbers of civil servants for 2012 to 2015 is not yet available but will be released in due course.

Communities First Fund: Halifax

Mrs Riordan: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office for what reasons Illingworth and Mixenden Ward in Halifax constituency did not qualify for funding under the Community First programme. [76422]

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 job seekers allowance claimant increases at top tier local authority level. In Calderdale, the eligible wards are Eland, Ovenden, Park, Sowerby Bridge, Town and Warley. They will all receive £33,910 of match funding over four years, with the exception of Ovenden which will receive £84,775.

Departmental Procurement

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many meetings he has had with representatives of (a) social enterprises, (b) charities, (c) large private sector businesses and (d) small and medium-sized private sector businesses since May 2010; and if he will make a statement. [75700]

Mr Hurd: I have had numerous meetings with a range of organisations since last year. Details of Ministers' meetings with external organisations are published on a quarterly basis with those for June 2011 to be published in due course.

Maria Eagle: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps his Department is taking to take account of (a) socio-economic factors and (b) potential revenues for the Exchequer in the awarding of contracts. [76552]

Mr Maude: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 10 October 2011, *Official Report*, column 117W.

Employment: North East

Ian Mearns: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the change was in the number of jobs in (a) Gateshead and (b) the North East in the (i) public and (ii) private sector in each of the last four quarters. [76405]

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 what the change was in the number of jobs in (a) Gateshead and (b) the North East in the (i) public and (ii) private sector in each of the last four Quarters. (076405)

We are unable to provide quarterly information at this level of detail. However as an alternative, public sector employment statistics for local areas can be calculated from the Annual Population Survey (APS).

The table provided shows the change in levels of the number of people employed in the public and private sector resident in Gateshead and the North East, between the 12 month periods ending in March 2010 and March 2011. As with any sample survey, estimates from the APS are subject to a margin of uncertainty.

In the APS the distinction between public and private sector is based on respondents' views about the organisation for which they work. The public sector estimates provided do not correspond to official Public Sector Employment estimates. Those are derived directly from employers and are based on National Accounts definitions.

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. Change in the number of people employed in the public and private sector¹ resident in Gateshead and the North East between 12 month periods ending in March 2010 and March 2011

	Private ²	Thousand Public ³
Gateshead	-1	-1
North East	6	-4

¹ It should be noted that public and private sector estimates are based on survey respondents' views about the organisation for which they work;

do not correspond to the National Accounts definition used for official Public Sector Employment estimates.

² Includes self-employed and unpaid family workers.

³ Includes nationalised industry or state corporation, central Government, civil service, local government or council (incl. police, fire services and local authority controlled schools or colleges), university or other grant funded educational establishment, health authority or NHS trust and armed forces.

Source:

ONS Annual Population Survey

Employment: North West

Luciana Berger: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the change was in the number of jobs in (a) Liverpool and (b) the North West in the (i) public and (ii) private sector in each of the last four quarters.

[76748]

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 what the change was in the number of jobs in (a) Liverpool and (b) the North West in the (i) public and (ii) private sector in each of the last four Quarters. (76748)

We are unable to provide quarterly information at this level of detail. However as an alternative, public sector employment statistics for local areas can be calculated from the Annual Population Survey (APS).

The table provided shows the change in levels of the number of people employed in the public and private sector resident in Liverpool Local Authority and the North West, between the 12 month periods ending in March 2010 and March 2011. As with any sample survey, estimates from the APS are subject to a margin of uncertainty.

In the APS the distinction between public and private sector is based on respondents' views about the organisation for which they work. The public sector estimates provided do not correspond to official Public Sector Employment estimates. Those are derived directly from employers and are based on National Accounts definitions.

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: Change in the number of people employed in the public and private sector¹ resident in Liverpool local authority and the North West between 12-month periods ending in March 2010 and March 2011

	Private ²	Thousand Public ³
Liverpool	6	-5
North West	33	15

¹ It should be noted that public and private sector estimates are based on survey respondents' views about the organisation for which they work;

do not correspond to the National Accounts definition used for official public sector employment estimates.

² Includes self-employed and unpaid family workers.

³ Includes nationalised industry or state corporation, central Government, civil service, local government or council (including police, fire services and local authority controlled schools or colleges), university or other grant funded educational establishment, health authority or NHS trust and armed forces.

Source:

ONS Annual Population Survey.

Private Rented Housing: Greater London

Tessa Jowell: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people live in privately-rented accommodation in London; and what proportion of such people are (a) in full-time work, (b) unemployed, (c) aged 16 to 34 years, (d) ethnic minorities, (e) single people and (f) living in a household of more than three people.

[76404]

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 what estimate has been made of the number of people living in privately-rented accommodation in London, and what proportion of these people are (a) in full-time work, (b) unemployed, (c) aged 16 to 34 years, (d) ethnic minorities, (e) single people, and (f) living in households with more than 3 people. (76404).

The requested estimates are derived from the Annual Population Survey (APS) person and household datasets. The latest available data are for January to December 2010. The estimates are provided in the accompanying table. These estimates are for all people aged 16 and over living in privately-rented accommodation in London, and therefore exclude children aged under 16. The estimate for 'ethnic minorities' include those who classified themselves as mixed, Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British, Chinese, or other. The estimate for 'single people' refers to those living in one-person households.

