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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Thursday 6 June 2013**



# House of Commons

*Thursday 6 June 2013*

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

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Oral Answers to Questions

### ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### Per Capita Carbon Emissions

1. **David Mowat** (Warrington South) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with his counterparts in Germany, the Netherlands and Ireland regarding the level of per capita carbon emissions and the future policy of those countries. [158073]

**The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Mr Edward Davey):** I frequently have talks with my German, Dutch and Irish counterparts. In April, for example, I attended informal energy and environment councils in Dublin, where discussions with other member states, including Germany, the Netherlands and Ireland, focused on the EU 2030 climate and energy framework.

**David Mowat:** The March European Environment Agency report confirmed that the UK's per capita emissions are among the lowest in Europe, and in 2011 they fell at double the rate of those of the rest of the EU. Furthermore, the recent emissions trading scheme vote by the European Parliament means the UK has a carbon price six times higher than the rest of the EU, and now we are seeing several countries moving ahead to build coal stations that will not use carbon capture and storage. Is there a risk that we are increasingly acting unilaterally in this area?

**Mr Davey:** Let me reassure my hon. Friend. We work very closely with our European colleagues, and I formed the green growth group, currently working with about nine other member states, including our German and Dutch colleagues. We need to reform the ETS to make sure we have a functioning and effective carbon market in Europe, and we also need an ambitious 2030 target for greenhouse gas emissions. The UK Government have agreed that we will seek a 50% target in the context of winning a global climate change treaty.

**Mr Peter Lilley** (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con): What is the point of us closing coal-fired power stations if Germany is opening 20 of them? What is the point of

us having a carbon tax and reducing emissions if we thereby release trading permits for other countries in Europe to emit more carbon?

**Mr Davey:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his question. He is not right about the German position, and I refer him to the April 2013 report by Pöyry, which we commissioned and which is on our website. It examines the reality of what is happening with new coal-fired power stations in Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. Some 10 new coal and lignite coal projects are under construction in Germany, because the final investment decisions on them were taken in 2005 and 2008, when there was a very different policy environment, but four have been postponed and 22 have now been abandoned, so the situation in Germany is different from the one my right hon. Friend describes.

**Ian Swales** (Redcar) (LD): Carbon emissions per capita statistics fail to recognise the effect of imports and exports on consumption. Will the Secretary of State confirm that he will not seek to meet UK targets through policies that close down our energy-intensive industries, thereby exporting jobs and importing carbon?

**Mr Davey:** My hon. Friend is right. We do not want to see carbon leakage; that would not help the climate, and it would not help our economy. That is why I agreed with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills a very generous package, working with the Chancellor, to compensate energy-intensive industries for the indirect costs of the ETS and the carbon price floor, and it is also why we have exempted energy-intensive industries from the costs of contracts for difference. We want to ensure we make progress on climate change, but we also want to ensure we keep successful businesses in the United Kingdom.

#### Energy Bills

2. **Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): What steps he is taking to help households with their energy bills. [158075]

**The Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Gregory Barker):** This coalition Government are determined to help hard-working families with the cost of living. We have a range of initiatives to help with energy bills. From the Prime Minister's proposals to get consumers on to the cheapest energy tariffs to our flagship green deal, and from the warm home discount to our promotion of collective switching and building a more competitive energy market, this Government are putting the consumer first.

**Andrew Gwynne:** The Minister must be aware that the respected think-tank the Institute for Public Policy Research has produced a report that shows that if the energy market were more competitive, bills could be reduced by at least £70 from efficiency savings alone, so why will he not get behind Labour's plans to break the dominance of the big six by ensuring that they supply energy into a pool to enable more businesses to access the market and to bring down bills for customers?

**Gregory Barker:** The hon. Gentleman will forgive us if we do not take lessons on how to widen the big six from the party that created the big six. When Labour

came to office there were 14 major participants in the energy sector; when they left office, the number had shrunk to six. We believe our radical energy market reforms that are going through the House are the way to bring in real competition.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Does the Minister agree that making bills simpler and easier to understand is a big step towards empowering consumers to allow them to make the best choices and get the best deals?

**Gregory Barker:** Absolutely. My hon. Friend is, as ever, spot on. We have been working very closely with Ofgem to ensure that consumers are not baffled by the information on their bills and that they can make informed choices. Our market reforms will make it even easier for them to get the best deal.

12. [158087] **Mr Iain McKenzie** (Inverclyde) (Lab): This House was told that the green deal would be the biggest home improvement scheme since the second world war, creating thousands of jobs and hundreds of new businesses. If that were true, why does Enact Energy, which has been in the insulation business for 20 years, cite late payments from the green deal as having put it into administration, resulting in the laying off of all its staff?

**Gregory Barker:** Obviously, we are very sorry when any business goes into administration, but I think the hon. Gentleman is being a little hasty. It is very early days for the green deal and for one business that, sadly, has gone into receivership there are dozens, if not hundreds, of new small and medium-sized enterprises that are starting up to come into the new competitive marketplace that we are creating.

**John Pugh** (Southport) (LD): What steps are being taken to stop profiteering by the National Grid, which can charge a fortune to move or change a domestic meter?

**Gregory Barker:** If my hon. Friend has real evidence of profiteering, we would love to see it. If he shares it with us, we will take steps to crack down on it.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Does the Minister agree that smart metering gives the consumer—the householder—real information on how much energy they are using? How quickly can we get smart metering into every home in Britain, hopefully along with a carbon monoxide detector that will save people's lives?

**Gregory Barker:** First, on carbon monoxide detectors, the hon. Gentleman is the champion in this House of that very important technology and I thank him for his engagement with my Department. We are working closely to ensure that the green deal will push through the roll-out of carbon monoxide detectors.

On smart meters, we now have what we believe to be the most ambitious programme in Europe, beginning in earnest in 2014 and completing by 2019. It is very exciting and very radical.

**Caroline Flint** (Don Valley) (Lab): On 12 occasions the Prime Minister has promised to force the energy companies by law to put everyone on to the cheapest tariff, but clause 121 of the Energy Bill clearly states that the power to require an energy company to change a customer's tariff applies only to people on closed tariffs. There are 25.5 million households in Britain. How many are on closed tariffs?

**Gregory Barker:** I cannot give the right hon. Lady the exact figure off the top of my head, so I will write to her on that. The Labour party is in complete denial. The Prime Minister pledged radical action to put everyone on to the cheapest tariffs for them. We have come forward with a solution and we have put it into law; the Opposition had 13 years to do that and did nothing for consumers. We are taking radical action to cut through the swathe of tariffs that they left consumers when they left office.

**Caroline Flint:** I have tabled written questions, I have asked Ofgem and now I have asked the Minister, and nobody can tell me how many people will find themselves on a better deal, let alone save money.

Let us look at another promise. On Tuesday, the Secretary of State told the House that the Energy Bill would give Ofgem the power to force energy companies to compensate consumers, something I called for in October 2011. Ofgem is undertaking 15 formal investigations with another 12 cases at informal review stage. Will the Minister confirm that even after the Energy Bill has received Royal Assent and even if there is evidence of wrongdoing in any of those cases, Ofgem will have no powers to force the companies to pay a single penny in compensation to their customers?

**Gregory Barker:** It is a big pity that the right hon. Lady first started taking an interest in these matters in 2011 and not during the 13 years for which Labour was in government when it did nothing to address those issues for the consumer. I am happy to say that our Energy Bill takes those issues into account and Ofgem will be able to take them into account as the investigations go through. This Government are putting the consumer first after 13 years of inaction from Labour.

**Mr Speaker:** Mr Edward Leigh, not here.

### Decarbonisation Target

4. **Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): What his assessment is of the potential effect on the UK wind industry of not setting a target to decarbonise the power sector by 2030. [158077]

7. **Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): What representations he has received on setting a target to decarbonise the power sector by 2030. [158081]

13. **Alison Seabeck** (Plymouth, Moor View) (Lab): What representations he has received on setting a target to decarbonise the power sector by 2030. [158089]

15. **Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): What representations he has received on setting a target to decarbonise the power sector by 2030. [158091]

**The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Mr Edward Davey):** The Government have listened to a wide range of views on the issue of setting a decarbonisation target and have legislated to set one. We fully recognise that investor certainty is essential to delivering our energy and climate goals at the least cost and have already provided very clear signals to industry about the long-term trajectory of the electricity sector; for example, through our commitment to the levy control framework, through the Energy Bill, through carbon budgets and through our commitment to ambitious long-run targets on renewables, power sector decarbonisation and carbon emission reductions.

**Chi Onwurah:** When I asked the Prime Minister yesterday to show some leadership and stand up for British business and green jobs by setting a target, he claimed that business was against it, but when the Secretary of State was asked earlier, he could not name a single business that opposed it. Can he now name a business that has thanked him for voting against the target?

**Mr Davey:** The hon. Lady needs to look at what has happened. We have drafted the legislation so that we can set a target and that has been welcomed. She should remember that when the draft Energy Bill was published and we first started to discuss electricity market reform, there were no proposals to set a power sector decarbonisation target—not from the Opposition or from any other party in this House—but I, as Secretary of State, argued in the Government to set such a target, and that is what we have done.

**Paul Blomfield:** We have very little economic growth in this country at the moment, but last year the CBI estimated that one third of the growth that there is comes from green business. To keep growing, green businesses say they need certainty about Government policy and they want a target in law to decarbonise the power sector by 2030. Why are the Government refusing to listen?

**Mr Davey:** I am afraid it is the Opposition who are refusing to listen. They should look at the Energy Bill, in which we have legislated for the power to set a decarbonisation target—the first country in the world to do so.

**Alison Sebeck:** On Tuesday, the Government said they opposed the 2030 decarbonisation target, in part on the ground that it would increase bills. If that were so, one would expect Fuel Poverty Action to agree with the Government, but it does not. Instead, it said:

“in failing to set a target for clean energy, the Government has yet again let down hard-up UK households.”

Will the Secretary of State explain his position in the light of that statement and say whether it would also apply to his long-grass target?

**Mr Davey:** I am afraid the hon. Lady has not read the Bill; she needs to go back and do some more research. The difference in the debate has been about when the target is set, not if a target is set. The new clause tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (Mr Yeo) dealt with whether it should be set in 2014; the Government have legislated to give us the power to set it

in 2016, 14 years before it needs to be met. That is an ambitious position and we are yet again leading the world.

**Diana Johnson:** On Tuesday, most Liberal Democrat MPs tore up their own party policy to join the anti-green Tories in voting down a carbon target, which would have provided the certainty needed for Siemens finally to commit to coming to Hull. Would the Government have shown greater urgency if it was about jobs in Kingston upon Thames, rather than Kingston upon Hull?

**Mr Davey:** I worry about all the Kingstons in the United Kingdom and as Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, I represent all of them. I am working extremely hard to make sure we get investment in the energy sector in this country and we are working with Siemens. The hon. Lady may be interested to know that, in fact, Siemens did not sign the most recent letter from a number of companies about this issue. In our discussions with Siemens, the issues that have come up are contracts for difference, strike prices, ports and infrastructure, and we are working with the company. The hon. Lady ought to get behind us and support us.

**Stephen Mosley (City of Chester) (Con):** One of the key ways the Government can decarbonise power generation is by increasing investment in the nuclear sector. URENCO has a base in Capenhurst in my constituency. In April, the Government announced that they were to sell their one third share in the company, and in May the Dutch Government announced that they would sell their one third share. Will my right hon. Friend update the House on the progress of the sale?

**Mr Davey:** We will give a full update in due course, but URENCO is owned by three countries—Germany, the Netherlands and the UK—and we are working closely with our partners to take the sale forward.

**Mr Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne East) (Lab):** The Secretary of State's answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah) was not satisfactory. How does he account for the dramatic decline in levels of private sector investment in the renewables sector?

**Mr Davey:** Since this Government came to power, there has been a very big increase in investment in renewables. It is true that in the past few months the investment has not continued at the rate that we have seen. Why is that? Because people are waiting for the draft strike prices for contracts for difference for renewables, which we will publish next month. We are making real progress on our electricity market reform, and I am delighted to remind the House that on Tuesday this House voted for the Energy Bill on Third Reading by 396 votes to 8. That shows that we have cross-party support for our reforms and we are taking them forward.

### Mid-Wales Connection Project

5. **Glyn Davies (Montgomeryshire) (Con):** What assessment he has made of the level of support for onshore wind in those areas affected by the mid-Wales connection project. [158079]

**The Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Michael Fallon):** Financial support for onshore wind from 2013 to 2017 was reduced by 10% from 1 April 2013. I hope my hon. Friend will welcome this morning's announcement that local people will now have more control over wind farm developments in their area. They will be consulted earlier and they will have more say against turbines that are poorly sited or inadequately justified.

**Glyn Davies:** Since power to decide large onshore wind farms—those over 50 MW—is not devolved to the Welsh Government, will my right hon. Friend reassure me that the changes to planning policy that will be announced this morning will apply to the wind farms that the mid-Wales connection is being built to accommodate?

**Michael Fallon:** I am sure my hon. Friend will understand that I cannot comment on any specific wind farm proposal that is subject to the local planning authority and potentially to the Planning Inspectorate and Ministers, but as he will shortly hear in more detail from the unstarred question which I think you have allowed, Mr Speaker, the planning guidance is to be clarified to ensure that the visual impact of turbines, the cumulative impact of turbines and local factors are taken more clearly into account before consent is given.

**Mr Speaker:** The Minister got the U right, but the U is not for unstarred; it is for urgent.

**Duncan Hames (Chippenham) (LD):** I welcome local authorities being allowed to make their own decisions on the merits of wind turbine applications. Does the Minister agree that setting excessive minimum separation distances, as proposed in a private Member's Bill in the House of Lords last year, or more recently by Wiltshire council, only serves to deny local communities the chance to have their say?

**Michael Fallon:** I am not persuaded that minimum distances are the answer, because it is important to take into account the factors that apply to every specific application and these things should be judged locally and individually on a case-by-case basis. However, in the clearer planning guidance that is being issued today it is the visual impact as much as the siting of the turbines that will now be taken more fully into account.

### Green Investment

6. **Pauline Latham (Mid Derbyshire) (Con):** What steps he is taking to encourage green investment.  
[158080]

**The Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Gregory Barker):** The coalition is committed to growing the green economy. An unprecedented £29 billion of new investment has been announced in renewable energy alone since 2010. We are driving further green investment through the Energy Bill, the green deal and the energy company obligation, the green investment bank, our carbon capture and storage competition, the reformed feed-in tariff, the renewable heat incentive, and our support for low-carbon research and innovation.

**Pauline Latham:** I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his article in *The Daily Telegraph* today showing that we are working closely with Sweden on these matters. What assessment has he made of the proposed EU anti-dumping tariffs on the Chinese solar PVs?

**Gregory Barker:** My hon. Friend is right. We are very concerned by the impact of EU tariffs on the UK solar industry. In the past three years we have added about 2.5 GW of solar here in the UK. We are making great progress but that could be jeopardised if those tariffs go ahead. I have personally been to Brussels with a number of key stakeholders from the UK solar industry to lobby the Commission, and we will continue to fight on for open borders and for the interests of the UK renewables industry.

**Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab):** Will the Minister explain why the UK has fallen to seventh in the world for investment in clean energy since the Government came to power?

**Gregory Barker:** There are a number of surveys, but the Ernst and Young survey shows that the UK is now the fifth most attractive place for renewables investment and deployment, up one place on last year.

**Andrew George (St Ives) (LD):** The announcement by the Scottish Government of the relaunch of the marine renewables commercialisation fund, while welcome, has, as my right hon. Friend knows, created an imbalance between that and Wave Hub in west Cornwall. What can the Government do to ensure that the Scottish Government and this Government work in partnership on marine renewables?

**Gregory Barker:** As my hon. Friend knows, I am a keen champion of UK-wide marine energy. Under this coalition, we have opened a marine energy park in the south-west, and also in the waters off the north of Scotland. It is vital that we develop the marine resource right the way around the British Isles. However, I take on board the point raised by my hon. Friend, who is a big champion of marine energy in the south-west, and I will be happy to meet him to discuss it further.

**Katy Clark (North Ayrshire and Arran) (Lab):** Why does research by Bloomberg New Energy Finance show that investment in renewables has more than halved since this Government came to power?

**Gregory Barker:** Actually, as I said, an unprecedented sum of over £29 billion has been invested in renewables since the coalition came to power. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, there has been a slight tailing off in recent months, but that is to be expected, just as we expect a real acceleration once the strike price is announced and the Energy Bill is enacted.

**Mr Speaker:** Mr Nuttall, are you still seeking to trouble the scorers?

**Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con):** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I want to pursue further the EU's imposition of tariffs. Perhaps the Minister could explain how on earth this will do anything to make it easier for people, if they

wish, to install solar panels, and how on earth it will do anything to make it cheaper for those struggling to pay their energy bills.

**Gregory Barker:** My hon. Friend and I are absolutely on the same page on this matter. That is why I am fighting this EU proposal very hard. It is not just me; 18 other member states take a similar view to us. We are determined to continue to push the EU Commission to come to a sensible agreement with China and to make sure that the EU stands for free trade and open borders.

**Tom Greatrex (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op):** One significant form of low-carbon green investment that the Secretary of State spoke about during his speech to the Met Office on Monday is carbon capture and storage. His predecessor told the House in October 2011, when Scottish Power pulled out of the Longannet project, that he guaranteed that there would be no Treasury backsliding on the capital funds for CCS demonstrator projects in the competition. Will the Minister confirm whether that remains the case—yes or no—and whether the £1 billion is still available?

**Gregory Barker:** Yes, it does.

**Tom Greatrex:** I am grateful for that answer, and I am sure that those in the industry who will be slightly disconcerted by the tenor of some of the remarks by the Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the right hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Michael Fallon), during the passage of the Energy Bill will be gratified as well. However, may I press the Minister a little further? Given that the Cabinet Office project assessment review that I obtained last year said that in the current comprehensive spending review only £200 million was available, will the remainder of the £1 billion be available for the next CSR period? Can he confirm that whatever else he has given up in his less grand bargain with the Treasury on DECC's budget, that money is safeguarded for CCS in the next CSR period?

**Gregory Barker:** I am very happy to scotch the hon. Gentleman's baseless scaremongering and political point-scoring. The fact of the matter is that we are going forward with the CCS programme, and it is going to be successful, unlike Labour's failed attempts at CCS. We have two preferred bidders in place, and it is backed by £1 billion, putting the UK at the front of the global race for carbon capture and storage.

### Fuel Poverty

8. **Julie Hilling (Bolton West) (Lab):** What recent assessment he has made of the likely level of future fuel poverty in the UK. [158082]

9. **Mark Lazarowicz (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op):** Whether he plans to take further steps to reduce the level of fuel poverty in the UK. [158084]

11. **Fiona O'Donnell (East Lothian) (Lab):** What recent assessment he has made of the likely level of future fuel poverty in the UK. [158086]

**The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Mr Edward Davey):** Recently published statistics show a modest fall in fuel poverty in 2011 compared with 2010, from 4.75 million UK households to 4.5 million UK households. This is welcome, but we are determined to do more. Our comprehensive policy package includes targeted energy efficiency measures under the green deal and the energy company obligation, direct bill rebates under the warm home discount and, of course, measures through the Energy Bill to back Ofgem's proposals to simplify the market.

**Julie Hilling:** Under the previous Labour Government, the number of people in fuel poverty fell by 1.75 million. In the past two years, the number of households in fuel poverty has gone up from one in five to one in four. When next year's figures come out, will the number of people in fuel poverty be higher or lower than when Labour left office?

**Mr Davey:** The hon. Lady will know that during the previous Parliament, when Labour was in office, fuel poverty grew in every single year and that, according to the latest figures, it has now gone down. In many ways this is a rather odd debate. The Government commissioned Professor Hills to review how we measure fuel poverty and he has come up with proposals that have gained wide-scale acceptance. We have consulted on them and will respond shortly to that consultation. We believe that the old measurements of fuel poverty, which are still in use, need radical reform so that we can better target fuel poverty policy.

**Mark Lazarowicz:** The problem with Government measures such as putting the consumer on to the cheapest tariff—if that ever happens—is that they will not make much difference if the tariff prices themselves and energy prices are high. The main beneficiaries of the green deal are not people on low incomes, but people who will be able to take up the arrangements. What is the Secretary of State doing to help people on low incomes who face high energy bills now, particularly given the high fuel prices over the past few months?

**Mr Davey:** We have a whole range of measures. For a start, the warm home discount helps more than 2 million low-income people, including 1 million of the poorest pensioners, by taking £130 off their bill directly. Schemes such as collective switching mean that we are helping people club together to exercise power in the market to get better rates. The simplification of tariffs proposed by Ofgem will mean greater competition and choice for people. We have a whole range of measures. On energy efficiency, the energy company obligation, through the affordable warmth and carbon saving communities schemes, is helping people in fuel poverty.

**Fiona O'Donnell:** The Secretary of State clearly thinks he is doing a great job on fuel poverty. In which case, why does his own Department's public attitudes survey show that concern about energy bills has risen from 49% last year to 59% this year? Is not this another example of a Government who are out of touch with ordinary people?

**Mr Davey:** I am extremely concerned by energy bills. We need to do as much as we possibly can and some of our new policies will help people. I say to the Labour party that it is this coalition Government who are reforming tariffs to take away the confusion and complexity that the previous Government failed to tackle, who are looking into collective switching to help people get a better deal from energy companies, and who are getting more competition in our energy market. We are taking a whole range of measures to help consumers.

**Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab):** Despite the initiatives that the Secretary of State has referred to, in the real world bills are going up and the energy companies are making massive profits. Thousands of my constituents are having difficulties paying their bills. When did the Secretary of State last meet the energy companies, and did he raise with them the amount of profit they are making and what was their answer?

**Mr Davey:** I think I met the big six together in one group last month. I will have to clarify the date on which we spoke. We discussed a number of issues. I made it clear to them that competition and consumer service are critical. One of the best ways to make sure that companies make reasonable profits is through healthy competition.

### Energy Efficiency

10. **David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con):** What steps he is taking to ensure the UK leads the way in energy efficiency. [158085]

**The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Mr Edward Davey):** This Government's November energy efficiency strategy clearly sets out the importance of reducing our energy demand and how the UK has an opportunity to lead the world in improving its energy efficiency. Game-changing initiatives such as the green deal, electricity demand reduction and the roll-out of smart meters are central to realising this opportunity.

**David Rutley:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that helping to improve home insulation is vital when helping to take people out of fuel poverty? What is this Government's energy company obligation doing to help vulnerable and lower-income families in that vital task?

**Mr Davey:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Energy prices have gone up massively on global markets and we as a Government need to cushion people from those rising prices by helping them with energy efficiency, and through the green deal and ECO we are doing just that. The affordable warmth component of ECO is already making a major difference for people in fuel poverty and helping to tackle it.

**Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op):** I welcome the Secretary of State's saying that he wants to support people, but there has been a 97% plummet in the number of cavity wall insulation installations, one in four insulation workers has lost their job since December and, according to industry reports, just three people are paying back a green deal loan on their electricity bill. When is he going to make the green deal a good deal, so that the ambition that we all share is achieved?

**Mr Davey:** It is already a good deal. I understand the issue in the cavity wall insulation market, but the hon. Lady will understand that there are very few cavity walls left to fill. The real issue in the building fabric of the nation is solid walls. There are 7 million solid walls that are yet to be treated for energy efficiency. The last Government did almost nothing to tackle that. The green deal and ECO will do something about it. That is where the biggest wins are available and we are proud of what we are doing.

### Green Deal

14. **Damian Hinds (East Hampshire) (Con):** What recent progress he has made on the roll-out of the green deal. [158090]

**The Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Gregory Barker):** The coalition is committed to helping consumers up and down the UK reduce their energy bills by driving energy efficiency. The green deal went live on time, as planned, on Monday 28 January. By the end of April, more than 18,000 assessments had been carried out. Later this month, we will publish data on the number of green deal plans and a breakdown of measures installed through the green deal and ECO.

**Damian Hinds:** It is encouraging to hear of so many assessments, but how many providers does the Minister anticipate will be offering plans by the end of the year?

**Gregory Barker:** My hon. Friend is right that the number of companies that are able to offer finance is key. I am extremely encouraged that four companies are already writing plans. The Green Deal Finance Company anticipates that another eight companies will start this month and that a further 20 will begin to write plans by the end of July. We think that about 50-plus companies will offer finance by the end of the year. Ultimately, when to start writing plans is a commercial decision for each company because the green deal is primarily a private sector market that is being created by this Government.

### Shale Gas

16. **Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con):** What progress the Government has made on facilitating exploration of UK shale gas reserves. [158093]

**The Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Michael Fallon):** We have strengthened the regulatory framework to protect the environment and to ensure that hydraulic fracturing is done properly and safely. We want to encourage shale exploration. That is why we have announced fiscal incentives for developers and why we are working on a package of community benefits, such as discounts on bills for residents in drilling areas.

**Mr Jones:** Given today's announcement about community benefits for onshore wind, will my right hon. Friend elaborate on what community benefits the communities that host shale gas reserves may expect if such exploration goes ahead?



**Michael Fallon:** We are discussing that matter with the industry and will consult on more specific proposals shortly. It is important that residents who suffer disruption in areas where there is drilling see benefits from it, either for their local community through grants or expenditure, or, better still, through discounts on their bills, which could be significant.

#### Home Energy Efficiency (Milton Keynes)

17. **Iain Stewart** (Milton Keynes South) (Con): When he next plans to visit home energy efficiency schemes in Milton Keynes. [158094]

**The Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Gregory Barker):** I was delighted to visit Milton Keynes in July last year, when I was pleased to launch new guidance for local authorities under the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 and to visit, with my hon. Friend, the Lakes estate retrofit project, which is improving homes and cutting energy bills for his constituents.

**Iain Stewart:** As part of the pioneer places project in Milton Keynes, the National Energy Foundation has engaged with 30 local traders to promote the benefits of becoming green deal installers. What plans does my right hon. Friend have to roll out that scheme nationally?

**Gregory Barker:** My hon. Friend has done a huge amount in the Milton Keynes area to work with small and medium-sized enterprises and traders in the supply chain. Nationally, we have provided more than £2 million to support the training of 1,000 go-early green deal assessors and 1,000 advisers as part of our support for the developing market. Since last autumn, DECC has organised a series of 12 roadshows, which have reached more than 1,600 companies across the country. My team has worked most recently with Energy UK to deliver a further regional roadshow programme. It is early days for the green deal, but the prospects are exciting.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): Will the Minister agree to my hon. Friend's request to go to Milton Keynes, because he could then pop down the road to Wellingborough to meet councillors and constituents who are worried about applications for wind farms that, although not in the constituency, would affect them? That would be a great opportunity to explain our new policy.

**Gregory Barker:** I would be delighted to return to Milton Keynes, and to visit the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone), particularly if there is an opportunity to compare notes with Mrs Bone.

#### Off Grid Gas

18. **Guy Opperman** (Hexham) (Con): With reference to the findings of the all-party parliamentary group on off-gas grid, what plans he has to help residents living off the gas grid. [158095]

**The Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Michael Fallon):** I am grateful to the all-party group on off-gas grid for its informative report. I chaired a round table in May with colleagues from that group,

consumer groups, local government and industry, as a result of which a better consumer code of practice is being circulated by the Federation of Petroleum Suppliers. Fuel Poverty Action is developing recommendations on information sharing and vulnerable customers, and Ofgem is considering connecting electricity and gas priority service registers to other markets, including heating oil.

**Guy Opperman** (Hexham) (Con): I thank the Minister for that answer and welcome the developments that have been made as the all-party group continues its good work. Will the Minister review the progress that has been made and meet the group again so that further representations can be made and we keep the providers of that type of power up to speed?

**Michael Fallon:** I reassure my hon. Friend that the round table I was privileged to chair was not a one-off event and I shall be organising a further meeting on 11 September to chase up progress. I am happy to meet specifically the all-party group, as well as continuing to chair the round table.

#### Topical Questions

T1. [158097] **Tom Blenkinsop** (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Lab): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Mr Edward Davey):** Since my Department's last question time, the remaining stages of the Energy Bill have been completed and approved by this House by 396 votes to 8. The Bill has been introduced into the other place as we make further progress to build the world's first ever low-carbon electricity market.

For consumers, I published the Government's response to the discussion document, "Ensuring a better deal for energy consumers", which confirmed the Government's backing for Ofgem's market reforms that are designed to improve competition in retail markets and help consumers. Today, along with the Department for Communities and Local Government, we have published the Government's decisions on onshore wind to give communities a greater say, setting out an industry-proposed fivefold increase in benefits for communities in England, and keeping financial support for onshore wind at the rate of 0.9 renewables obligation certificates.

**Tom Blenkinsop:** Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland has more than 7,000 households living in fuel poverty, and since this Government came to power the energy bill of the average family has leapt by more than £300 a year. Will the Minister please tell the House why the Government have halved support for people in fuel poverty while giving millionaires a tax break?

**Mr Davey:** We have not halved fuel support and will increase it over the lifetime of the spending review. We are changing and reforming it to ensure that it is more effective, which the hon. Gentleman ought to support.

T2. [158098] **Chris White** (Warwick and Leamington) (Con): One way we can reduce the cost of heating and carbon emissions is through the use of biomass boilers, which can save households hundreds of pounds each

year. The Government have a target of installing 1 million biomass boilers in the UK by 2030, but some are concerned that the target might not be met. Will the Minister outline what steps are being taken to achieve the target, and meet businesses such as Baxi UK in my constituency to discuss the issue?

**The Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Gregory Barker):** I know that my hon. Friend does a huge amount for businesses in his constituency, and I would be happy to meet him, Baxi UK, and representatives of the industry in my Department. The coalition Government are committed to delivering not just cheaper bills but cleaner energy, and biomass boilers are part of that strategy. The good news is that we have recently announced that renewable heat payment vouchers for biomass will increase to £2,000 until March 2014, and later this summer we will provide details for the scheme that we will be launching for domestic renewable heat initiatives next spring.

**Caroline Flint (Don Valley) (Lab):** Apparently, more than 5 million homes could still benefit from cavity wall insulation, so there is still a lot of work that could be done.

The Government have claimed it is too early to set a decarbonisation target for 2030, but next month they will publish their electricity market reform delivery plan, which will determine our energy mix and its carbon intensity. In the absence of a legally binding decarbonisation target, will the Secretary of State at least confirm that his long overdue delivery plan will be in line with our legally binding carbon budgets, or will the Government be rewriting the fourth carbon budget?

**Mr Davey:** No, the plan will be in line with our legally binding obligations. As I have explained to the House, before we set the decarbonisation target in 2016 we will give National Grid guidance on setting the EMR delivery plan to ensure that it is on path to meet our decarbonisation targets in the least-cost way.

T3. [158100] **Mr Mark Spencer (Sherwood) (Con):** The Minister will be aware that I represent Thoresby colliery in my constituency, one of the most efficient and profitable pits in the country. Is he optimistic for the future of coal mining in Nottinghamshire, and does he remember my invitation to visit?

**Michael Fallon:** I would be delighted to visit my hon. Friend's constituency. He will know that deep-mine coal in this country has suffered a number of setbacks this year, including the serious fire at Daw Mill colliery. I assure him that my officials continue to work with the company to do our best to ensure its continued viability. We are also in touch with the situation in Scotland to ensure that everything possible can be done to replace some of the jobs that were lost when the company there went into liquidation.

T4. [158103] **Sheila Gilmore (Edinburgh East) (Lab):** On some energy issues, such as setting a date for a decarbonisation target, the Government appear to be extremely slow, but on others, such as the exploitation of shale gas, they want to rush ahead at great speed without looking at environmental and safety considerations.

Will the Secretary of State commit to looking properly at those considerations before any extraction takes place?

**Mr Davey:** In 2016, we will be the first country to set a decarbonisation target, so the idea that we are being slow on that is preposterous. On shale gas, we are behind other countries—she may have noticed that the US has already gone into it. We are determined to see whether this country can benefit from shale gas, but we will ensure that we protect the environment and take the public with us. That is the right way to get the benefits for the country that shale gas might well offer.

T6. [158105] **Glyn Davies (Montgomeryshire) (Con):** I congratulate my right hon. Friend on today's announcement that local opinion will no longer be trumped at the planning stage by national policy. However, everyone in my constituency wants to know whether that applies to the six large wind farm applications, over which planning power is not devolved, and which are currently being heard at the UK's largest ever public inquiry, which started yesterday. Everybody in my constituency is desperate to know whether those applications are subject to the new policy.

**Mr Davey:** My hon. Friend will know that the public inquiry has started, and that it would be inappropriate for a Minister to comment on it. I am sorry, but I cannot give him the answer he looks for.

T5. [158104] **Katy Clark (North Ayrshire and Arran) (Lab):** Will the Secretary of State explain why, at the same time as energy bills are soaring, research from Energy Bill Revolution and the Association for the Conservation of Energy shows that help for people most in need is falling?

**Mr Davey:** I have not seen the research to which the hon. Lady refers. Given that we have introduced the warm home discount, which targets some of the poorest households in our country, taking £130 directly of their bills, I would be surprised by such findings. I reassure her and the House that the Government are not complacent on the challenge of fuel poverty. We know we need to do as much as possible, which is why we commissioned Professor Hills, why we consulted on many of his proposals, and why we will respond. We will shortly produce a framework on fuel poverty and produce a strategy by the end of the year. The Government believe that that should be a high priority.

T7. [158106] **Mr Dominic Raab (Esher and Walton) (Con):** When will the British Geological Survey review of shale gas reserves be published? Given that IGas recently found that there are 20 times the previous estimates of reserves, does the Minister agree that shale represents a major strategic advantage for Britain, in meeting energy demand and decarbonisation?

**Michael Fallon:** I can confirm to my hon. Friend that the BGS report will be published before the summer recess. There have been a number of optimistic estimates of the amount of shale in the UK. Shale clearly has enormous potential. It would therefore be irresponsible of us not to encourage exploration to see exactly what is down there.

**Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): The Teesside Low Carbon consortium, comprising some of the country's top companies and experts, was rightly disappointed when its innovative project for capturing and storing the carbon created by our energy intensive industries was rejected by the Government. We know that the project is on the reserve list, but is there any real hope that the project, which would take huge amounts of carbon out of the atmosphere, and which has the potential to drive thousands of jobs in an area where unemployment is as high as 10%, will receive financial and other support from the Government to make it a reality?

**Michael Fallon:** Let me be clear: this project was not rejected but placed on the reserve list. We are working with our two preferred bidders to take forward the carbon capture and storage competition. Should one of the two bidders drop out, we will of course look again at the situation.

**Nigel Adams** (Selby and Ainsty) (Con): Following on from the question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr Spencer), Kellingley colliery in my constituency is a profitable, high-performing deep coal mine with 700 highly skilled employees. Will the Minister update the House on what is being done to ensure its viability?

**Michael Fallon:** I think my hon. Friend knows that we have been working flat out to help the company to restructure since the fire at Daw Mill. That has involved intensive work with a number of other Government bodies. I understand how frustrating it is for him and, in particular, for those who work in the colliery not to have had an announcement yet, but I am hopeful that we will see progress in the next few days.

**John Cryer** (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): Further to that question, the Minister will know that UK Coal has applied for a loan from the Government that would be paid back when the insurance comes through from the Daw Mill fire. What is happening with that loan?

**Michael Fallon:** The position is that insurance payments are now coming through to the company, so the financial situation is not quite as the hon. Gentleman describes it. I want to assure him that the Government are doing everything they possibly can to safeguard the financial future of the two collieries, and to assist the company in necessary restructuring following the disastrous fire at Daw Mill earlier this year.

**Tessa Munt** (Wells) (LD): Many village halls, such as the one in East Brent in my patch, have applied for Big Lottery awards for all funding to install PV solar panels and use feed-in tariffs as an invaluable source of income to make repayments on loans to complete their projects. It is a feature of the lottery that it is funded not by Government but by individuals, and that that grant funding is made completely independent of government, as is stated on its website and in its literature. Ofgem seems to have decided in February 2013 that lottery funding is—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. It is my ambition in this Parliament to educate the hon. Lady that the second sentence should usually end with a question mark. That is what we want.

**Tessa Munt:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. Ofgem has decided that this is state aid—[*Laughter.*]

**Mr Speaker:** It's not working.

**Tessa Munt:** It is, Sir. I must explain myself. Will the Secretary of State investigate Ofgem's administration of the scheme and the lack of information provided to everybody involved, so that it reverses its decision to categorise lottery money as state aid?

**Mr Davey:** My hon. Friend is a doughty campaigner for her constituents in villages, helping them with community halls and so on. I am aware of this issue—it is not just grants from the lottery, but grants from elsewhere in government that prevent installation of micro-technology receiving feed-in tariffs under the Ofgem scheme. This matter has been raised by a number of hon. Members and I hope we are able to look at it in due course.

**Mr Speaker:** The Secretary of State does not have to compete with Back Benchers. There is no obligation for the answer to be as long as the question.

**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): Earlier, the Minister mentioned that the Government's policies would result in energy bills being about 7% lower, but is that not correct only if people go out and buy new energy-efficient TVs, washing machines, dishwashers and combi gas boilers, and that if people do not their bills will actually be higher under this Government?

**Mr Davey:** I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is wrong. The methodology of the bills and prices report includes examining how often average households replace these types of goods—it is statistically robust.

**Julian Smith** (Skipton and Ripon) (Con): I thank the Government for listening on wind. Communities across north Yorkshire will be delighted by this decision. The Minister of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Michael Fallon), is already popular in north Yorkshire, but I am sure that they would join me in wanting to give him a collective hug to thank him for this decision.

**Michael Fallon:** I am married to a girl from Yorkshire, but I think that a further hug would probably not be appropriate.

It is important that communities understand that they will now have more say against developments that are inappropriate and not properly justified. Too many communities have felt under siege from wholly inappropriate applications, and this measure will now bring them much-needed and long-awaited relief.

**Cathy Jamieson** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister referred to the coal industry in Scotland. I am sure he knows of the devastation in my constituency and in that of my neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Sandra Osborne). What recent discussions have taken place with the Scottish Government to address the serious environmental consequences of restoration work not going ahead?

**Michael Fallon:** We are in touch with the Scottish Government. I have ensured that an official from my Department attends meetings of the taskforce set up following the collapse of the Scottish company. We will learn lessons from what has happened in Scotland, and if the British Government can help, of course we will.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend explain what role he sees the energy efficiency strategy playing in reducing demand for energy?

**Gregory Barker:** My hon. Friend will know that earlier this year the Prime Minister launched our first-ever national energy efficiency mission. We are determined always to pursue the cheapest option, including where the cheapest option is saving energy rather than building new plant, but we will do that in a way that is good for consumers and gives us lower bills as well as cleaner energy.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. If we are to accommodate the several remaining colleagues, very short answers will be required.

**Derek Twigg** (Halton) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State have another go at answering my earlier question? He said he met the energy companies last month. Let me put the question this way: when he met them, did he raise any concerns about the level of profits they were making, and, if so, what did they say?

**Mr Davey:** I do not think that profits were part of a specific conversation. This issue is about the whole market: how we ensure more competition and more investment and how we protect consumers from rising global prices by ensuring that they help us deal with energy efficiency.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): In order to save money and improve Government efficiency, would the excellent Secretary of State agree to close his Department and transfer its responsibilities to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills? He, then, could become the Business Secretary, freeing up the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), to concentrate on his campaign to become the next leader of the Liberal Democrats. It would be a win, win situation for everyone.

**Mr Davey:** You will know, Mr Speaker, that the Liberal Democrats always listen to the hon. Gentleman's advice, because it is always meant as a helpful contribution. I can tell him, however, that my right hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Michael Fallon) is a fantastic

Minister of State and does a brilliant job not only in my Department, but in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, so we are already very well connected.

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): The Secretary of State told me earlier that he was concerned about all Kingstons in this country. On that basis, would he agree to meet me and a delegation from Kingston upon Hull to discuss what more the coalition Government can do to support Siemens coming to Hull?

**Mr Davey:** Yes.

**Duncan Hames** (Chippenham) (LD): I welcome the Minister's support for biomass boilers, but the renewable heat incentive was announced in October 2010. Why is it not possible to open up the domestic scheme for payment before spring 2014?

**Gregory Barker:** It has been much more challenging than we anticipated, not least because when we entered government we found that the previous Government had done absolutely no work on this whatsoever. This is the first renewable heat scheme of its type in the world, and heat is much more difficult to quantify and value than exporting electricity, but it is good news. We prioritised industrial heat and are now moving on to domestic heat, and I am looking forward to the scheme's launch this spring.

**Julie Hilling** (Bolton West) (Lab): The Minister claims that the energy company obligation will help people in fuel poverty, but is it not true that nearly 60% of the funding will go to households that can already afford to pay, not to those people in fuel poverty?

**Gregory Barker:** It is anticipated that more than £500 million of the ECO funding will go directly to the most vulnerable and those who need it most, but the balance of the energy company obligation is intended to support roll-outs street by street. It was the specific nature of previous Government schemes under Labour that made them so bureaucratic and ineffective. Our view is that we ultimately need to focus on properties, not just the individuals who live in them.

**Miss Anne McIntosh** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): The co-firing of biomass at power stations such as Drax brings enormous opportunities to growers and farmers in Thirsk and Malton, but will the Minister or Secretary of State assure the House that unfair subsidies to imported wood chip are not undermining our home-grown produce?