	Number/percentage
<i>Number of people¹ living in privately-rented accommodation in London:</i>	
Privately-rented accommodation (thousand)	1,544
<i>Of the people aged 16 and above living in privately-rented accommodation in London:</i>	
In full-time employment (percentage)	54.6
Unemployed ² (percentage)	6.2
Aged 16 to 34 (percentage)	65.1
In ethnic minorities ³ (percentage)	38.1
Single people ⁴ (percentage)	11.7
Living in households with more than three people ⁵ (percentage)	27.6

¹ People aged 16 and above, excluding children aged under 16.

² Note that unemployed proportion is not the same as unemployment rate, as the unemployment rate does not include inactive people or people under 16 in the denominator in its calculation.

³ Ethnic minorities include those who classified themselves as mixed, Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British, Chinese, or other.

⁴ "Single people" are those living in one-person households.

⁵ Households where everyone is aged 16 and above.

Source:

APS person and household datasets

Small Businesses

Nicola Blackwood: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what steps he is taking to encourage local authorities to procure goods and services from small and medium-sized businesses.

[76264]

Mr Maude: At an SME Strategic Supplier Summit held on 11 February, we announced a series of measures to make it easier for SMEs to compete for Government contracts, detailed at:

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/news/government-opens-contracts-small-business

Local authorities are responsible for their own procurement decisions, but many choose to follow central Government policies and practices. Baroness Eaton, Chair of the Local Government Group, has signalled local government support for the measures the Government announced on 11 February, particularly the use of a shortened, simplified and standard set of core questions to be used in pre-qualification.

In addition, we are working with local government procurement organisations to make as many of their procurement opportunities as possible accessible through Contracts Finder, our one stop shop to enable suppliers to find procurement opportunities, tender documents and contracts online, free of charge.

Social Investment Market Vision and Strategy

Damian Hinds: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what recent representations he has received on his Department's Social Investment Market Vision and Strategy. [75668]

Mr Hurd: As Minister for Civil Society I receive numerous representations in relation to social investment, including the Department's vision and strategy, which was published in February 2011. This includes correspondence, meetings and parliamentary business.

Work to develop the social investment market is being taken forward by a range of organisations inside and outside Government.

Social Lending

Damian Hinds: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what proportion of Big Society Bank funds he estimates will be disbursed through community development finance institutions. [75669]

Mr Hurd: The Big Society Bank will be an independent organisation, and will be responsible for making its own investment decisions based on the expected impact and quality of the investment proposal. It will invest through intermediary organisations, like Community Development Finance Institutions that provide financial and business support to civil society.

Since the level of investment sought by Community Development Finance Institutions from the Big Society Bank is uncertain, and subsequent investment decisions will be for Big Society Bank, it is not possible or appropriate for Government to estimate the proportion of funds that will be disbursed through Community Development Finance Institutions.

Voluntary Organisations

Graham Jones: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many (a) community networks and (b) councils for voluntary service organisations receiving public funding (i) have closed in the last 12 months and (ii) have plans to close. [76079]

Mr Hurd: We do not centrally hold specific data on closures of community networks or Council for Voluntary Service. Latest figures show that approximately 38,000 general charities receive funding from Government and we continue to work closely with partners in the sector and across government to support such organisations through the transition.

Voluntary Work

Mr Thomas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) what assessment he has made of the Access to Volunteering pilot projects undertaken in 2008-09 and 2009-10; and if he will make a statement; [76289]

(2) if he will publish the independent assessment undertaken of the Access to Volunteering projects; and if he will make a statement. [76290]

Mr Hurd [*holding answer 21 October 2011*]: Encouraging volunteering and social action is a key part of the Government's vision for a Big Society. In May 2011 the Cabinet Office published the Giving White Paper, which announced a number of measures including £40 million of funding over the next two years to support volunteering.

An independent evaluation of the Access to Volunteering pilot was published in March 2011. The report is available at the following link:

http://shared.freshminds.co.uk/Access_to_Volunteering_Evaluation.pdf

The evaluation was accompanied by three documents that share good practice from the pilot, available on the Volunteering England website at:

www.volunteering.org.uk/resources/goodpracticebank/Specialist+Themes/Disabled+People/index

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Judge Darlow

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration he has given to the prosecution of the offence of misconduct in public office in the light of the rulings of Judge Darlow in the case of *R v Laloi* (2005). [75924]

The Attorney-General: His Honour Judge Darlow ruled, on 19 October 2005, that there was no case to answer in relation to the charges of misconduct in public office. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) was, therefore, unable to proceed on these charges.

At the same hearing, the judge also indicated that the type of penalty he would impose on the remaining charges under the Data Protection Act 1998 would not justify a complex criminal trial. This obliged prosecutors to review the decision to proceed. The Code for Crown Prosecutors states that a public interest factor tending against prosecution is if the court is likely to impose a nominal penalty. In the light of this and applying the Code, the prosecution offered no evidence on these charges on 30 March 2006.

The CPS queried the judge's ruling in court and subsequently sought counsel's advice on referring his rulings in this case to the Court of Appeal, through an Attorney-General's reference. The CPS was advised that the case was not suitable for referral to the Court of Appeal because the law required no further clarification.

Section 58 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 now allows appeals of judge's rulings within a trial. This was not available at the time of these proceedings.

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