**Mr Davey:** The hon. Lady will know that our schemes apply to all companies, wherever they are from. We need to ensure that we invest in renewables such as biomass, but in a way that meets our sustainability criteria and creates a proper, fair market.

## Onshore Wind (Planning Policy)

10.30 am

**Chris Heaton-Harris** (Daventry) (Con) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Minister for Housing if he will make a statement on planning policy in relation to onshore wind.

**The Minister for Housing (Mr Mark Prisk)**: The coalition agreement pledged to decentralise power to local people. We are committed to giving local people far more ability to shape the places in which they live. Through a series of reforms, this coalition Government are making the planning process more accessible to local communities. Planning works best when communities themselves have the opportunity to influence the decisions that affect their lives. However, current planning decisions on onshore wind do not always reflect a locally led planning system.

Following a wide range of representations, including the letter of 30 January 2012 to the Prime Minister from 100 hon. Members, and in light of the Department of Energy and Climate Change's call for evidence, it has become clear that action is needed to deliver the balance expected by the national planning policy framework. We need to ensure that protecting the local environment is properly considered alongside the broader issues of protecting the global environment. Today my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change has published the response to his call for evidence on onshore wind and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government is publishing a written ministerial statement that will set out a number of key changes that I know the House will wish to consider. Let me set out the key elements for the benefit of the House and my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris).

First, we want to strengthen the voice of local people. The submissions to the call for evidence have highlighted the benefits of good quality pre-application discussions for onshore wind development and the improved outcomes they can have for local communities. We will amend secondary legislation to make pre-application consultation with local communities compulsory for the more significant onshore wind applications. This will ensure that community engagement takes place at an earlier stage and may assist in improving the quality of proposed onshore wind development. It will also complement the community benefits proposals announced by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change.

Secondly, on better planning guidance, the national planning policy framework we published last year includes strong protections for the natural and historic environment. However, I know that local communities have genuine concerns that insufficient weight is being given to environmental considerations such as landscape, amenity or heritage. We need to ensure that decisions get the environmental balance right, in line with the framework, and that any adverse impact from a wind farm development is addressed satisfactorily.

We have been equally clear that this means facilitating sustainable development in suitable locations. Put simply, meeting our energy goals should not be used to justify the wrong development in the wrong location. We are looking to local councils to include in their local plans

policies that ensure that adverse impacts from wind farm developments, including cumulative landscape and visual impact, are addressed satisfactorily. Where councils have identified areas suitable for onshore wind, they should not feel they have to give permission for speculative applications outside those areas when they judge the impact to be unacceptable.

To help to ensure that planning decisions reflect the balance in the framework, my Department will shortly issue new planning practice guidance to assist local councils and planning inspectors in their consideration of local plans and individual applications. Briefly, the guidance will set out, first, that the need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities. Secondly, decisions should take into account the cumulative impact of wind turbines and properly reflect the increasing impact on the landscape and local amenity. Thirdly, local topography should be a factor in assessing whether wind turbines have a damaging impact on the landscape. Fourthly, great care should be taken to ensure that heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting.

We will be writing to the Planning Inspectorate and to all councils to flag up the new guidance and its operation. This Government firmly believe that renewables have an important role to play in a balanced energy policy. However, as a localist Government, we also firmly believe that planning works best when local people are able to shape their local environment.

**Chris Heaton-Harris**: Thank you for granting this urgent question, Mr Speaker. I should like to draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

I thank the Minister for his reply, but it is a shame that this was not announced to the House first. Should the Department of Energy and Climate Change have been briefing the media on this announcement 24 hours before it was announced in this place, especially when its planning element comes from the Department for Communities and Local Government and is time-sensitive and commercially significant? What will be the impact of the policy change on proposed developments that are currently in the planning process, particularly those that are in the planning appeals system and whose appeal has been concluded but the result is not yet known? Will the proposed change be retrospective for schemes that have been granted planning permission against the wishes of the local communities or councils, but whose construction has not yet started?

For too long, developers have ridden roughshod over the views of local communities and local councils on inappropriately sited wind turbines. Can the Minister elaborate on how the new policy will be communicated to the Planning Inspectorate and local planning authorities, and on the timeline that will be involved?

There might have been some confusion within Government Departments about these matters, but I wholeheartedly welcome the planning changes. I really believe that this could be the beginning of the end of unwanted onshore wind farm development in England, and I welcome the Minister's statement.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. This policy announcement should of course first have been made in this Chamber through an oral statement offered by the Government. Right hon. and hon. Members will appreciate that it was precisely because that offer was not made, which it should have been, that I granted the urgent question from the hon. Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris). We look forward of course to the Minister's reply.

**Mr Prisk:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. The two written ministerial statements are important, but the Government will always note what you have to say on these matters. That is important in this regard.

I welcome my hon. Friend's wholehearted support for these important changes. I know that he has been an ardent campaigner on these matters, and I very much respect that. It is important that constituency Members of Parliament should feel able to do that. He asked which proposals would be affected by the changes. I must be careful not to mention any specific named applications, but when something has been determined at local level, we clearly cannot reopen it. The changes will not be retrospective. When something is in the planning application system but no decision has been made, local planners and the planning inspectors will now have to give clear consideration—as they would in any other circumstances—to this guidance. That will give comfort not only to Members of the House but to many of the constituents they represent.

**Roberta Blackman-Woods** (City of Durham) (Lab): I am grateful to you for your ruling, Mr Speaker. Once again we have had to learn the details of a Government policy from the press rather than from a statement to the House.

We know that planning approvals for wind farms in England have fallen from about 70% of applications in 2008 to 35% in 2012, which raises the question of why this guidance is being introduced now. We accept that there are clearly locations in which it is inappropriate to put wind turbines, and we welcome the greater incentives that will be provided to local communities that accept wind farm developments. Pre-application discussions with communities are clearly a good thing, and should be happening in any case, but can the Minister tell us what the threshold will be for the more significant applications that will trigger compulsory consultation, and do the Government intend to make the same changes for fracking planning applications?

It has been reported that local communities will, in effect, be given a veto over new wind farm planning applications. A senior Conservative source is quoted in the newspapers as saying:

“This is a bomb proof set of safeguards”.

That is not, however, what it says in the written ministerial statement, and neither did the Minister say that in his reply. Can he therefore tell us what will in fact be the case? Will there be a veto: yes or no? If so, how exactly will this power of veto operate?

Reference has also been made to significant local opposition. How will this be assessed and who will decide whether it is significant? Will local authorities still finally determine the planning applications? What will be the position in local communities where a local plan has not yet been drawn up or approved by the Planning Inspectorate?

Do the Government have any plans to change the process for deciding on planning applications for wind farms generating more than 50 MW?

As we know, onshore wind is the cheapest form of renewable energy, so what assessment have the Government made of the likely impact of these changes on our carbon budgets and on the cost of electricity for consumers in general?

**Mr Prisk:** The hon. Lady raised a number of points, and she will forgive me if I say that the details on carbon emissions are not within the bounds of the planning decision, which is what this urgent question is about.

Let me deal with two particular issues that the hon. Lady raised. She rightly raised the question of what a “more significant” development is. This will depend on a number of issues. As hon. Members may understand, it may be about the scale and number of turbines, but it could also be about the height, size and massing of them. Clearly, we do not want to ensnare someone who is thinking of having a small turbine in the back garden. That is not the purpose of the approach; this will be set out clearly in the secondary legislation.

The hon. Lady then raised a broader point about retrospectivity. She did so quite imaginatively, I thought, in a number of different ways. Perhaps I can reiterate the point. Where a determination has been made, there will not be a retrospective change, but where an application is in the system, we expect the local planning officers and, if the case is in appeal, the inspectors themselves to give clear and careful consideration to the issue, in the knowledge that it has the potential to be a “material consideration”, which she will obviously understand has a legal implication as well.

The purpose behind this approach is very clear, but I am not sure that the hon. Lady was. We believe in making sure that local communities have a clear voice, and we want the balance between the global environmental issues and the local environmental issues to be made clear. The policy has been clear; sadly, as many hon. Members have found, it has not been applied appropriately on the ground. We intend to make sure that planning inspectors and the planners themselves on the ground are able to do so.

**Mr Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): In congratulating my hon. Friend on this statement, may I ask whether he will extend the principles he has enunciated to offshore wind farms, where exactly the same principles apply, particularly in the case of the much-despised proposal for an offshore wind farm in Christchurch bay?

**Mr Prisk:** My hon. Friend is always adept at tempting Ministers, but I think I shall keep my feet on dry land.

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab): May I return to a point the Minister did not answer a minute ago? Will he confirm that this change does not give a veto to local authorities and local communities over all wind farm applications? Will he confirm that what he has done is to put into the guidance matters to which the local authorities will now have to have regard in considering applications? These are in fact matters to

which local authorities currently can have regard, and to which the best local authorities will already have regard?

**Mr Prisk:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, which is that the policy has not changed. The frustration that many Members have experienced is about the way in which it has been applied at a local level. He is right to say that we are now making sure that these matters are dealt with in the appropriate fashion at the local level. These will now be material considerations, which is an important aspect. The policy has been clear. The sad part, as many hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, is that the application has been inconsistent. That problem will now be solved.

**Sir Alan Beith** (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (LD): Is the Minister aware that the beautiful county of Northumberland has a large number of wind farm applications, and that there will be a welcome for this coalition Government's recognition that visual and cumulative impact should be more effectively recognised in the system and that communities where appropriately sited wind farms are built should get a greater benefit from that?

**Mr Prisk:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right; I have often felt that issues of amenity and landscape are things that people do care about in terms of their environmental considerations. This guidance will help to ensure that the balance is right now.

**Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister has not made it clear whether this will apply in Wales and England. Irrespective of that, will he confirm that it will mean more wind farms in urban areas and fewer in rural areas, and that more electricity will therefore be generated in Labour constituencies for Conservative constituencies, with the Liberals blowing in the wind, as normal?

**Mr Prisk:** No, it does not apply to Wales and no, the hon. Gentleman is wrong.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): The borough of Kettering is enthusiastic about its successful and expanding wind farm at Burton Wold, but we do not want wind turbines all over the countryside. Can the Minister assure my constituents that they can use the very good example of that wind farm to protect against the spread of wind turbines everywhere else?

**Mr Prisk:** That is the thing that people feel; the cumulative issue is often the concern that local communities have. That is why this guidance will strengthen the arm to make sure that it is a genuine material consideration. People will now feel that they are to contribute to the planning process, and that is good for the process itself.

**John Woodcock** (Barrow and Furness) (Lab/Co-op): So there is still no veto?

**Mr Prisk:** There seems to be a lack of understanding among Labour Members. This is not about vetoes; it is about making sure, in a legal system, that we have appropriate and due consideration of the material issues—topography, amenity and heritage. On this idea that we

have a blanket veto here at the Dispatch Box, I know that that is how they liked to do it in the Labour party in the past, but we let local people decide.

**Sir Gerald Howarth** (Aldershot) (Con): While I warmly welcome my hon. Friend's statement, as I am sure most of my colleagues do, may I just point out to him that it contains no reference to general aviation and the Ministry of Defence, both of which have enormous concerns about the impact of wind farms? May I give just one example? As one of the few currently licensed aviators in this House, I was flying on Monday past Popham, in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for North West Hampshire (Sir George Young), where there is a huge concern about 22 wind turbines, each the height of the London Eye, and the massive impact they can have on general aviation. May I ask the Minister to take into account those concerns, which are certainly shared by my hon. Friends the Members for Romsey and Southampton North (Caroline Nokes) and for Winchester (Steve Brine)?

**Mr Prisk:** My hon. Friend makes a very good point, and we do need to consider that issue, although of course what he is referring to is strictly outside the nature of this statement. Perhaps I, or indeed the Secretary of State, might like to take a flight with him to see this directly.

**Cathy Jamieson** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab/Co-op): I realise that the announcement on the planning changes refers to England, but given that the Government appear to have had time to brief the media, did they also have time to discuss any of this with the Scottish Government, as there will be concerns that it will perhaps be tougher to obtain planning permission in England and that that will have knock-on consequences in Scotland?

**Mr Prisk:** Clearly this is a devolved matter, but if the hon. Lady is directly concerned, she needs to talk to the Scottish Government, as we are already doing.

**Mr Mark Spencer** (Sherwood) (Con): I have tried to push the Minister on this important issue, but will he just clarify whether the current applications at judicial review are included in the change in guidance?

**Mr Prisk:** The key point is that if a determination has been made, that cannot be undone, whether that is at the local level or at the planning level, and that, I think, incorporates any other aspect where there is a decision about this. Once a decision has been published, that clearly cannot be changed by this guidance.

**Phil Wilson** (Sedgefield) (Lab): E.ON wants to build a wind farm consisting of 25 wind turbines in the middle of my constituency, generating 64 MW of electricity, which is therefore over the 50 MW threshold. The final decision will be made by the Secretary of State. Does this announcement today mean that if the local planning authority is opposed and the local community is opposed, the Secretary of State will say no to it?

**Mr Prisk:** It is cute of the hon. Gentleman to try to tempt me into that area. He knows that these are quasi-legal decisions, and I am not going to comment on any individual application. What we have done

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today is make sure that the balance in discussions is correct at the local level and at the appeal level, so that there is an appropriate level of decision making. I am not going to be drawn into individual applications, as he will understand.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): I welcome what the Minister has said—as, I am sure, will many of my constituents, particularly those in Denholme who have been battling against a wholly inappropriate proposal for a wind farm—but can he tell us what safeguards will be provided for local residents? My constituents have become accustomed to Labour-run Bradford council's practice of sending its councillors over to parts of the constituency, riding roughshod over the wishes of local councillors and residents, and imposing unpopular decisions on them. What safeguards will be introduced to stop Labour councils such as Bradford imposing decisions on my constituents, contrary to the recommendations of the guidance?

**Mr Prisk:** Our key purpose in making these changes is to ensure that the voice of local people is stronger. My hon. Friend is evidently experiencing a difficulty with the local Labour council, which I must say does sound shocking, but I am sure that, in his usual terrier-like manner, he will ensure that it understands what it is doing wrong.

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): Whether we are talking about a change of policy or a change of guidance, will the Minister tell us what prior consultation he has had with local planning authorities?

**Mr Prisk:** The call for evidence produced responses relating to some 1,100 applications, in respect of both the planning and the energy aspects. Those responses have been very useful, and have come from all the parties to whom the hon. Lady has referred.

**Julian Sturdy** (York Outer) (Con): I welcome my hon. Friend's statement. In my constituency, the council's draft local plan proposes the development of 40 new wind farm sites on green belt land. What message would my hon. Friend send to a council which is intending to impose those sites, in environmentally sensitive areas, on local communities that are deeply opposed to them?

**Mr Prisk:** I think the message would be that the Government have listened carefully to what local people say about the way in which planning has been applied and why they are concerned about it. We want to ensure that their voice is clear and loud and listened to.

**Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): Does the Minister agree that today's announcement is a further demonstration of the Government's commitment to the principles of localism in planning, which—starting with neighbourhood plans—ensure that local communities have a greater say both when supporting and when opposing development in their areas?

**Mr Prisk:** The Secretary of State and I are strongly committed to ensuring that local voices are heard in the planning system. This is a legal process, and we need to

ensure that it is conducted appropriately, but as my hon. Friend says, we are a localist Government with clear localist principles.

**Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con): There is an increasing perception among many people who have opposed wind turbine applications in my beautiful part of Yorkshire that local wishes have been overruled in favour of energy suppliers and landowners who have been pocketing the subsidies. Does the Minister agree that if such applications are to be approved, they must have the support of those local communities and they must benefit those local communities?

**Mr Prisk:** I know that my hon. Friend is an ardent campaigner on this issue, and his constituents are fortunate in that regard. He is right: we must ensure that local voices are very clear so that proper, balanced decisions are made, and people are not made to feel that their own considerations have been ridden over roughshod.

**Mr Tobias Ellwood** (Bournemouth East) (Con): I agree with my hon. Friend and neighbour the Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope) that there is a logic to extending community powers relating to onshore to offshore wind farms. As the Minister knows, there is a plan to build a rather large wind farm off our constituencies, and its proximity to the coast is concerning residents.

**Mr Prisk:** I understand that. My hon. Friend is another powerful campaigner, and I think it important for his campaign to continue. However, as I said earlier, I think it wiser for me to keep my feet on dry ground.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris) on his urgent question, and also on his consistent and informed leadership on this subject from the Back Benches. I welcome the announcement of a change in the planning rules relating to wind farms, but may I suggest that if one wants to look green one builds wind farms, whereas if one wants to be green, one should build them only where they will be effective and acceptable to local communities?

**Mr Prisk:** As I said in my statement, we have an energy issue to deal with, but renewables must be sited appropriately. My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to that, and we want to ensure that it happens.

**Miss Anne McIntosh** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): There will be joy in North Yorkshire at this decision, which will be good for the environment and good for the countryside, but may I tempt my hon. Friend to specify the more significant onshore wind farm developments, and explain how that term will be interpreted?

**Mr Prisk:** I am delighted to be tempted by my hon. Friend, and as I said earlier, what is more significant is trying to make sure we do not unintentionally snare the small single turbine in someone's back garden. This is about making sure we have consideration about the massing, the size and, indeed, the height, and we will set that out clearly in the secondary legislation.



**Annette Brooke** (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (LD): I find myself much in accord with the Minister's expressions of support for balance, as that is absolutely right, but I have some concerns that the pendulum might swing too far the other way. Will he be carefully monitoring things as the new guidance is implemented?

**Mr Prisk:** I will certainly monitor where the pendulum sits with the greatest of care.

**Stephen Barclay** (North East Cambridgeshire) (Con): In joining colleagues in welcoming the announcement, may I pay tribute to the work of my right hon. Friend the Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Mr Hayes) on this issue?

May I push the Minister to be clear that where an appeal has concluded taking evidence but the inspector has not published their decision, today's announcement will be taken into account, because that will give great comfort to my constituents, particularly those in Tydd St Giles, who are awaiting a decision on 17 July?

**Mr Prisk:** Where no decision has been published, as would be the case for local planners at that stage in the process, planning inspectors will now have to give consideration to this change in the guidance.

**Mr David Nuttall** (Bury North) (Con): My constituents in Bury North will warmly welcome this statement. Many of them can already see a massive wind farm development over at Scout Moor, but it is very often the individual turbines going here, there and everywhere across my constituency that create a great deal of concern. Can the Minister confirm that these guidelines will apply to individual turbine applications, as well as those for large farms, which may already be affecting the landscape?

**Mr Prisk:** As I said earlier, we are trying to make sure that the principal concern people have about the impact, and particularly the cumulative impact, is properly and clearly set out in the guidance. That will make sure that decisions on the kinds of application to which my hon. Friend refers will be influenced in the same way.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris) on leading the campaign against wind farms in this House, and I have a sneaking feeling that I can detect the hand of my right hon. Friend the Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Mr Hayes) in this new revised policy.

Until now, planning applications were refused for wind farms, but on appeal were granted. Under this new guidance, as I understand it, if local councils act properly and say no to a wind farm, normally they will not be overturned on appeal. Am I right in thinking that?

**Mr Prisk:** My hon. Friend is right to highlight that there have been a number of contributions in this particular debate. What I would say to him is that we want to make sure the system is balanced. What most constituents have been concerned about—I am, perhaps, speaking now as a constituency MP—is that they feel

their views are ridden roughshod over. That is what my hon. Friend referred to, and that is what we are seeking to correct.

**Duncan Hames** (Chippenham) (LD): I note the Minister's emphasis on significant and cumulative impact. Does he agree that minimum separation distances, as espoused by Wiltshire council, are arbitrary and therefore totally incapable of taking that into account?

**Mr Prisk:** We are not promoting buffer zones, as I think they are known in that context. We are a localist Government, and we want to make sure that the councils, which are accountable to their local electorates, take the appropriate decisions. The fact that we have specifically highlighted the issue of cumulative impact can, I think, give my hon. Friend some reassurance.

**Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): In addition to the turbines we already have, sometimes turning, in my constituency, we have 70 further ones consented, the largest development being for 34 turbines on the Isle of Axholme, which was granted by the previous Government on appeal, against the wishes of local people. Just yesterday another wind farm application was rejected, and a couple of weeks ago I spoke at an appeal against yet another wind farm application. Therefore, while I welcome the announcement, as will my constituents, may I urge the Minister to do a full and thorough review of how the appeal system works, because it is often at that point that my constituents are let down, not by their democratically elected councillors?

**Mr Prisk:** I understand that point, and the Secretary of State, the planning Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles), and I are all very much aware of the need to make sure planning at the local level and at appeals runs appropriately, and we will always give consideration to representations.

**Andrew Jones** (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): I welcome the statement, which will also be welcomed by the constituents of Harrogate and Knaresborough, where there have been significant concerns about developments of a proposed wind farm along the Knabs ridge area. Does the Minister agree that the measures announced will help to address the confusion and anger about the fact that local landscapes and local environments can be damaged in the name of protecting our environment?

**Mr Prisk:** I know that my hon. Friend is a fantastic campaigner for local people in his glorious part of Yorkshire. I think he is absolutely right and he can now say to his constituents that this is a Government who are on their side.

**Guy Opperman** (Hexham) (Con): This is wonderful news and the result of a long campaign. I welcome the announcement, because in Northumberland we have sporadic applications and sporadic wind farms that have no impact other than destroying the landscape in a very bad way. Cumulative impact is a massive issue, but how will it go into a local development plan when a local authority has not completed a local development plan thus far?

**Mr Prisk:** As I said in my opening remarks, we want to ensure that the guidance, as part of the balancing of the new planning policy framework, shows a clear understanding of the issue, especially the cumulative impact, and that that is reflected in the policies in the local plan.

**Glyn Davies** (Montgomeryshire) (Con): I congratulate the Minister on today's statement and associate myself with those who have congratulated my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris) on the leadership he has shown on this issue.

I would like some clarity if possible from the Minister about the position as it affects Wales. Applications for large wind farms over 50 MW are not devolved to the Welsh Government. It seems logical that the new provisions should apply to those applications, so can he reassure me that that is the case?

**Mr Prisk:** As I think you will know, Mr Speaker, the process relates to England only. There is a sensitive legal issue, to which my hon. Friend refers, but I understand that the Secretary of State for Wales is attuned to that and is in contact with the Welsh Government.

**Julian Smith** (Skipton and Ripon) (Con): Does the Minister agree that today is a victory for the Conservative party, which has finally brought some sanity and good sense to a very dubious energy policy?

**Mr Prisk:** The sad part about this has been that the Labour party seems not to have any understanding of why local voices matter. Members of this House have raised local issues time and again, and I agree with my hon. Friend; this is about localism and giving power back to local people, and we will ensure that that happens.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): The Minister's announcement will be widely welcomed by my constituents, particularly those in Humberston who are fighting an application in the neighbouring constituency. With particular reference to pre-application consultation, and because of the widespread impact such turbines have,

can he assure me that a consultation area will cover neighbouring council areas so that everyone can be involved?

**Mr Prisk:** It is important that a wide range of local voices are involved, but clearly those matters and where the boundaries must lie in any individual application are a matter not for central Government but for local government.

**Nigel Adams** (Selby and Ainsty) (Con): People in my part of North Yorkshire will be thrilled with the announcement this morning. May I add my gratitude to the hon. Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris) and the Minister without Portfolio, my right hon. Friend the Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Mr Hayes), for championing these changes? Will the Minister assure the House that local councils will be given the correct level of support to implement the changes? They often come up against very clever and expensive lawyers from development companies and need far better support.

**Mr Prisk:** We will write to all local planning authorities and to Sir Michael Pitt at the Planning Inspectorate. I take my hon. Friend's point and I know that the issue is foremost in the mind of the Secretary of State. May I add my strong congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Chris Heaton-Harris)? We have listened and we have improved the guidance for the better.

**Tessa Munt** (Wells) (LD): The Minister mentioned specifically that meeting our energy goals should not mean overriding natural environment considerations. Will he confirm that he will include in his amendment to the legislation the higher planning authorities that will make judgments about equally ugly pylons and the need to underground electricity transmission lines across the beautiful Somerset levels?

**Mr Prisk:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for that question. Today, clearly, we are considering the question of onshore wind turbines, so I think it would be wiser if I did not draw myself into the even more vexed question of pylons. I know that the Secretary of State and I will consider her question should it have any due implications.

## Business of the House

11.4 am

**Ms Angela Eagle** (Wallasey) (Lab): Will the Leader of the House give us the business for next week?

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Andrew Lansley)**: The business for next week is as follows:

**MONDAY 10 JUNE**—Second Reading of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill.

**TUESDAY 11 JUNE**—Remaining stages of the Children and Families Bill, followed by motion to approve a European document relating to section 10 of the European Union Act 2011.

**WEDNESDAY 12 JUNE**—Opposition day [2nd Allotted Day]. There will be a debate on an Opposition motion. Subject to be announced.

**THURSDAY 13 JUNE**—Debate on the 10th anniversary of the Iraq war. The subject for this debate was nominated by the Backbench Business Committee.

Colleagues will wish to be reminded that the Prime Minister of Canada will address both Houses of Parliament on this day.

The provisional business for the week commencing 17 June will include:

**MONDAY 17 JUNE**—Second Reading of the Pensions Bill.

**TUESDAY 18 JUNE**—Motion to approve a European document relating to the reform of the common agricultural policy, followed by motion to approve a European document relating to enhanced co-operation and a financial transaction tax, followed by motion to approve a European document relating to the European elections 2014.

**WEDNESDAY 19 JUNE**—Opposition day [3rd Allotted Day]. There will be a debate on an Opposition motion. Subject to be announced.

**THURSDAY 20 JUNE**—Business to be nominated by the Backbench Business Committee.

I should also like to inform the House that the business in Westminster Hall for 13 June will be:

**THURSDAY 13 JUNE**—Debate on the seventh report of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee on dog control and welfare.

**Ms Eagle**: This week marks the 100th anniversary of the death of suffragette Emily Wilding Davison, who threw herself at the King's horse demanding votes for women. As the battle for women's suffrage raged, she was at its forefront, being imprisoned on multiple occasions and force fed 49 times. She has a connection with this place because she hid in St Mary's Undercroft so that she could register as a resident here for the 1911 census. She is also known for throwing things at Chancellor Lloyd George.

Since women won the vote, just 35 have entered the Cabinet and today we make up only 23% of the House of Commons. Does the Leader of the House agree with me that, on this centenary, we should have a debate in Government time on women's progress in the UK? Under this Government, women's rights are going backwards: as carers, service users and public sector workers, women are bearing the brunt of Government cuts and women's unemployment is the highest it has

been for a generation. No wonder the Government forgot to do a gender impact assessment of their first Budget. I suggest that if Emily Wilding Davison were alive today, she would still find reasons to throw rocks at the Chancellor.

I wonder whether the Leader of the House recalls last October's Back-Bench business debate on the badger cull. The vote at the end of that debate instructed the Government not to proceed with the cull, but the Government just ignored it and started anyway. The Government have lost Back-Bench votes on circus animals, badgers and the Royal Fusiliers, and since starting to lose votes on Back-Bench motions so frequently, they have simply stopped opposing them. Today, we have a motion on the effects of pesticides on the bee population. Will the Leader of the House let us know whether the Government intend simply to let the motion pass without a vote, and if they do, will the will of the House be ignored again?

The Commons is abuzz with speculation about the end of the greatest No. 10 love affair of all time. Their eyes met at a press conference in the garden and they accepted each other with open arms, but the Prime Minister was unfaithful with his Back-Bench EU deal and now the Deputy Prime Minister has gone to the papers over his child care demands. They have been kidding themselves for a while, but the Queen's Speech showed us that they did not even have the energy to try any more. Their mouse of a legislative programme has already unravelled, with No. 10 at panic stations over another lobbying scandal, the EU Back-Bench Bill, and the third U-turn of the Session in the abandonment of the appalling plan to increase ratios for child care providers. It is hard to believe that the House has sat for only 11 days since the Queen's Speech was unveiled.

It is the job of the Leader of the House to co-ordinate the Government's legislative programme. I know he likes expensive top-down reorganisations, but this is ridiculous. To be fair to him, though, it is not as if his Cabinet colleagues are faring any better. The Education Secretary has been so busy positioning himself to be the next Tory leader that he has forgotten to do the day job. According to a damning report from the Procedure Committee, his Department is very late in answering half of all written questions tabled by Members, and answers only one in five written named day questions in time. During the recess the chairman of the Tory party was told off by the UK Statistics Authority for making things up. He joins a long list of his Cabinet colleagues languishing on the statistical naughty step, including the Prime Minister, the Health Secretary and the Work and Pensions Secretary. So may we have a debate about sanctions that could be applied to Ministers who do not answer questions in a timely fashion or get censured for misusing statistics?

Perhaps we should also have a debate about performance-managing the Cabinet. Such a debate could start with a look at the NHS. Since 2010 the number of people waiting in A and E for more than four hours has doubled. The ambulance queues have doubled, but instead of taking responsibility, the Government have tried to blame immigrants, women doctors and a 10-year-old GP contract for a problem that has only just emerged. Of course, they are only following the Chancellor's lead after he blamed the flatlining economy on the snow, the rain and various bank holidays, including the royal

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wedding and the jubilee. This Government have been in office for three years. When will they face up to their responsibilities and realise that they have only themselves to blame?

**Mr Lansley:** I am grateful to the shadow Leader of the House, not least for the opportunity to mark in the House the centenary, as she rightly said, of the death of Emily Wilding Davison who, on 4 June 1913 I think it was, threw herself in front of the—was it the King or the Prince of Wales?—the King's horse at the Epsom derby. I understand that there was an extremely successful event in Westminster Hall yesterday to mark that; it is important for us to do so.

Many would share the view that we have come on a very long way in a century, but not as far as we would like to have done, not least in ensuring that we realise to the full the potential that women are able to bring into our political life. In my party we feel strongly that we did very well at the last election in doing so, and we have further to go and I am looking forward to—

**Ms Angela Eagle:** Where are they?

**Mr Lansley:** Busy, I would imagine. The experience in this Parliament of increased numbers of women in the parliamentary Conservative party will have encouraged Conservative associations across the country in their selections for the future.

The hon. Lady mentioned child care. She will be aware that no announcements have been made. We are committed to securing improving quality and affordability for parents seeking child care and we will make announcements in due course.

The hon. Lady made a point about Back-Bench debates. She said that Back-Bench votes instructed the Government. She completely understands, I know, that they are very important opportunities for Back-Bench and House opinion to be expressed. The Government never ignore them, and particularly in relation to the debate on the 2nd Battalion the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, Ministers took that decision seriously, weighed it carefully and came back to the House on a further occasion in order to explain why they maintained the decision that they had made.

Yesterday, Ministers came back to the House at the instigation of the Opposition in order to explain fully why the pilot badger cull was going ahead, and in a vote yesterday the House endorsed the Government's view on that. In the course of her questions, including requests for debates, the shadow Leader of the House did not tell us what the Opposition are planning to do with their time.

**Thomas Docherty** (Dunfermline and West Fife) (Lab): It is called a Business Question.

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): The Leader of the House has to answer it.

**Mr Lansley:** I know it is a question, but in the course of her questions the shadow Leader of the House might have indicated to the House what the subjects for the Opposition day debates next week might be, not least as

she seems to have an idea of the issues that she regards as important. She might think, for example, that 19 June would be a good opportunity to debate tax evasion and tax avoidance in the wake of the initiative, which is, I think, unprecedented in scale and success, that the Prime Minister has led in securing international co-operation, not least through the G8 summit that will have taken place over the previous weekend. No doubt by that date there will have been an opportunity for the Labour party to have paid to the Revenue any tax that would have been due on any donations that might have been given to it.

In the light of the speeches that have been made this week, the hon. Lady might also try to have a debate about the credibility of Opposition policy. On Monday, the shadow Chancellor was in complete denial about the simple fact that he talked with the former Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister about "iron discipline" just ahead of the biggest spending spree by a Government that this country has ever seen, which left us in the biggest debt that this country has ever encountered. That is no iron discipline; there is no credibility in that.

If the Opposition are going to make speeches about welfare reform, they have to answer some simple questions. To give just one example, do Labour Members now believe that they were wrong to oppose the Bill that became the Welfare Reform Act 2012, with its cap on welfare uprating for working-age benefit recipients? If the shadow Leader of the House is able to say that they were wrong about that, there might be some credibility; otherwise it was a completely empty policy.

**Andrew Bridgen** (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Today I will be delivering a letter to the Prime Minister signed by 81 Conservative colleagues calling for a parliamentary debate and a vote before the Government make any decision to arm any factions in the Syrian conflict. There is considerable concern in this House and, indeed, the country about our being pulled further into another middle eastern conflict where there appear to be many sides but no end. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that if such a decision to arm any of the groups is considered during a recess, Parliament can be quickly recalled so that we can debate this very important issue?

**Mr Lansley:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I have had the opportunity to see early-day motion 189, which relates to this.

*[That this House believes that prior to any decision being taken to supply arms to the Syrian National Coalition or any other groups in Syria, a full debate and vote should be held in Parliament and in addition to this, if Parliament is in recess, it should be recalled to facilitate this important debate; notes the division and sensitivity that this issue evokes both with colleagues and the general public; believes that it is a matter that needs to be subjected to full parliamentary scrutiny and debate before the UK potentially becomes further involved in another Middle Eastern conflict; and further notes that in some matters of defence, time does not always allow for parliamentary debate, whilst not however believing this constraint applies to this potential course of action.]*

My hon. Friend will recall what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said yesterday, when he was absolutely clear—in the same way that he was careful to ensure that on 21 March 2011 the House had an opportunity

to debate Libya on a substantive motion—that any decision relating specifically to the arming of the Syrian National Coalition or others in Syria would be the subject of debate and an opportunity for a vote in this House.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): In evidence to the Home Affairs Committee on Tuesday, Cressida Dick, the head of counter-terrorism at the Metropolitan police, told the Committee that, on one hand they were proposing to assess protection for Anjem Choudary, but on the other they were considering prosecuting him for racist and inflammatory statements. He is a former member of a number of proscribed organisations. May we have a statement on any guidance that the Home Secretary has issued about the protection of people who go out of their way to inflame tensions?

**Mr Lansley:** The right hon. Gentleman will of course understand that I am not in a position to make any comment about any individual case. I am sure that the Home Secretary—as the right hon. Gentleman knows, she has done this before and will do so again—will keep the House fully updated about any actions she is taking relating to tackling violent extremism and tackling those who seek to propagate views promoting violent extremism and terrorism in this country.

**Mr John Leech** (Manchester, Withington) (LD): In the light of recent speculation that the London-based Science Museum Group could axe three regional museums, including Manchester's Museum of Science and Industry, to protect the London Science Museum, may we have a debate on the future of funding for museums and the need to protect our regional cultural assets?

**Mr Lansley:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that many Members will share with him a sense of the importance of the Science Museum Group, including, in particular, the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester. The group receives over 5 million visitors a year, so it is very important. It received a real-terms reduction in its overall funding in the previous funding review and, obviously, I am not in a position to talk about any future spending review. The distribution of funding within the Science Museum Group is an operational matter for the group itself, but I will bring the point raised by my hon. Friend to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

**Mr John Baron** (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): May I seek absolute clarity on what the Leader of the House kindly said about a debate on arming the Syrian rebels? Are the Government committed to having a substantive debate and vote before any decision is made on whether to arm the Syrian rebels, even if Parliament is in recess at the time? Will we get that debate before any policy is implemented?

**Mr Lansley:** Let me be clear: as the Prime Minister made perfectly clear yesterday, that question has not yet arisen because no such decision has been made. The Prime Minister was clear, as he was in relation to Libya, that he will seek to secure an opportunity for the House to debate and express its view through a vote on these matters. It is, of course, a hypothetical question

at present. The Prime Minister is determined, as is the Foreign Secretary, that the House should have the opportunity, as was the case with Libya, to express its view.

**John Cryer** (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): The Deputy Prime Minister has been trailing his lobbying Bill all over the press yet again, and this time his ideas seem to be staggeringly incoherent even by his standards. It is three years since the Prime Minister's original remarks. When will the Deputy Prime Minister make a statement to the House or even present a Bill? After all, it is many months since the consultation exercise closed.

**Mr Lansley:** The coalition agreement is very clear that we will introduce legislation. The Prime Minister said in response to a question yesterday that we will legislate to tackle the issue of third-party influence in our political system. We are looking to introduce proposals before the summer recess.

**Alec Shelbrooke** (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): Could we have a debate on the practices of companies such as Phyderma and Elisa Jewels, which actively seek to scam British pensioners by enticing them to purchase catalogue items with the promise that they will win prizes such as new cars and luxury holidays? I recently met a distraught constituent whose father has spent more than £5,000 to date on these false promises.

**Mr Lansley:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Members will sympathise with him and his constituents about these matters, which come up for many of us. Misleading or false promotional or other advertising material is covered by the advertising code of practice, which is policed by the Advertising Standards Authority, with which my hon. Friend may wish to raise these matters. Failure to comply with ASA rulings can also result in referral to the Office of Fair Trading, so that is a further avenue for him to take if he is not initially successful.

**Siobhain McDonagh** (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab): May we have a debate on something that affects a large number of Members of all parties, namely the rules used by the NHS to consult on hospital closures? In my own area the "Better Services, Better Value" scheme proposes to close the A and E and maternity units at St Helier hospital after a 12-week consultation over the school summer holidays at a time when it is difficult to find venues and get people to volunteer to assist in gathering the information in order to discuss the schemes. Could that debate also include a discussion about the rules on giving notice about venues and dates for important meetings where members of the public might wish to see the NHS making decisions on its future?

**Mr Lansley:** My colleagues from the Health Department will be here to answer questions on Tuesday, if the hon. Lady would like to raise the issue of the NHS's internal guidance on the conduct of consultations, which should also, of course, reflect the guidance issued by the Cabinet Office. The hon. Lady will be aware, as I hope all Members are, that if the overview and scrutiny committees of local authorities are not satisfied with the procedure, evidence or outcome of consultations, they can refer

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them to the Secretary of State, who in my experience is able to take advice from the Independent Reconfiguration Panel.

**Jessica Lee** (Erewash) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend provide time to debate the valuable heritage of our rivers and canals, and the volunteers who work on them? As one of the few MPs whose constituency is named after a river, I understand well the importance of waterways. [Interruption.] We can now begin the list, Mr Speaker. It is worth noting that this is national volunteers week. Such a debate could highlight the campaign for new volunteers to help the Canal & River Trust in Erewash, which has the Erewash rangers scheme, and elsewhere up and down the river and canal network.

**Mr Lansley:** My hon. Friend raises two valuable aspects of life in her constituency. Her views about our canals and rivers, and about volunteering, are shared in many constituencies. I would love to be able to stand at the Dispatch Box and dispense debates on such issues, but I direct my hon. Friend and other colleagues to the Backbench Business Committee, which is very receptive to applications for such debates.

**Jim McGovern** (Dundee West) (Lab): May we have a debate on how employers can help employees who are suffering from work-related mental health issues? Last year on St Stephen's day, 26 December, one of my constituents, Filep Myzylowskyj, tragically took his own life. He was employed by National Express as a bus driver and had been on sick leave following an accident involving a pedestrian. His widow, Janet, his family and his friends agree unanimously that his suicide was work-related. I have written to Dean Finch, the chief executive of National Express, seven times. It appears that he simply refuses to respond to my correspondence. Such a debate would help us to determine how employers can help employees and how they should communicate with Members of this House.

**Mr Lansley:** Members will sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's constituent and he is right to raise the case. I hope that the fact that he has done so will encourage some employers, including National Express, to take note of the points that he makes. Many employers are taking up the opportunity under the responsibility deal to improve the occupational health support for their employees. Through the national health service, we are continuing to expand access to psychological therapies. In my experience, such therapies are particularly valuable for employees who are suffering from work-related stress, anxiety and depression. Early access to those therapies can help to avoid the kind of tragedies to which he refers.

**Andrew Stephenson** (Pendle) (Con): I look forward to welcoming the Pendle rainbow parliament tomorrow morning for a question and answer session following its parliamentary tour. It is made up of hard-working school children from Nelson St Philip's Church of England primary school, Walverden primary school, Higham St John's Church of England primary school, Holy Saviour Roman Catholic primary school and Castercliff community primary school in my constituency. May we have a debate on what we can do to make it easier for

teachers to take pupils on educational trips so that more Pendle school children can visit Parliament and other educational places?

**Mr Lansley:** I am glad that my hon. Friend raises that matter. I am sure that the House will be delighted to host the Pendle rainbow group. In the last year for which figures are available, 2012-13, some 47,000 young people made educational visits to this place. That is some 10,000 more than in 2010-11. I know that you have attached particular importance to this matter, Mr Speaker, and that increase is testimony to the priority that you have given it. I know that you want us to go further and do better. Ultimately, I hope that schools across the country will feel confident that all young people will come here at some point in their educational life to learn about democratic processes and the history of Westminster.

**Tom Blenkinsop** (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Lab): Can we have a debate on how sensible is the Government's new requirement for a member of the armed forces to get their chain of command to confirm they are deployed on operations, in order for service personnel to secure an exemption from the bedroom tax? Is that efficient and practical when people are deployed to Afghanistan or at sea? May we have a statement on how many members of the armed forces are still awaiting that confirmation, and how many households are now in rent arrears?

**Mr Lansley:** I confess I do not know the difficulties to which the hon. Gentleman refers, but I will, of course, raise the point with my hon. Friends at the Ministry of Defence and ensure that he secures a reply.

**Oliver Colvile** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Con): In 2020, Britain will commemorate and celebrate the 400th anniversary of the pilgrim fathers leaving Plymouth on the Mayflower to go and found the American colonies. Unfortunately, a number of other cities and towns are trying to claim that they should be the centre of celebrating this main historic event. Please may we have a debate on Britain's relationship with the USA, so that everybody can be aware that Plymouth is the unrivalled home of the start of the special relationship, and a potential prime contender for hosting the G8 in 2020 when it comes to Britain?

**Mr Lansley:** My hon. Friend takes a fantastic opportunity to promote Plymouth's ambitions in that regard. Being from East Anglia, it is not for me to judge these matters, but having been in Massachusetts and gone to Plimoth Plantation, it seems obvious where those who named it that way thought they had come from.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Mr Speaker, you know that I am not a puritan or killjoy, but like most Members of Parliament I think that the betting and gambling industry is out of control in this country. Fixed-odds betting terminals and bookies are proliferating in every deprived part of our country, and online gambling is destroying lives. Is it not about time that the House tackled the scourge of betting shops, which often sit next to payday loan shops? They are preying on the poorest people in our country, and it is about time that the House was aware of it and acted to regulate this industry which is out of control.

**Mr Lansley:** I do not have to agree with the hon. Gentleman to say, just from a business point of view, that he will note that the Government have published the Gambling (Licensing and Advertising) Bill. I have not yet been able to tell the House the date of its Second Reading, but when that time comes the hon. Gentleman will have an opportunity to make his points.

**Daniel Kawczynski** (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): Recently, the British Chambers of Commerce again called for extra support for British exports from the Government. We have not had a debate about exports on the Floor of the House since 2010, yet UK Trade & Investment receives more than £400 million of British taxpayers' money to help British companies export overseas. I have spent the last 10 months interviewing hundreds of SMEs to get their first-hand experience of UKTI. May we please have a debate on the Floor of the House to scrutinise how the money is spent and consider what more needs to be done to ensure that British companies get the support they rightly deserve to start exporting all over the world?

**Mr Lansley:** My hon. Friend is an active, energetic advocate for promoting British exports, and I know the work he does. When I was at the British Chambers of Commerce we set up the export advisory service and took on delivery of the export marketing research scheme back in the late 1980s, so I completely understand where the British Chambers of Commerce is coming from. I will, of course, discuss with my hon. Friends what opportunities there may be, and the Chancellor set out in the autumn statement his ambition to support the UKTI in whatever it can achieve to maximise our impact in terms of exports. Whenever we have an opportunity for a debate on economic issues, it is important that we bring forward export and trade promotion as one of the central measures to promote growth.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. More than 20 Back-Bench Members are seeking to catch my eye and I am keen to accommodate them. I remind the House that there is a statement by the Foreign Secretary to follow, and then a number of debates under the auspices of the Backbench Business Committee to which I must give proper consideration. There is, therefore, a premium on brevity from those on the Back and Front Benches alike.

**Alison McGovern** (Wirral South) (Lab): The Leader of the House may be aware that the pre-inquest hearings into the deaths of 96 people in the Hillsborough disaster are taking place. Given that press reports of yesterday's hearing said that lawyers representing the match day commanders accused the Hillsborough independent panel of having a so-called "agenda" guided by the families of those who died, and that questions were raised on whether the Home Office put a block on providing sufficient resources for the inquiry, does he believe it could be helpful to have a debate or statement on the matter?

**Mr Lansley:** I am not sure whether I can endorse the hon. Lady's request for a statement at this stage, not least because I am not sure whether my ministerial colleagues would wish to come to the Dispatch Box and

intervene or express a running commentary on inquest proceedings. She will know that I was able to announce at previous business questions Government support for the families' legal costs for that inquiry, but in order to be sure I will bring her point to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary so that they are aware of it.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): Has my right hon. Friend seen the case of Geoffrey Bettley, a teacher at St Mary's in Menston, on the border of my constituency, who downloaded child porn images and was rightly sacked by the school and put on the sex offenders register? In a decision ratified by the Education Secretary, Geoffrey Bettley has been told that he is allowed to teach again. I am sure my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will appreciate that many parents will be deeply disturbed by the fact that somebody who has been convicted of downloading child porn should be allowed to teach again. Can we have a statement from the Education Secretary so he can explain what on earth he was thinking when he allowed that person to teach again?

**Mr Lansley:** I have read press reports on the matter. The decision was taken by the National College for Teaching and Leadership and then endorsed by a senior official at the Department for Education. I will be in touch with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education so that he might give my hon. Friend an account of the process in the case.

**Jim Sheridan** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (Lab): In responding to a question yesterday from my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South (Mr Harris) on the latest lobbying scandal, the Prime Minister made a strange comparison with the open and transparent donations by trade unions to the Labour party. He also said that he would clear up over-influence in the House. Will the Leader of the House clarify what the Prime Minister meant by "third parties" other than trade unions?

**Mr Lansley:** What the Prime Minister said was very clear, and it was not just about the question of the statutory register of lobbyists, which should ensure transparency and greater accountability in relation to third-party influence with Ministers and in Parliament. We must be sure that the whole political system has not only a transparent structure, but one that is accountable and open about those who seek to exercise such major third-party influence. Not just trade unions but other organisations seek to do so; the trade unions are a major source of third-party influence in the political system, as the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well.

**Tessa Munt** (Wells) (LD): Will the Leader of the House allow time for a debate on the processes in place to follow up the implementation of recommendations made in serious case reviews, and to review and report in public in the long term on the adherence to points made in action plans after incidents in care homes, so that changes to poor practice are made for the long term, and that care of the vulnerable and elderly does not slip backwards?

**Mr Lansley:** Yes, to reiterate a point I made earlier, my hon. Friends from the Department of Health will answer questions in the House on Tuesday next, when the hon. Lady might wish to raise that issue with them. The Minister of State, Department of Health, who has responsibility for care services, recently set out further details on how, for example, the Winterbourne View cases are being followed up by the group to ensure that the residents are being well looked after. That example illustrates how important it is that people are not lost in the system, and that serious case reviews are followed up.

**Andy Sawford** (Corby) (Lab/Co-op): Given yesterday's announcement from the Deputy Prime Minister that the Government's plans to cram more toddlers into nurseries have been dropped, may we have a statement on child care policy? It is welcome that Labour Members' campaigning and that of tens of thousands of parents and child care professionals has forced the Government to drop their plans, but it is shocking that we have not had a statement today. If the Leader of the House will not arrange a statement, will he at least tell us the current policy? The Deputy Prime Minister said yesterday that the plan had been dropped, but the Leader of the House has told us this morning that it is being reviewed. What is the policy? It is a shambles.

**Mr Lansley:** Our policy is to ensure an increase in the quality of child care and to improve affordability for parents: that is what we are setting out to do and that is what we will do. As soon as the policy is agreed, there will no doubt be an opportunity for it to be announced in the House.

**Neil Carmichael** (Stroud) (Con): As was highlighted on Tuesday by the "Gloucestershire goes to Westminster" event, locally produced food and drink is extremely popular. May we find a way of demonstrating how important local produce is to the rural economy, and have a debate to discuss our locally produced food in the context of the common agricultural policy?

**Mr Lansley:** As chance would have it, as I announced earlier the House will discuss a motion on reform of the CAP. Members greatly welcomed Gloucestershire coming to Westminster—many other areas have held similar events—to tell us about its local produce, something we all value in our constituencies.

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): May we have a debate on the Olympic legacy? Walsall has the only brine swimming pool in the west midlands, which is used for hydrotherapy and general fitness. Walsall also nurtured Ellie Simmons, the Paralympic champion. However, the Gala baths are threatened with closure. May we have an urgent debate on how to protect these vital community services?

**Mr Lansley:** I cannot offer time at the moment, but we attach the greatest importance to the Olympic legacy, which Lord Coe is pursuing actively. We committed to the legacy as part of our Olympic bid, and I hope it will be as successful as the Olympics and Paralympics themselves. As regards securing a debate, I suspect that the hon. Lady might like to get together with other colleagues with a view to making representations to the Backbench Business Committee.

**Chris White** (Warwick and Leamington) (Con): In an article in *The Times* yesterday, Daniel Finkelstein raised the issue of industrial policy and called it the economic big idea. I agree completely with this viewpoint. We still need a comprehensive industrial policy that will encourage investment in British manufacturing. May we have a debate on industrial policy and the role it can play in helping to rebalance our economy?

**Mr Lansley:** My hon. Friend will share my strong support for the industrial strategy set out by the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my right hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), which focuses on the many sectors where we have identified comparative advantage, and on rebalancing our economy geographically and away from an undue reliance on financial services, to bring forward internationally tradable manufacturing and service industries, which are the only basis for paying our way in the future. I cannot offer a debate on the strategy at the moment, but I hope I have indicated the importance we attach to it. We will look for opportunities for the House to help to frame its implementation.

**Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): Further to the previous question, City and Guilds today published research that shows that we in this place spend four times as much time debating academic qualifications as vocational qualifications and skills. Most people do not have degrees, while the vast majority of MPs do have them. When can we find time to debate the important issue of skills and vocational training in relation to our growth strategy? Does the Leader of the House have any idea how we might get more representation from people who have had real jobs in the past, and who have even faced redundancy?

**Mr Lansley:** I have found in business questions that hon. Members pay consistent and frequent attention to the development of skills. My colleagues have supported the doubling of apprenticeships that has taken place under this coalition Government and the introduction of traineeships to secure, as the Queen's Speech set out, the expectation that all young people should be going into higher education, traineeships or apprenticeships, to ensure that we have appropriate skills at all levels for those going into the work force.

**Mr David Nuttall** (Bury North) (Con): I suspect that when the House meets to consider private Members' Bills for the first time this Session on Friday 5 July it will be rather fuller than it is sometimes on a Friday. Given the likely increased interest in private Members' Bills, may we please have a statement on whether the Government will if necessary provide more time for their consideration, and clarification on whether, if the Backbench Business Committee were so to decide, the time made available to that Committee could be allocated for the consideration of private Members' Bills?

**Mr Lansley:** My hon. Friend, who increasingly understands intimately the workings of the House, will recall that the time available for private Members' Bills is established in Standing Orders. It might encourage him to recall that last year that time was sufficient for 10 private Members' Bills to secure Royal Assent.



**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): May we have a debate on Ministers' responsiveness to Members? I wrote to the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury on behalf of my constituent Karen Bawker of Thorneside, Denton, on 4 April in follow-up to correspondence on 11 January, which was answered by him on 4 February. This time I have not had so much as an acknowledgement, let alone a reply, despite my having sent reminders, including most recently at the start of this week. Will the Leader of the House investigate this discourtesy and, through his good offices, also ensure that my constituent's query is responded to?

**Mr Lansley:** I will of course be in touch with my hon. Friend the Exchequer Secretary, who I know is an assiduous and hard-working Minister. Like all of us, he seeks to respond to Members' correspondence within 20 working days, and I am sure he will want to address the reasons he has failed to do so in this instance.

**Richard Fuller** (Bedford) (Con): May we have a statement from the Government about streamlining procedures at Companies House better to support people trying to start a business for the first time? A constituent of mine had his form returned because it was in the wrong colour ink, and when he sought advice and guidance from Companies House he was told simply, "Look at our website." When he re-filed to ensure that it was absolutely correct, Companies House returned it, having identified errors that it had missed first time, and then he was fined £375 and told that he was liable to prosecution for a criminal offence. I think we can do better in encouraging business.

**Mr Lansley:** It is not a happy tale my hon. Friend tells. I know that my hon. Friends at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills will want to look at that. When we tackle red tape, as we are doing, we should not just be reducing the burden of regulation by taking away unnecessary regulations and simplifying others, but looking constantly—the Cabinet Office is leading on this across Government—at simplifying administration and reducing costs on those who have to comply with regulations.

**Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con): Last week, I made a most enjoyable and informative visit to the National Coal Mining museum near Wakefield, which adjoins my constituency. It was packed with families and children. I, too, would like to add my voice to the calls for a debate on our wonderful national museums and how best to support them financially during these difficult economic times.

**Mr Lansley:** I completely understand what my hon. Friend says. He will recall what I said about the Science Museum Group more generally. In that particular instance, although these are operational matters within the group, I understand that there is a £2.5 million per annum ring-fenced grant for the National Coal Mining museum.

**Chris Heaton-Harris** (Daventry) (Con): In the light of the three debates on European documents that the Leader of the House announced, will he bring forward fresh proposals to enhance how the House and national Parliaments deal with European legislation?

**Mr Lansley:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. As happy chance would have it, the Foreign Secretary is on the Front Bench alongside me. Last week in Berlin, he set out what I think is essential—I think both sides of the House might agree with this—

**Mr Douglas Alexander** (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (Lab) *indicated assent*.

**Mr Lansley:** Yes, I am saying that we can agree about it. We should increase the influence of national Parliaments over legislation, for the achievement of which my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has set out specific proposals. As Leader of the House, I want to work not least with the European Scrutiny Committee and the Liaison Committee to ensure that we use every opportunity to the maximum, identifying proposals as they come from the European Commission, intervening as early as possible, sending our political and reasoned opinions on the legislation and maximising our influence over EU legislation.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): May I remind the Leader of the House about private Members' Bills and the days allocated to them? In the last Session the Government tabled a motion, which was passed by the House, to increase the number of sitting days for private Members' Bills, so I am afraid that hiding behind Standing Orders to suggest that we cannot increase the number of sitting days for private Members' Bills is not quite correct. May we have a statement on that?

**Mr Lansley:** I never like to disagree with my hon. Friend, but in that instance I think we brought forward a motion for the House additionally to sit on a Friday, but not for the consideration of private Members' Bills—rather, it was for the extension of a debate. If I am wrong, I will gladly confess and correct that. As far as I am aware, the issue is simply put. The number of days—13—is set out in Standing Orders.

**Nigel Adams** (Selby and Ainsty) (Con): Sport, as we know, plays a crucial part in the development of young people. May we have a debate on the work of sports clubs in the community? By coincidence, 150 years ago the Yorkshire county cricket club played its first ever official cricket match here in London, across the river, against Surrey. One-hundred and fifty years ago today, Yorkshire skittled out Surrey for 60 runs in the second innings. The Leader of the House will know the names: Hawke, Sutcliffe, Trueman, Close, Boycott, Gough, Lehmann, Vaughan—all Yorkshire sporting legends who have played for a club that does incredible good work in our community. As well as the debate, will the Leader of the House join me in congratulating Yorkshire on its anniversary? Will he also join me on Monday for a reception on the Terrace for Yorkshire county cricket club, where he will get to meet the great Geoffrey Boycott and the current Yorkshire squad?

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Gentleman has had a very full innings.

**Mr Lansley:** Who can resist? I absolutely endorse that celebration and commemoration in this House. Let me say how much we applaud Yorkshire county cricket club for its many achievements over 150 years. It would

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be the greatest possible pleasure to meet some of those who have contributed to them. Cricket clubs in Yorkshire and across the country play a vital part in promoting sport and community life. Yorkshire has been at the forefront of that, and I hope we can celebrate that on Monday.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): It is widely anticipated that a decision on the future of the children's heart surgery unit in Leeds will be known soon. There has been a wide campaign across the House, involving many Members. Can the Leader of the House assure us that when a decision is made, there will be an oral statement?

**Mr Lansley:** I will, of course, talk to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. I am not aware that he has received, or made any decision in relation to, an independent reconfiguration panel report, but I will of course discuss with him how an announcement will be made in due course.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): Earlier this week you confirmed from the Chair, Mr Speaker, that the Standing Orders of the House permit only the Government to make a formal request to recall Parliament. Given that Governments can be tempted to make major policy announcements during the recess and given that the Leader of the House is, after all, the leader of all of us in this place, would he be kind enough to give consideration to amending the relevant Standing Order, so that if a certain threshold—for example, 20%—of Members requesting a recall were met, they would be able to use that mechanism to make a formal request?

**Mr Lansley:** Of course, my hon. Friend understands that I take very seriously my responsibility to represent both the Government in this House and the House as a whole, including within the councils of Government. From my point of view, in my recent experience I do not see any mischief—in the sense that there have been issues on which it was thought appropriate for the House to be recalled when Ministers did not take a suitable initiative—but I will keep this under review.

**Glyn Davies** (Montgomeryshire) (Con): This morning the Government issued an important statement about the public voice in relation to onshore wind farms. Three times this morning you have called me, Mr Speaker, and I have asked a similar question about how the statement will affect Wales. I have not received a satisfactory answer. I have been left in a position of deep frustration, and I am sure the people of Wales feel the same. Will my right hon. Friend ensure that we have an early statement clarifying the position, so that people in Wales will know that applications for developments over 50 MW, which are not devolved, will be subject to today's new guidelines?

**Mr Lansley:** I completely understand my hon. Friend's concern about this, and his desire to secure proper answers. If I may, I will talk to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales to see how we might expedite a response.

**Andrew Jones** (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): Engineering businesses in my constituency have told me of the challenges that they face in recruiting, particularly in relation to the academic backgrounds of applicants. They are looking for achievement in computer sciences, mathematics and physics. May we please have a debate to discuss what more the Government could do to encourage participation in those critical subjects, and to ensure high standards in the curriculum and rigour in the examinations?

**Mr Lansley:** From my point of view, I am clear that my ministerial colleagues in the Department for Education and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills are working closely together to ensure that we maximise our support for education and training in science, technology and engineering. The first job I ever did, many years ago, was in the then Department of Industry, and it was to support the Young Engineer for Britain scheme and Women into Science and Engineering. This has been a long, hard struggle, but companies today still feel that we in this country do not attach as much importance to science, technology and mathematics as other countries do. We have made significant progress recently in the number of students following those subjects and the success that they are achieving, but we still need to attach greater importance to encouraging the brightest and best to go into engineering and manufacturing industry.

**Mark Pawsey** (Rugby) (Con): Almost exactly 12 months ago, I raised with the then Leader of the House my concerns about a stretch of the M6 that has become known as "Rugby's mad mile" because of the large number of accidents in the traffic queuing to join the A14 at Catthorpe. His response was that funds had been allocated for improvements, but that a public inquiry was needed. Twelve months on, we are waiting for the outcome of that public inquiry, but accidents are continuing to happen, with yet another fatality occurring only last week. Given the importance of that junction to the UK motorway network, may we have a ministerial statement on the progress on bringing forward those urgently needed improvements?

**Mr Lansley:** As somebody who lives down the A14 in an eastward direction, I am only too familiar with the Catthorpe interchange. My hon. Friend will know that the local public inquiry into the proposed improvement of junction 19 and related sections of the M6 and A14 closed on 16 March this year. The Department for Transport received the inspector's report on 16 May. The report is currently being considered, and a decision will be issued as soon as possible. Subject to a satisfactory outcome of this statutory process, the Highways Agency expects that construction could start in the spring of 2014. That would be sooner than the date announced in the Chancellor's 2011 autumn statement, when it was stated that the scheme would be prepared for start of construction before 2015.

**Julian Sturdy** (York Outer) (Con): May I add my voice to the call for a debate on the importance of local museums and the way in which they protect our culture and heritage for future generations? An example is the fantastic National Railway museum in York, which I

visited many times as a young boy. I now have the pleasure of taking my young children there, and I know how important that museum is to York's DNA.

**Mr Lansley:** Yes, indeed. I know that my hon. Friend will forgive me if I do not reiterate what I said earlier about the Science Museum Group, but I will ensure that all the contributions relating to this subject, including his question on the National Railway museum, are brought to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

## Mau Mau Claims (Settlement)

11.59 am

**The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague):** With permission, I would like to make a statement on a legal settlement that the Government have reached concerning the claims of Kenyan citizens who lived through the emergency period and the Mau Mau insurgency from October 1952 to December 1963.

During the emergency period, widespread violence was committed by both sides, and most of the victims were Kenyan. Many thousands of Mau Mau members were killed, while the Mau Mau themselves were responsible for the deaths of over 2,000 people, including 200 casualties among the British regiments and police.

Emergency regulations were introduced; political organisations were banned; prohibited areas were created; and provisions for detention without trial were enacted. The colonial authorities made unprecedented use of capital punishment and sanctioned harsh prison, so-called "rehabilitation", regimes. Many of those detained were never tried, and the links of many with the Mau Mau were never proven. There was recognition at the time of the brutality of these repressive measures and the shocking level of violence, including an important debate in this House on the infamous events at Hola camp in 1959.

We recognise that British personnel were called upon to serve in difficult and dangerous circumstances. Many members of the colonial service contributed to establishing the institutions that underpin Kenya today, and we acknowledge their contribution. However, I would like to make it clear now and for the first time on behalf of Her Majesty's Government that we understand the pain and grievance felt by those who were involved in the events of the emergency in Kenya. The British Government recognise that Kenyans were subject to torture and other forms of ill treatment at the hands of the colonial administration. The British Government sincerely regret that these abuses took place and that they marred Kenya's progress towards independence. Torture and ill treatment are abhorrent violations of human dignity, which we unreservedly condemn.

In October 2009, claims were first brought to the High Court by five individuals, who were detained during the emergency period, regarding their treatment in detention. In 2011, the High Court rejected the claimants' arguments that the liabilities of the colonial administration transferred to the British Government on independence, but allowed the claims to proceed on the basis of other arguments.

In 2012, a further hearing took place to determine whether the cases should be allowed to proceed. The High Court ruled that three of the five cases could do so. The Court of Appeal was due to hear our appeal against that decision last month. However, I can announce today that the Government have now reached an agreement with Leigh Day, the solicitors acting on behalf of the claimants, in full and final settlement of their clients' claims.

The agreement includes payment of a settlement sum in respect of 5,228 claimants, as well as a gross costs sum to the total value of £19.9 million. The Government will also support the construction of a memorial in Nairobi to the victims of torture and ill-treatment during

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the colonial era. The memorial will stand alongside others that are already being established in Kenya as the country continues to heal the wounds of the past. The British high commissioner in Nairobi is today making a public statement to members of the Mau Mau War Veterans Association in Kenya, explaining the settlement and expressing our regret for the events of the emergency period.

This settlement provides recognition of the suffering and injustice that took place in Kenya. The Government of Kenya, the Kenya Human Rights Commission and the Mau Mau War Veterans Association have long been in favour of a settlement, and it is my hope that the agreement now reached will receive wide support, will help draw a line under these events and will support reconciliation.

We continue to deny liability on behalf of the Government and British taxpayers today for the actions of the colonial administration in respect of the claims, and indeed the courts have made no finding of liability against the Government in this case. We do not believe that claims relating to events that occurred overseas outside direct British jurisdiction more than 50 years ago can be resolved satisfactorily through the courts without the testimony of key witnesses, which is no longer available. It is therefore right that the Government have defended the case to this point since 2009.

It is, of course, right that those who feel they have a case are free to bring it to the courts. However, we will also continue to exercise our own right to defend claims brought against the Government, and we do not believe that this settlement establishes a precedent in relation to any other former British colonial administration.

The settlement I am announcing today is part of a process of reconciliation. In December this year, Kenya will mark its 50th anniversary of independence and the country's future belongs to a post-independence generation. We do not want our current and future relations with Kenya to be overshadowed by the past. Today, we are bound together by commercial, security and personal links that benefit both our countries. We are working together closely to build a more stable region. Bilateral trade between the UK and Kenya amounts to £1 billion each year, and around 200,000 Britons visit Kenya annually.

Although we should never forget history and, indeed, must always seek to learn from it, we should also look to the future, strengthening a relationship that will promote the security and prosperity of both our nations. I trust that this settlement will support that process. The ability to recognise error in the past but also to build the strongest possible foundation for co-operation and friendship in the future are both hallmarks of our democracy.

12.5 pm

**Mr Douglas Alexander** (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (Lab): May I thank the Foreign Secretary for his statement and for advance sight of it? However, may I begin my remarks by asking him about a procedural point: why, given a Minister's obligation to the House and the importance of this announcement, were the details, including the wording of the statement of regret, the scale of the quantum agreed and details of the legal

background to the settlement, all provided to the newspapers yesterday before the House of Commons today? A full report appeared on *The Guardian* website at 6.42 yesterday evening and on *The Times* website at 7.30 yesterday evening. I hope that in his response the Foreign Secretary will offer the House a candid explanation as to why that occurred.

Let me turn to the substance of the matter in the Foreign Secretary's statement. First, may I place on record the cross-party consensus that exists on this issue and offer my support for the Foreign Secretary's efforts in seeing a legal settlement being agreed? Much has already been said of the suffering on all sides that lies at the heart of today's announcements. On 20 October 1952, Governor Baring signed an order declaring a state of emergency in Kenya. The violence that followed, carried out by both sides in the conflict, has been well documented, not least thanks to the brave and tragic testimony of many survivors who lived through it. As the Foreign Secretary said, there were hundreds of casualties among the British soldiers, police and officials, but during the period of emergency in Kenya most of the victims and casualties were Kenyan, with many thousands of Mau Mau members killed, and thousands more imprisoned and displaced. It is therefore right that the Foreign Secretary recognised the challenges and dangers that British personnel in Kenya faced at that time, but the mass detention camps, the forced resettlement and the levels of brutality that characterised that period in Kenyan history must also be recognised. The numbers of dead and those not accounted for is, of course, still debated, but I think there is broad consensus in all parts of this House that the scale of the suffering was profound and deeply regrettable.

That is why I welcome today's statement by the Foreign Secretary and want to echo his words acknowledging that Kenyans were tortured and mistreated by the colonial administration. I also want to support further today's expression of deep regret and unreserved condemnation of those actions. The British Government are right to reflect on our country's colonial past, not simply because the legacy of our past is still being felt today, but because we must look to history, learn its lessons and use them to help chart a course going forward. All parts of this House share an interest in seeing this issue resolved, which is why today I wish to put on record my support for the right hon. Gentleman's work over recent months to press for a fair resolution as Foreign Secretary.

So we support the announcements made today in the Foreign Secretary's statement, but I seek his clarification on a number of issues that arise as a result. First, could he confirm to the House which departmental budget is funding the £19.9 million of which he spoke, which makes up the full and final settlement announced today? Will he also set out what meetings his Department has had with representatives of the Mau Mau claimants, and could he update the House as to their collective view of and response to today's announcement? Indeed, will he further explain what he anticipates will be the response of the Kenyan Government, in particular, to today's announcement?

The British Government must continue, of course, to be categorical in their condemnation of torture and ill treatment, which are abhorrent violations of human dignity. It is right that current and future relations with

Kenya are not overshadowed by the past. So, along with the Foreign Secretary, I hope that today's announcement will encourage even stronger ties between our two nations going forward, despite, but not ignoring, our shared and, at times, troubled past.

**Mr Hague:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. I agree that the cross-party approach is important. These claims were first made in 2009, under the last Government, and the last Government decided to contest them in the courts. That was the right decision, because all of us together contest the liability of British taxpayers in the 21st century for what happened under colonial administrations. However, we are also right to support this settlement together, because it is the best outcome all round for both the British taxpayer and the claimants. Many of the claimants are of course very old, and further protracted legal proceedings would not necessarily be in their interests.

The right hon. Gentleman asked, quite rightly, about reports in the press. As I think he and the House recognise, I am an enthusiast for announcing things to Parliament. While I am not in a position to point a finger of accusation at anyone, I note that, in view of the nature of the settlement, information about it had been circulated beyond the Government before today. I also note that some of the figures given in newspaper reports are different from the figures that I have given today, and have clearly not come from the Foreign Office. However, the right hon. Gentleman was absolutely right to make the point that such announcements are best made to Parliament in the first instance. He was also right to join in the sincere regret that the Government have expressed: it will mean a great deal in Kenya that regret has been expressed by the Opposition as well as by the Government.

Let me turn to the specific questions that the right hon. Gentleman asked. The claim will not be met by any departmental budget; it is a claim on the Treasury reserve. That is what the reserve is for—to provide lump sums that cannot be anticipated or budgeted for.

The right hon. Gentleman asked what meetings the Government had had. This matter has been a subject of legal proceedings for four years, and the meetings that have been held with the aim of reaching a settlement have taken place with the lawyers of the claimants. From that it can be deduced that the claimants are happy with the settlement. Certainly the lawyers have expressed satisfaction on their behalf.

The Kenyan Government called for a settlement, and it is now for them to react to this settlement in whatever way they wish, but I hope that they will welcome it. The British high commissioner in Nairobi has met the Kenyan human rights commission and representatives of the Mau Mau in recent weeks, and, as I said in my statement, he will be speaking to Mau Mau veterans today, in particular about our plans for a memorial. However, all the contact in London has been with the lawyers.

Let me say again that, like the right hon. Gentleman, I believe that stronger ties between our countries are very important. Kenya is an important partner of this country in trade and tourism, and also—this is particularly important—in countering terrorism and seeking stability in east Africa. We work with Kenya closely in trying to bring stability to Somalia, for instance. I hope that the settlement will make it easier for us to do all those things in the future.

**Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con):** I support what we have done. However, when I was a little boy my father was a soldier operating in Aden, and I remember being absolutely petrified by the stories of British-origin settlers and farmers being chopped to bits by the Mau Mau. I note that we are going to subsidise and help to build a memorial to the Mau Mau, but may I make a suggestion? Given that not only were 200 British soldiers and policemen killed, but 1,800 civilians perished as a result of Mau Mau activities, I think that it would be very appropriate for a memorial to be erected to them—both Kenyans and those of British origin.

**Mr Hague:** My hon. Friend is right to remind the House that terrible acts were committed on both sides over a long period, between 1952 and 1963. Thirty-two European settlers were murdered in horrific circumstances, and many actions that can only be categorised as terrorist actions were undertaken by people who were part of the Mau Mau insurgency.

Equally, however, it is important for us to recognise—as we do, across the House—that torture and inhuman and degrading treatment can never, and should never, be part of our response to any outrage, however terrible. That is because we uphold our own high standards of human rights, and also because it is not an effective way in which to respond to any such outrages. It is very important that we express our own regret and acknowledge mistakes that were made, even though terrible acts were carried out on both sides.

As my hon. Friend will have noted, I recognised in my statement the service done by those employed by the colonial administration, who did so much work to build the institutions that underpin Kenya today. My statement was about the recognition of people engaged in the Mau Mau insurgency or accused of being so engaged, and I think that questions about other memorials and recognition of other people are for a different occasion, but I take full account of the point that my hon. Friend has made.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I appreciate that these are extremely sensitive matters, but we have a heavy schedule, so we need to speed things up somewhat.

**Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab):** I thank the Foreign Secretary for his statement, but I was a bit surprised when, towards the end of it, he said that the British Government “continue to deny liability” for what happened. It is very strange that the Government should arrive at a settlement with Leigh Day and offer compensation, and at the same time deny liability.

Liability was well known in the 1950s. Fenner Brockway, Barbara Castle, Leslie Hale, Tony Benn and many other MPs raised the issue in Parliament during the 1950s. It is only the steadfastness of people in Kenya who stood for justice and against the use of concentration camps, torture, castration, and all the vile things that were done to Kenyan prisoners by the British forces that has finally brought about this settlement. I met many of those victims last year when they came here to go to court, and I pay tribute to them, and to Dan Thea and others who have organised the campaign that has finally brought this day about.

[Jeremy Corbyn]

There are serious lessons to be learnt. When we deny rights and justice, when we deny democracy, when we use concentration camps, our actions reduce our ability to criticise anyone else for that fundamental denial of human rights. That lesson needs to be learnt not just from Kenya, but from other colonial wars in which equal brutality was employed by British forces.

**Mr Hague:** I fully accept the hon. Gentleman's extensive knowledge. He is right to speak about the terrible nature of some of the things that happened, and also right to speak—as I did a few moments ago—about the importance of upholding our own highest standards, expressing that very clearly to the world, and ensuring that we do it now.

The hon. Gentleman asked, in particular, about the consistency between recognition of those things and the Government's continuing to deny liability. What we are making clear—as the last Government did when contesting these claims in the courts in 2009—is that we do not agree with the principle that generations later, 50 or 60 years on in the 21st century, the British taxpayer can be held liable for what happened under colonial administrations in the middle of the 20th century. However, while we cannot accept that as a principle, we have reached a settlement in this case, and I am pleased that it has been welcomed in the House.

**Daniel Kawczynski** (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): Governments of various political colours have contested these claims through the courts over a period. May I first ask the Foreign Secretary what, specifically, has happened recently to cause the Government to change their position and acquiesce to this? Secondly—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I think that one question will do. I have just made a point about brevity, which should not be flagrantly defied.

**Mr Hague:** I will try also to give brief answers. I described in my statement how the legal cases were proceeding. There had been a series of hearings in 2011 and 2012. The Government had contested all of the cases, but the High Court had decided that three out of five of them could proceed, on grounds that were quite specific to this particular case and to the Mau Mau insurgency. It does not therefore set a precedent for other cases. Given that it had decided that, the Government came to the view that it was in the interests of the British taxpayer, and also of the claimants, to come to a settlement on this particular matter.

**Mr David Winnick** (Walsall North) (Lab): Terrible things were undoubtedly done on both sides, but may I tell the Foreign Secretary that many of us opposed from the start what we considered to be a totally unnecessary colonial war, as, indeed, we opposed what happened in Cyprus at around 1960? Although I would not normally quote Enoch Powell, because of the outburst in 1968 and other matters, in the debate on 27 July 1959 on the murder of 11 African detainees, he said:

“We cannot say, ‘We will have African standards in Africa, Asian standards in Asia and perhaps British standards here at home’... We cannot, we dare not, in Africa of all places, fall below

our own highest standards in the acceptance of responsibility.”—  
[*Official Report*, 27 July 1959; Vol. 610, c. 237.]

For once, Enoch Powell was right.

**Mr Speaker:** I think the Foreign Secretary will remember that Denis Healey described the speech in his autobiography as the greatest parliamentary speech he ever heard, carrying all the moral force of Demosthenes.

**Mr Hague:** Enoch Powell did, indeed, give a remarkable and powerful speech in the debate in 1959, and I read it in preparing for this statement. [*Interruption.*] I was not born at the time, so I did not read it then. There will be many strong views held about the events of that time, although most of us who are Members of the House now did not have a strong view at the time because we were not around then, but there is a strong tradition in this House going all the way back to the 18th century. In the 1780s, Edmund Burke called Governments to account for colonial misdeeds in India and sought to bring Warren Hastings to trial. There is a long and proud history of this House asserting itself on the errors that have been made during our imperial rule of other countries, and our recognition of these errors today is part of that long tradition.

**Tessa Munt** (Wells) (LD): I welcome the Foreign Secretary's statement. It serves us well to approach this whole matter with sensitivity and humility. There are some fairly serious disputes about the numbers of people involved. The official figures say 11,000 Mau Mau rebels were killed and only 32 white settlers, but David Anderson, professor of African politics at Oxford, says that probably 25,000 people died at the hands of the colonial organisation. I wonder whether there should be a debate about the past, and whether we ought to make sure that adults, some of whom will remember these events, know about what happened, and also that young people learn from this period of history. Might the Foreign Secretary speak to the Education Secretary and consider whether this part of our colonial past, which did not cover us with glory, might be a topic for discussion in schools?

**Mr Hague:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her remarks. I do not suppose there will ever be universally agreed figures in respect of what happened and how many people were killed in what was such a confused and terrible situation in such a large country. I will refer her points on to my hon. Friends with responsibility for these matters, and the Deputy Leader of the House is present, hearing another bid for parliamentary time and discussion. It is very important for us always to learn, in whatever form, from mistakes of the past. We are recognising that today. Indeed, the abhorrence of torture and ill treatment, and the strictness of the rules we now have against that for everyone working on behalf of the United Kingdom, are part of our recognition that mistakes were made in the past.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): I also welcome this important and historic statement, which was so eloquently delivered by the Foreign Secretary. These were dark days in the history of our country. My wife was born in Kisumu in Kenya, and her family lived through this violence. Many thousands of Kenyan Asians have come to settle in Leicester. They will see this as a line being

drawn in the sand. How does the Foreign Secretary intend to take the relationship with Kenya forward in the future?

**Mr Hague:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for his support for the statement. The relationship with Kenya is very important to our country, and I mentioned a few moments ago the many different dimensions of it. It is a relationship that we want to expand, in terms of trade in particular, to the benefit of both nations. It is also very important for stability in east Africa. Given the UK's leading role there, for instance in the work we do on Somalia, our relations with Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia are of great importance, and we give great attention to them. I hope relations between the UK and Kenya will develop over the coming years and decades in a true sense of partnership, with the new generations moving on fully from everything that happened in the colonial era. A sense of equal partnership with African nations is now how we should approach our relationships with these countries.

**Hugh Bayley (York Central) (Lab):** I welcome the statements, expressing regret, made by both the Foreign Secretary and the shadow Foreign Secretary. The ghastly impact of Mau Mau on African Kenyan citizens as well as European settlers is well documented in the wonderful books by the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o, but we must accept that there were totally unacceptable actions by British colonial authorities, and I am glad that has happened today. We have an important development relationship with Kenya, and important joint security concerns, such as on piracy off the coast of Africa. To what extent will this statement make it easier for our countries to co-operate, and to do so better than before, on issues of common interest?

**Mr Hague:** I hope it will make it easier. It should remove one of the areas of contention between the UK and Kenya—or the people of Kenya. The hon. Gentleman rightly notes the breadth and importance of our co-operation, so I hope it will smooth the path for our effective co-operation in the future. Of course that relies on many other things, however. It relies on the daily commitment of each nation to make our bilateral relations work successfully, but I certainly hope this settlement will be a help, rather than a hindrance, in that very important process.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am grateful to the Foreign Secretary and colleagues.

## Backbench Business

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

### Public Administration Committee Report (Charity Commission)

12.27 pm

**Mr Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered the matter of the publication of the Third Report of the Public Administration Select Committee, The role of the Charity Commission and “public benefit”: Post-legislative scrutiny of the Charities Act 2006, HC 76.

I am grateful to the Backbench Business Committee for the opportunity to launch the Public Administration Committee's third report of this Session. This is, in many ways, one of the Committee's most important reports. The charitable sector is at the heart of British society, involving millions of people and with £9.3 billion received in donations last year. About 25 new applications for charitable status are received by the Charity Commission every working day.

The first UK charity was established in the year 597: the King's school, Canterbury, which still thrives today. The regulation of charities in England and Wales started under Queen Elizabeth I, with the 1601 Statute of Charitable Uses, which set out the first definition of a charity in English law and the purposes for which a charity could be established. The definition of a charity has remained largely unchanged from that time. Page 8 of our report carries a useful timeline of the development of charity law since then.

The subject of the Committee's inquiry was the Charities Act 2006. Our inquiry followed the Government's own review of the Act, carried out by Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots. I hope the House will join me in thanking my noble Friend for his valuable and meticulous work.

The Committee's inquiry came at a challenging time for the Charity Commission. Its budget is being reduced by 33% in real terms over five years. The Charity Commission has also become involved in some protracted legal battles. It lost a case with the Independent Schools Council and its decision last year to decline an application for charitable status from the Preston Down Trust, part of what is called the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church or, formerly, the Exclusive Brethren—

**Paul Flynn (Newport West) (Lab):** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr Jenkin:** I will give way at the end of my remarks.

That decision was challenged and taken to the charity tribunal—

**Paul Flynn:** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman said that he will give way at the end of his remarks. I understand that the debate is time limited, so can he give us some idea of when he is likely to finish? I am the only other member of the Committee in the Chamber and I profoundly disagree with this very poor report. If I am to be gagged and not allowed to speak by the Chair—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo):** Order. I am sure that that is not the intention, Mr Flynn. Under this procedure, Mr Jenkin can take up to 20 minutes to present his report but he will take interventions as he is going along.

**Paul Flynn:** He has just refused one.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I think we should interpret his remarks, as I did, to mean that he wanted to finish the point he was making before he took an intervention. I am sure that that was what you meant, Mr Jenkin, was it not?

**Mr Jenkin:** I will give way to the hon. Member for Newport West (Paul Flynn) and I can assure the House that I have never been able to gag him, try as I might. I can assure him that my speech will by no means fill the 20 minutes available; I hope it will fill no more than half that.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I want to make sure that we are both clear on the procedure. If you make your remarks and sit down, that is the end, so we need you to take interventions during your speech.

**Mr Jenkin:** I quite understand.

We received firm advice from the Attorney-General that we should treat the Preston Down case as sub judice to avoid prejudging any future tribunal decisions. In any case, it is not for PASC to determine the charitable status of individual cases.

The impact of the 2006 Act on the issue of public benefit and charitable status was at the centre of the inquiry. It has always been the case that charities must be established for charitable purposes only and that a charitable purpose must be “for the public benefit”, but the 2006 Act is said to have removed the presumption of public benefit from the list of headings that has historically existed, although case law prompts the question whether there ever was in fact such a presumption. However, the Act also placed a duty on the commission to publish guidance on public benefit, even though Parliament failed to define “public benefit” in the Act.

That aspect of the Act has been an administrative and financial disaster for the Charity Commission and for the charities involved, absorbing vast amounts of energy and commitment. Lord Hodgson describes the public benefit aspect of the Act as “a hospital pass”, inviting the commission to become involved in matters such as the charitable status of independent schools, which have long been a matter of political controversy.

We criticise the Charity Commission’s interpretation of the Act in some cases, but ultimately find that “the Charities Act 2006 is critically flawed on the question of public benefit and should be revisited by Parliament”.

**Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con):** Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

**Mr Jenkin:** I will give way to my hon. Friend when I am close to the end of my remarks.

We recommend that the presumption of public benefit in the 2006 Act should be repealed along with the Charity Commission’s statutory public benefit objective. The situation must be rectified with a new Act to allow

the commission to focus on its proper job. Parliament, not the Charity Commission, should determine the criteria for charitable status and should not delegate them to an executive body.

We concluded that the other objectives for the Charity Commission set by the 2006 Act are also far too vague and aspirational in character—an all-too-frequent shortcoming of modern legislative drafting—to determine what the Charity Commission should do, given the limitations on its resources, to fulfil its statutory objectives.

**Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con):** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Jenkin:** The Cabinet Office must consider how to prioritise what is expected of the Charity Commission, so that it can function with its reduced budget. That must enable it to renew its focus on regulation as its core task. The commission is not resourced, for example, “to promote the effective use of charitable resources”

or, for that matter, to oversee a reappraisal of what is meant by “public benefit”; nor is it ever likely to be.

PASC’s report also makes recommendations on the issue of chugging—that is, the face-to-face fundraising whereby many feel pressured by chuggers.

**Paul Flynn:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way on that point?

**Mr Jenkin:** I will give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

The chair of the Charity Commission, William Shawcross, described chugging as “a blight on the charitable sector”.

Self-regulation has failed so far to address that. The case for statutory regulation of fundraising is compelling, but what about the cost, whether to the taxpayer or to charities themselves? Self-regulation has made some progress, but we recommend that it is placed on notice and reviewed in five years’ time.

Lord Hodgson proposed a rise in the threshold for compulsory registration with the Charity Commission to £25,000 a year to reduce red tape for smaller charities. We rejected that on the basis of the overwhelming majority of the evidence we received.

We also recommended against any relaxation of the rules on political campaigning by charities. Moreover, charities should publish their spending on campaigning and political activity to boost transparency. That is relevant to the question of lobbying, which Parliament is shortly to consider.

As for the question whether public funds should be used by charities involved with political campaigns, again transparency is the answer. Ministers should inform Parliament whenever a decision is made to provide Government support by direct grant to a charity that is involved in political campaigning.

Earlier this week, the Public Accounts Committee reported on the case of the Cup Trust and the specific issue of sham charities and tax avoidance. We welcome its report and the Charity Commission should learn from that scandal. We question whether the commission’s legal advice was too cautious and whether they should have acted more boldly. If the commission feels that it



lacks necessary powers, it should tell us. Generally, however, the abuse of charitable status to obtain tax relief is intolerable and should be uncovered by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Charity Commission working more closely together.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr Jenkin:** I want first to give way to my fellow member of the Committee, the hon. Member for Newport West.

**Paul Flynn:** The report does nothing to add to the reputation of this House. It is an atrocious report and it is a bad reflection on our systems that the Chairman of the Committee can take up the entire time devoted to its consideration.

Let me take the hon. Gentleman back to the point about the situation with independent public schools. It was hoped that the 2006 Act would change the unfairness whereby Eton and Harrow get a handout from taxpayers whereas ordinary schools in poor areas do not. The Act tried to change that, but a perverse decision taken by the law stated that the status of a charity depends on what it was established for, not on what it does. Two charities—one in Wales that exists to give petticoats to fallen women and another that exists to give education to the orphans of the Napoleonic wars—are more important than the fact that ordinary schools are deprived of charity status whereas public schools for the rich and privileged continue to enjoy that status and the related handouts.

**Mr Jenkin:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, because he demonstrates the diversity of view on the question of the charitable status of independent schools. That shows why that matter should be decided by this House and Parliament, rather than simply being passed to the Charity Commission to determine. It is too controversial and we should not be delegating legislative functions to an executive body.

**Mr Sheerman:** I am obviously not a member of the hon. Gentleman's Committee, but I am a trustee and chair of a number of charities. Can he comment at all on the well-known whistleblower who worked for the Charity Commission but said that the weakness of the commission is that it has absolutely no power to investigate what is known to be widespread fraud in the charitable world? The commission is ineffective at doing that and does not have the necessary staff. Even the staff it does have are not directed to that large-scale fraud, which the whistleblower who came to see me told me is going on and must be stopped.

**Mr Jenkin:** I am mindful of the hon. Gentleman's point. We did not major on that during this inquiry, but it might be something to which we return. We recommend in our report that the Charity Commission and HMRC should work much more closely together. In fact, HMRC has the resource to investigate, penetrate and demand information about charities and their tax affairs and donors. In my personal opinion, it is as much a failure of HMRC as of the Charity Commission, but we recommend they work together more closely. What we have to be

absolutely clear about is that the Charity Commission cannot start to conduct extensive investigations into the tax affairs of charities and their donors; it simply is not resourced to do so.

**Mr Bone:** I congratulate my hon. Friend and the Committee on producing such an excellent report—

**Paul Flynn:** You haven't read it.

**Mr Bone:** There it is, Paul. I've read it—okay?

**Mr Sheerman:** We'll test you on it.

**Mr Bone:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the suggestions being made from a sedentary position that I have not read the report are outrageous.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo):** Mr Bone, I quite agree. Mr Sheerman, Mr Flynn, you have made your contributions, and shouting across the Chamber is not helpful.

**Mr Sheerman:** He spends his life shouting across the Chamber.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Well, the next time he shouts across the Chamber when I am in the Chair, I can assure you I will pick him up, as I do everyone. Mr Bone, you may continue.

**Mr Bone:** May I refer to a different aspect of the report, on charitable status for religious institutions? Many such institutions feel that there has been creep by the Charity Commission in defining public benefit or, worse still, going to the tribunal to define it. From what the Chair of the Committee is saying, I gather that he thinks this is something that Parliament should revisit.

**Mr Jenkin:** That is exactly right. The legal advice we received on this question is quite clear: in the 1949 case of *Gilmour v. Coats*, the House of Lords made it clear that a cloistered religious order is not charitable, as any benefit is restricted to its members, who are a private class and not a sufficient section of the public. It has never been the case that every religious organisation is automatically charitable. However, the judgments in two other cases—*Neville Estates v. Madden* in 1962 and *Re Banfield* in 1968—were that a private religious group that is not wholly shut off from the world at large may be charitable.

The 2006 Act was not intended to introduce anything new, and it may have introduced some instability by requiring the commission to think up guidance on public benefit. That is what we feel was the real mistake—the apparent removal of the presumption and the requirement to produce guidance. If Parliament wants public benefit to be defined, it should define public benefit or it should leave the matter to the courts. Making the Charity Commission use its intervening judgment is what Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots described as the hospital pass.

**Mr Nuttall:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Paul Flynn:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Mr Jenkin:** I will give way to the hon. Gentleman again, but first I give way to my hon. Friend.

**Mr Nuttall:** I thank my hon. Friend and his Committee for their report. I look forward to reading it in more detail, but I will be honest and say that I have only had a chance to skim through it. I want to concentrate on conclusion 28, on the payment of trustees. Does he agree with me that in cases where there are voluntary trustees who are willing to replace expensive paid-for corporate trustees, that should be encouraged, welcomed and, indeed, facilitated by the Charity Commission?

**Mr Jenkin:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question, because we were presented by my noble Friend Lord Hodgson with a recommendation that it should be made much easier for trustees to be paid officials. I have to say that there was a strong reaction against that proposal, which has a bearing on the point my hon. Friend raises because the whole point about charities is that trustees are not paid. There may be quite highly paid executives in charities, but the job of a trustee is not to benefit financially from being a trustee. There are exceptions, but the Charity Commission has to approve them. I believe my hon. Friend is suggesting that the commission should be prepared to withdraw that consent in the event of a person offering to do the job for nothing. I invite the commission to consider that matter, which we may revisit in a future inquiry.

**Paul Flynn:** Following the remark by the hon. Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) that a number of Christian denominations have been under pressure from the Charity Commission, will the Chair of the Committee remind the House that 1,176 Christian and other religious associations were awarded charity status, but only one tiny and oppressive sect was turned down, and that was Hales Exclusive Brethren? Is it not appropriate to remind the House that we were subjected to the most intensive lobbying on this matter? Two million pounds was spent and I was personally approached—face to face—more than 50 times, including at my party conference. Around every corner in this House, there were members of that very unpleasant sect waiting to accost us. The Committee made a point about the control of bodies that lobby in that way. It was not about religion or charitable status; it was about money.

**Mr Jenkin:** I hear what the hon. Gentleman says and he made his views clear in the Committee. I just re-emphasise that we declined to express a view one way or the other on the merits of that case on the advice of the Attorney-General.

**Mr Bone:** My hon. Friend is being generous in giving way. The point I was trying to make is that there are religious organisations of all faiths that are concerned about what is happening and what might happen in the future.

**Mr Jenkin:** That is certainly correct. There has been widespread fear among many colleagues that the case presages a crackdown on religious groups by the Charity Commission. I believe the consistent message in our

report is that we believe that too much has been laid at the door of the commission to determine. If Parliament wishes to legislate to provide additional restrictions against religious organisations, it is for Parliament to do that, but there is established case law, which I quoted earlier, that should determine whether or not a religious organisation becomes a charity. It is unfortunate that that particular case became so adversarial. It has to be said that the charity tribunal has not reduced the costs of litigation as was hoped, and there is scope to improve the practices of the commission in handling such disputes, so that vast amounts of the time and resources of the commission and charities, or potential charities, is not absorbed in paying lawyers to argue about how many angels there are on the head of a pin.

**Paul Flynn:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that particular sect has been involved in lobbying in other countries—including paying politicians, although I am not saying that that has happened here—and that the resulting disquiet among other religious groups was entirely because of the propaganda of Hales Exclusive Brethren? This is not a religion; it is a very nasty sect that treats its members very badly. We had people giving evidence in this House that they were threatened with losing their job, their home or their mortgage because they bought the wrong computer—not the one that Exclusive Brethren have, which, rather like what happens in North Korea, can only pick up the group's website. This is an exceptional group of people, and the Charity Commission took no action that was disreputable or wrong. The commission did the right thing in identifying that group and allowing 1,176 other religious groups to have charitable status.

**Mr Jenkin:** I am sure the whole House has heard the hon. Gentleman's strong opinions on that matter. He will know that the Committee as a whole declined to express a definitive view on the matter on the advice of the Attorney-General. My understanding is that we all agreed that such matters would be best settled by Parliament laying down more clearly the meaning of public benefit or by returning to the previous position in which it was left to the courts to decide, rather than by requiring the Charity Commission to produce guidance on the meaning of public benefit, which has been the source of much dispute.

If there are no more interventions—I should be happy to give way to either Front Bencher—I will conclude by stating our belief that the implementation of our recommendations is essential to restore and to maintain public trust in charities and in the Charity Commission, which in turn is essential to promote the good work done by charitable organisations in communities across the country. I hope that the House will join me in thanking the charity commissioners and everyone who works for the commission. They are dealing with a vast work load with diminishing resources—like much of the public sector, they have had to suffer extensive redundancies, with more to come—and we rely on their devoted service. We should thank them for everything they do for charities in this country.

*Question put and agreed to.*

## Student Visas

*[Relevant documents: Fourth Report of the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, Session 2012-13, Overseas Students and Net Migration, HC 425, and the Government response, Cm 8557, Seventh Report of the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, Session 2012-13, Too little, Too late: Committee's observations on the Government Response to the Report on Overseas Students and Net Migration, HC 1015, and the Government response, Cm 8622, Fifth Report of the Home Affairs Committee, Session 2012-13, The work of the UK Border Agency (December 2011-March 2012), HC 71, Sixth Special Report of the Home Affairs Committee, Session 2012-13, The work of the UK Border Agency (December 2011-March 2012): Government response to the Committee's Fifth Report of Session 2012-13, HC 825, Eighth Report of the Home Affairs Committee, Session 2012-13, The work of the UK Border Agency (April-June 2012), HC 603, and the Government response, Cm 8591, Seventh Report of the Committee of Public Accounts, Session 2012-13, Immigration: The Points Based System—Student Route, HC 101, and the Treasury minute, Cm 8467]*

12.50 pm

**Mr Adrian Bailey** (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move,

That this House notes the recommendations of the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, the Home Affairs Select Committee, and the Committee of Public Accounts, together with the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee and the EU Sub-Committee on Home Affairs, Health and Education, for the removal of students from net migration targets; and invites the Home Office to further consider the conclusions of these Committees in developing its immigration policy.

I thank the Back-Bench Business Committee for allocating time for this important debate. I am grateful to those Members who helped me get this Back-Bench business debate: my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield), who is not only a fellow Select Committee member, but secretary of the all-party higher education group, whom I thank for the work that he has done, and the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), whom I thank for the assiduous way in which he has backed the Select Committee recommendations and worked to ensure that they get wider recognition.

The motion demonstrates that there have been five Select Committee reports on this subject. All have examined the student visas issue, all have come to similar conclusions and all have been consistently rejected by the Home Office, even though a considerable number of Government Members on the relevant Select Committees have backed those reports. However, the wording of the motion is deliberately designed not to pursue a confrontational approach with the Home Office, and I will not seek to divide the House on the motion. Rather, the motion has been tabled in order to give the House an opportunity to present a case for removing students from the net migration figures in a way that will be evidence-led and lead to further consideration in the evolution and, I hope, refinement of the Government's immigration policies.

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Bailey:** Yes, I could not resist the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee.

**Keith Vaz:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I congratulate him on securing the debate and accurately reflecting the views of the Home Affairs Committee.

Does my hon. Friend agree that the way we conduct this debate—the language that we use—is extremely important? Over the past year, in the case of India, for example, there has been a 30% decline in the number of students coming to this country because the message has got out that they are not welcome here. Our message is that they are welcome here, and we need to reflect this in the debate that we have and in Government policy.

**Mr Bailey:** My right hon. Friend makes an important point. It is not just the regulatory regime, but the language surrounding the introduction and implementation of that regulatory regime, which define international perception of our policy. I will touch on that in the course of my remarks.

**Dr Julian Huppert** (Cambridge) (LD): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman and his Committee on securing this debate on a very important issue. International students make a huge difference. Apologies from me and, I am sure, from the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee, as we have a Home Affairs Committee debate in another place which starts shortly.

Further to the question from the Select Committee Chair, does the hon. Gentleman agree that there are three things that we have to get right—the rhetoric, the policy and the administration? If we fall foul of any of those, we will not get the outcomes that we need.

**Mr Bailey:** I agree. In varying degrees, none of those is right at present.

Before I go on to the substance of the issues, let me make it clear that no MP in any party can be unaware of public concerns about immigration or can fail to recognise the legitimacy of the Government's intentions to address that. Similarly, I do not think that any MP in any party can object to actions being taken against bogus colleges and the use of education as a route to illegal immigration. I am sure all MPs of all parties would stand behind the Government and the education system as a whole in seeking to block that.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I congratulate the Chairman of the Select Committee on this very good report. It meshes well with the Higher Education Commission report on post-graduate education, which he will know of. What is good about his report is that it flags up in a sensible way the problems of migration and bogus colleges, but points out strongly that, within this international market and this great employment and wealth creator, the universities of this country and post-graduate education in particular are sensitive to the possible reaction of legitimate students—highly qualified people—who come here.

**Mr Bailey:** The hon. Gentleman addresses an important point. Skills and higher education is now a global market. Those with the best brains are increasingly footloose and go to the places where they think they will get the best opportunity to develop their expertise and where they feel they will get the warmest welcome. It is in that international context that we must look at our policies on student visas.

[Mr Bailey]

In addressing what must be recognised as a hugely sensitive issue and a focus of public concern, the Government must have a student regime that does not deter bona fide international students and does not undermine our further education colleges, our universities or the wider economy. I recognise the efforts that the Prime Minister has made to visit India and China in particular to make it clear unequivocally that there is no cap on bona fide student applications. However, the Prime Minister has a credibility problem if, at the same time as he proclaims those things, students who wish to come to this country from abroad find that their dealings with the Home Office and the visa process completely contradict his public assertions.

**Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend find it slightly perplexing that we have seen a drop of about 40,000 a year in overseas student numbers, which suggests that the very people he wants to attract are being deterred, and that simultaneously we have seen a huge growth in temporary student visas—the very group that the independent inspector warned is most likely to include bogus students?

**Mr Bailey:** My hon. Friend mentions an important point. I shall deal with that in some depth in a moment.

Within the regulatory regime, the current problems are focused on the inflexibility of the tier 4 visa for undergraduate education. Over and above that and linked to it are the problems associated with the post-study work visa. There is no doubt that many international students who want an undergraduate education want to carry that on at postgraduate level in order to demonstrate the skills that they have acquired in local universities, the local public sector or sometimes local businesses. The majority deterrent to that within the existing visa structure is the high salary threshold, which precludes much postgraduate working in areas where salaries for graduates are lower or in professions where salaries for graduates are lower.

Credibility interviews are the process that the Home Office is using to interview would-be international students in their home countries to establish the credibility of their claims to want higher education in this country. The feedback that I am getting time and again from universities is that that approach appears to be incoherent and inconsistent. Taken together with the change in regulations, it reinforces the perception abroad that Britain is no longer open to business. The fact that the Prime Minister needs to go to these countries and make these statements is a tacit admission that there is a real problem and a gap between the regulatory regime as stated by the Government and the perception of it abroad.

**Dame Joan Ruddock** (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his speech. In London alone, tuition fees are paid by overseas students to the value of £870 million, so we have a tremendous gain from these students coming here. At my local colleges, Goldsmith's and Trinity Laban, the student experience is vastly enhanced by the presence of foreign students.

**Mr Bailey:** I thank my right hon. Friend for her intervention. I will elaborate on that point in a moment, and I am sure that Members representing other universities would seek to do so.

We really need to sing about the fact that further and higher education in Britain is a success story. It is not just a way for people to fulfil their personal career ambitions or to develop themselves culturally and socially, important though that is; it is an industry that earns £8 billion in exports and contributes £14 billion, in all, to the British economy. In certain towns, particularly in more deprived regions, it is crucial in sustaining employment levels and economies. Four UK universities are in the world university top 10 rankings, and a very high percentage are in the top 200. It is not just about the contribution that international students make to the economies of the local areas in which universities are located. Increasingly, universities are working in collaboration with local businesses to ensure that the research and skills that they develop are harnessed for commercial purposes or with the public sector to assist in the local community. I have seen fantastic examples of that work up and down the country, and it is crucially underpinned by international students.

Last year, 12% of the total student body comprised international students, 49% of whom enrolled in courses in engineering, maths and computer sciences—the very areas where there are serious skills shortages and the maximum economic dividend for our businesses. Any policy that restricts access into those areas will have, in the long term, profound implications for the capacity of our local businesses to grow the economy.

**Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this debate from the Backbench Business Committee. He may well come to this point, but I would like to make it as well. Many people who come to this country to study get a very good impression of it. They get educated here and they experience our values and understand what we stand for. When they go back, they become a friend of this country in their own societies. That is terribly important for the future of our country and, indeed, their countries.

**Mr Bailey:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, although he has taken half my next point. Perhaps he made it considerably better than I would.

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Bailey:** Very quickly, but I have already taken a lot of interventions.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** I appreciate that, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He will be aware that I represent the constituency that includes London Metropolitan university. Although things have moved on a long way and some overseas students are now being recruited, will he express regret about how that university has been treated and the damage that was done to Britain's international reputation by the Home Office's handling of the situation?

**Mr Bailey:** Whatever the case for taking action there, the way that it was handled has undoubtedly had considerable adverse repercussions abroad. Perhaps the case needs to be examined to see whether similar problems that may emerge in future can be dealt with in a less damaging way.

We have a superb industry and there is a huge and increasing global demand for its product. It is estimated that 4.1 million students are studying in different countries from their home countries and that that figure will rise to 7 million by 2020. We have top-class universities and an expanding market of people who want to come here, and we must capitalise on that.

The Government have claimed that their visa policy is working because, according to the figures, there has been a marginal increase in the number of international students applying to come to British universities in the past year. In reality, there are considerable fluctuations, with an increase in numbers coming from China offsetting a huge fall of 25% in those coming from India. I have to say that Universities UK disputes some of these figures, but I do not want to get drawn into a debate between the Government and Universities UK. Everybody recognises that at a time when there is huge and growing demand, Britain is, at best, flatlining in terms of the number of recruits it is getting. In fact, Britain's share of this expanding market has dropped from 10.8% to 9.9%. A shareholder of a company that had a fantastic product and an expanding market would not be very happy with its management if it were taking a declining share of that market.

The crucial significance of that was highlighted by the hon. Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart). It is not only about the immediate benefit but the long-term trading relationships that build up as a result. In the west midlands, we see that with the Tata brothers and their investment in Jaguar Land Rover, and with Lord Paul and his investment in schools and companies. There is a tremendous potential as regards the immeasurable contribution that will be made due to foreign students studying here.

This comes at a time when universities are struggling for finance; they recognise that in these hard times they cannot be exempt. Recruitment of international students presents an opportunity for them to bring in extra money that unfortunately they cannot get from the Government because of the current financial problems. My local university, Wolverhampton, currently recruits 800 international students each year, but it estimates that with a fair and consistent visa process it could take another 500 a year from India and Sri Lanka alone. If they contribute £10,000 a year, which is a fairly minimal estimate, that would amount to £5 million more a year going into the local university and, above all, into the black country economy. I think that that situation would be reflected in other universities that I have spoken to.

Earlier I mentioned the credibility test, which is undoubtedly one of the major problems. It is not only a regulatory problem but a process problem. One prospective Wolverhampton university student was rejected on the grounds that the amount of money he would spend in this country meant that he could get the same course at a domestic university in his own country. Imagine that happening in any other industry: if somebody told Jaguar, "You can't export a Jaguar, because people can afford to buy one that's made in their own country," we would be up in arms and dancing in rage. In this case, however, nothing is said.

**Mr Virendra Sharma** (Ealing, Southall) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Mr Bailey:** Yes, I will take one more intervention.

**Mr Sharma:** I thank my hon. Friend for giving way and congratulate him on securing this debate. On immigration policy and practices, I am sure that the caseloads of most MPs present will show that that kind of message deters genuine students from coming here. It means that the country loses finances and other resources as well as the individual student.

**Mr Bailey:** I agree entirely.

I have another example from Wolverhampton university. Six international students were refused visas even though they were sponsored by the Department for International Development. Moreover, when the Department wrote to the consulate, they were still rejected. If the Government cannot get their own people into the country through the Home Office system, what hope do so many young people from other countries have?

In its reply to the Select Committee report, the Home Office argued that other countries include students in their net migration figures. There are variations from country to country and I do not want to get bogged down in that argument, but the crucial thing is that, whether they do that or not, they do not use the figures as the basis for their immigration policy. The Government's target of reducing net migration to fewer than 100,000 can only be achieved by reducing numbers. The current drop to 157,000 has been achieved mainly by reducing numbers in the further education sector and by increased numbers going abroad. The Migration Advisory Committee calculates that to reach the target, non-EU student numbers need to be reduced by 87,000. That would be catastrophic to the finances of the FE and higher education sectors.

In conclusion, a policy whose success relies on damaging a great export industry needs re-examination. This is an industry with a great brand, a huge demand for its product and incredible potential for boosting the economy, both locally and nationally, and it should be backed all the way. It is an industry that should be helped, not handicapped. The current visa regime, whatever the legitimacy of the broad objectives of the immigration policy, is not doing that. It is handicapping our universities. The answer is to change the policy and focus on the real immigration issues that are, I recognise, of great concern to the public.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. Many Members want to speak, so may I gently suggest that they speak for up to 10 minutes? Unfortunately the opening speech lasted 23 minutes, so it has pushed us back. It was a very good speech—I am not knocking that—but I remind Members that we have to stick to the timetable because we need to fit in the Front Benchers as well.

1.13 pm

**Nadhim Zahawi** (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con): I shall attempt to take less than 10 minutes, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Ever since Erasmus came to study Greek at Cambridge 500 years ago, our universities have attracted the best and the brightest from around the world, but the world is changing. In the modern global marketplace, we have no God-given right to a competitive advantage in higher education. We have to fight for it.

[Nadhim Zahawi]

As the Chairman of the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee has said, there will be huge rewards for the British economy if we get this right. By 2020 the number of international students worldwide is set to grow to 7 million. Key strategic partners, such as Brazil and Saudi Arabia in the Gulf, have earmarked billions of dollars to spend on sending their students on scholarships abroad. This is a fast-growing market and if we want to win the global race we have to get serious about growing our market share.

We know that the competition is serious. Could there be any better example of the extraordinary lengths to which our rivals will go than the French Government's recent decision to relax the ban on teaching in the English language at French universities? Let us be clear: even though we enjoy a commanding position in the market, over the past 10 years our market share has remained pretty flat. Over the same period, our two most obvious competitors after the United States—namely Australia and Canada—have recorded significant increases. What are they doing differently?

First, both countries present more attractive options for post-study work. Foreign students in Canada can work for up to three years after graduation, and in Australia they can work for up to two years, rising to three with a masters and four with a PhD. Crucially, they do not have to seek work with a Government-approved firm or on a Government-approved salary.

The other key difference is that both countries distinguish between the temporary student inflow and long-term migrants when devising their borders policy. Australia has learned the hard way why that makes sense. When student visa rules were tightened up in response to political pressure in 2010, the Australian higher education sector posted a 2.7 billion Australian dollar loss on goods and services that would otherwise have been purchased by overseas students. In the UK, we risk making the same mistake. In particular, the closure of the tier 1 post-study work route has broadcast the message around the world that foreign students are less welcome in the UK than they are in our competitor economies.

I believe that the perception of a policy is just as important as the policy itself. Even though it did not come to it, the prospect of legitimate students at London Metropolitan facing deportation was deeply damaging. We cannot expect the casual 17-year-old reader of the *China Daily* who is thinking about studying abroad to distinguish between London Metropolitan university and the University of London.

**Alok Sharma** (Reading West) (Con): My hon. Friend is making some valid points. Does he agree that one of the key things that must come out of this debate is a clear message to students in India, China and other emerging economies with a lot of growth that the UK is open, that there are no caps or limits, and that they can come here if they go to an accredited establishment, can speak English and have the funding?

**Nadhim Zahawi**: I thank my hon. Friend, who is absolutely right that the message has to be that we are open for business. Indeed, the latest figures for 2010-11 and 2011-12 show that all the Russell group universities

apart from three posted positive increases. There is some good news, but I hope that this debate will further inform the Government and the Home Office as to what else we can do to enhance the situation.

**Jackie Doyle-Price** (Thurrock) (Con): Although I agree with my hon. Friend that we should give the message that we are open to legitimate students, will he also concede that this route has been abused in the past and that, equally, we have to give a message that we will be robust with those people who intend to exploit our good will as a route into the country?

**Nadhim Zahawi**: My hon. Friend is spot on in saying that we have to be robust and I will deal with that later. She is absolutely right to say that we have to carry the good will of the British people with us and demonstrate rigour in the immigration system and our border controls in order to be able to send a message to those areas that are crucial to our exports.

I want to return to the point that perception is reality and the example of the young student reading the *China Daily*. Fortunately, we know exactly what the problem is. With unprecedented unanimity, all five parliamentary Committees that have looked into this issue agree that the Government's net migration target puts our borders policy on a collision course with our ambitions for higher education.

Political targets are an essential part of the democratic process. They tell the electorate what we are about and what our values are. However, targets are not an end in themselves, but a tool to measure the success of broader policy aims. The Government's net migration target is about building an immigration system that works for Britain—one that delivers economic benefits while addressing long-standing public concerns about immigration. However, if we are trying to meet that target by discouraging a group who provide an obvious economic benefit, who are disproportionately less likely to settle here and who, of all migrant groups, attract the least public concern, something is wrong with the target.

I want immigration politics to be taken out of our higher education system. For that to happen, we must take international students out of the targets.

**Alok Sharma**: My hon. Friend is being very generous in giving way. Should we not be explaining to the public in more detail what the net migration figure is made up of and disaggregating it? We can debate whether student numbers should be taken out, but clearly we must explain each of the components, because that is not widely understood.

**Nadhim Zahawi**: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The disaggregation and further decimation of that information—

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): Dissemination.

**Nadhim Zahawi**: Dissemination, I apologise. I will get my English right eventually. I only arrived here in 1978. I apologise to the hon. Gentleman.

**Chris Bryant**: It is a Latin word.

**Nadhim Zahawi**: The hon. Gentleman is quite right.

We can do three things to solve this problem. First, we must continue to come down hard on immigration fraud. The Government are right to deal robustly with those who abuse the student route. The fact that we have closed down more than 500 bogus colleges since the election shows how easy it has been to exploit the student visa system in recent years. If we want to carry the public with us, it is vital to maintain public confidence in the integrity of our immigration system.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman is making about bogus colleges, but does he have sympathy for the students who applied to enter this country to study at those colleges and who have had a very bad time through no fault of their own because they were duped into a very bad system? The system has changed a bit, but should we not have a more humanitarian approach to those people who, after all, are victims?

**Nadhim Zahawi:** The hon. Gentleman is right to point out that innocents get caught out in those situations. The best way to deal with the problem is to close down the colleges that are abusing the system and the students. Indeed, I spoke about London Metropolitan university in his constituency earlier and the perception that there is the forced deportation of legitimate students from this country.

Secondly, we must be more intelligent about where the risks and the opportunities lie for us. I hope that Ministers will listen to this point carefully. In targeting tier 4 visas, the UK Border Agency already distinguishes between high and low-risk students. There are face-to-face interviews for students who are considered to be high risk.

In my opinion, that should work the other way around and we should give the red-carpet treatment to the kind of students we want to attract to our country. For example, female students from the Gulf states are likely to have lower English language proficiency and are more likely to want to bring their spouses and children with them. If we want to see reform in the Gulf states, those are exactly the kind of students we need to attract. However, under the current rules, their dependants are obliged to return home every six months to renew their visa, and after 11 months the student must do the same. In Australia, Canada and America, dependants can apply for a visa that covers the whole study period. We do not need to rewrite the rule book; we just need to have more common sense and flexibility where our national interests are concerned.

Finally, we need a cross-party consensus to neutralise the political fallout. No Government want to be accused of fiddling the figures, particularly on a policy area as combustible as immigration. We need to present a united front when standing up for British economic interests. That is why I am sharing a platform with my colleagues from the Labour party on this motion.

I came into politics to get politics out of the way of British businesses that want to grow. Elsewhere in the economy, the Government have done great things to cut red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy. We must extend the same freedoms and opportunities to our higher education sector. I commend the motion to the House.

1.25 pm

**Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): It is a pleasure to speak after the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), just as it was to speak alongside him last September at the Conservative party conference, where we made the same points and received a good reception.

**Nadhim Zahawi:** The hon. Gentleman is always welcome.

**Paul Blomfield:** I am not sure that I will make a habit of it. We made the point then and we make it again today that there is much cross-party unity on this issue. The fact that the motion has been sponsored by Members from all three main parties is a sign of that. From my discussions with Government Members, I am sure that, were they not tied by the responsibilities of office, many more of them would be joining us in support of the motion.

The case that we are making today was perhaps most powerfully put in an article in the *Financial Times* in May 2012 under the headline, "Foreign students are key to UK prosperity". The author wrote:

"Britain's universities are a globally competitive export sector and well-placed to make a greater contribution to growth. With economic growth at a premium, the UK should be wary of artificially hobbling it."

The article continued:

"Now that the government has clamped down on the problem of bogus colleges"—

from my perspective, the last Government did that too—

"there is scope to take legitimate students out of the annual migration targets... Indeed, that is what our main competitors in the global student market already do."

I do not disagree with a word in the entire article and I do not think that any of my hon. Friends would. Who was the author? It was the hon. Member for Orpington (Joseph Johnson), who is now head of the No. 10 policy unit. I quote from that article not to score a debating point, but to demonstrate the breadth of support for the motion.

At the outset of the debate, it is worth emphasising that international students are important not just because of their financial contribution, but because they add to the intellectual vitality of our campuses; they are vital to the viability of many courses, particularly in the STEM subjects of science, technology, engineering and maths; they contribute to the cutting-edge research that gives the UK a unique edge in international markets; and they give UK students the chance to learn alongside people from every other major country, which is extraordinarily good preparation for the transnational environment in which our graduates will work. As has been pointed out, international students form relationships and a fondness for this country that will win us contracts and influence as they become leaders back home.

Those are huge advantages for Britain, but let us put them to one side and look at the hard-nosed economic case. International students bring £8 billion into the UK economy each year. Higher education is a major industry and a major export earner. Some people ask, "What about the costs?" Indeed, the Minister made that point on the all-party parliamentary university group at one point. I discussed it with the university of Sheffield,

[Paul Blomfield]

which said, “Fair point. We ought to look at that”, and it commissioned Oxford Economics to undertake the first ever independent cost-benefit analysis of the contribution of international students. As an independent study I expected it to be quite rigorous, although I did not realise how rigorous. Oxford Economics did not just look at health, education and use of public services; it went to the nth degree and looked at traffic congestion and every conceivable indirect cost. It concluded that the annual net benefit to our city’s economy is £120 million. That is worth about 6,000 much-needed jobs in the city, not just in universities but in restaurants, shops, transport, construction and more besides.

The Government have damaged our ability to recruit by including international students in net migration targets. That is not a statistical argument but a fundamental point because in doing so, they have put international students at the heart of the immigration debate. It is no good saying, as the Minister might later and the Home Office did this week in its response to the report by the Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, that there is no cap on student numbers—[*Interruption.*] The Minister says from a sedentary position that there is not, but if the Government have a target for reducing immigration and they include international students in that, such a policy leads them to celebrate cutting the number of international students coming to the UK. Indeed, the Minister did just that a couple of weeks ago when the fall in net migration was announced by celebrating the drop in numbers of 56,000 international students year on year.

The Minister will point out that within those figures the number of university visas rose slightly while the real fall was in private college and further education student numbers, but that in itself should be a cause for worry not celebration. Not only are those students valuable in themselves, those courses are pathways into higher education and a fall in numbers is an indication of the problems we are storing up for the future. Conservative estimates suggest that some 40% of students going to universities in the UK go through those routes, and we should worry about that future impact.

On other occasions, the Government have argued that numbers are holding up, but as my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey) clearly pointed out, holding up is not good enough. We do not want to stand still in a growing market, which the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills recognised will double by 2025. That is another £8 billion in export earnings for the UK and another 6,000 jobs in Sheffield, yet the Home Office is frustrating that ambition.

The hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) mentioned Brazil—one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Under their Science Without Borders programme, the Brazilian Government are spending \$2 billion over four years on sending 100,000 of their brightest young people to study abroad at undergraduate and postgraduate level. They want them to go to the best universities in the world, and those are in the UK.

A group of 2,143 Brazilian students who wanted to come to the UK have been prevented by inflexible visa rules. They are high-achieving students who wanted to study undergraduate STEM courses, but they needed

to improve their English before starting. Current rules prevent them from staying in the UK after completing an English language course, and they would have had to return to Brazil and reapply for a new visa before starting their courses. As a result of those rules and the Home Office’s refusal to change them, 1,100 of those students are now going to the US and 600 to Australia, where they are welcome to study English and stay on for their degree course. Of the original 2,143 students, only 43 are applying to come to the UK this September. The value to the country of that cohort was £66 million. That has been lost because of Home Office inflexibility, and with it, considerable good will.

**Mr Richard Bacon** (South Norfolk) (Con): I am listening with great interest to the hon. Gentleman and I commend him for his work with my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi). He reminds me of a story in the *Financial Times* which, when describing the stupidity of the Home Office stated:

“If the Home Office were a horse it would have been shot by now.”

Despite the fact that the Home Office has been split up into an interior ministry and the Ministry of Justice, it still evinces extraordinary stupidity. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that one of the most extraordinary aspects of that stupidity is that the STEM subjects, which this country needs so badly, in many universities across the country can be sustained in sufficient numbers only if we include foreign students?

**Paul Blomfield:** I absolutely agree with that point, which I raised earlier in passing. I commend the hon. Gentleman on initiating an Adjournment debate some time ago. I know he feels passionately about this subject, as many of us do.

To allow other hon. Members to contribute, I will draw my remarks to a close by making a couple of points. Including students in net migration targets distorts the policy debate on immigration and focuses on the migration that concerns nobody. More importantly, as has been said, it damages the opportunity for growth in one of our most important and successful industries. Five Select Committees of both Houses are agreed on the issue, and as we debate the matter, those in the other place are also considering it when discussing a report by one of its Select Committees. This is too important for the Home Office to dig its heels in, and I suspect that in his heart the Minister knows that. I urge him to go away from today’s debate, look again at the inclusion of students in our net migration targets, and send a clear message to the world that it is not just about what we say but about what we do, and that we are open for business.

1.36 pm

**Gavin Barwell** (Croydon Central) (Con): I pay tribute to all three previous speakers, who have set out clearly the arguments relevant to this debate, and I particularly congratulate the hon. Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey) on securing it.

Back in the autumn, in his speech to the Conservative party conference, the Prime Minister set out an overall mission for the Government, to ensure that this country can win in the global race in which we are engaged. I strongly support that message and have a lot of time for



it. We as politicians are sometimes guilty of telling people what they want to hear, but this is actually quite an uncomfortable message because in reality, the world in which we live is not easy and Britain has to earn its living within it.

As well as congratulating the three Members who have spoken so far, I express sympathy for the Minister, for whom I have a high regard. It is his job to balance the Government's overall mission with what the hon. Member for West Bromwich West acknowledged is our clear task of addressing the public's concern about levels of migration into this country in recent years—not an easy thing to do. When my constituents communicate with me they sometimes seem to think that the challenges we face are easy to resolve, but the reality of politics is that a lot of these issues are difficult and sometimes point us in conflicting directions. There is also a fundamental conflict between the need in electoral politics for simplicity of message when trying to communicate what our party would do in government, and the complexity of the issues we need to deal with—that point was alluded to in some of the earlier speeches.

Let me say a little about what my constituents think about immigration, which I think is relevant to the debate. I represent a part of south London that is changing rapidly demographically, and it will not be long before no ethnic community is in a majority in the London borough of Croydon, nor will it ever be again. Migration is an issue of real concern to my constituents, particularly because the UK Border Agency has a significant presence in Croydon in Lunar house. Many of my constituents have recently been through the asylum or immigration processes, and I have several thousand constituents who worked for the two units into which the agency has been broken. A lot of my constituents are concerned about the pace of change, and I spend a lot of time talking to them on the doorstep about those concerns. However, I have never heard a constituent express to me a concern about bright people from around the world coming to study at our universities, or about international companies that want to invest in the UK and create businesses, bringing some of their managers and employees to the UK as part of that investment into our economy.

However, I hear a lot of concern about low-skill migration into the EU, which many of my constituents believe—rightly or wrongly—has made it more difficult for them or their children to get work and has depressed wages in sectors of our economy. There is a great deal of concern about unlimited migration from within the EU, and the effect of allowing into the EU countries from eastern Europe, which I strongly support—the concern is about the principle of free movement when the EU incorporates a series of states that are at different levels economically.

There is also huge concern about our failure to control our borders effectively. When I report to my constituents on the Government's progress in reducing net migration, they are almost universally inclined not to believe the figures, because their perception is that the figures do not include people who are here illegally. On migration policy, therefore, I am most keen for the Government to take more action than they are taking to deal with people who are in this country who should not be here.

**Nicola Blackwood** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Gavin Barwell:** I certainly will.

**Nicola Blackwood:** Does my hon. Friend agree—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. The hon. Lady has just walked into the Chamber. Normally Members would give it a little bit longer before they intervene. On this occasion she can do so, if Mr Barwell wants to give way.

**Gavin Barwell** *indicated assent.*

**Nicola Blackwood:** I apologise, Mr Deputy Speaker. You are very kind, as is my hon. Friend.

Does my hon. Friend agree that the introduction of exit checks could be important? In that way, we would know not only how many people are coming into the country, but how many people are going out. One of our biggest problems in developing immigration policy is poor data.

**Gavin Barwell:** That is something we could consider. The key is building public confidence in the system.

**Mr Jim Cunningham** (Coventry South) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Gavin Barwell:** If I can make progress, I will come back to the hon. Gentleman.

I will not go into too much detail on students because the previous hon. Members who made speeches set the situation out clearly, but the UK gains four clear benefits from international students, the first of which is economic. We have heard the figures for the UK as a whole, but the Mayor of London's office tells me that the economic benefit to London, my city, is about £2.5 billion a year.

The second benefit is to the experience of our students when they are at university. I was lucky enough to attend the university of Cambridge, and can attest to the benefit I gained from studying with pupils from around the world.

The third benefit, which my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart) strongly communicated, is to what is frequently referred to as the UK's soft power. A 2011 Select Committee on Home Affairs report identified that 27 foreign Heads of State had been educated in the UK. That is a difficult benefit to quantify, but an important one to this country.

**Chris Bryant:** Unfortunately, that includes the Head of State of Syria.

**Gavin Barwell:** It does include Syria—clearly, educating Heads of State will not be a benefit universally, but the hon. Gentleman would agree that, in general, having people in leading positions in foreign countries, whether in Governments, the diplomatic service, the military or the business community, is a benefit to the UK.

**Mr Jim Cunningham:** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Gavin Barwell:** I will take one more intervention because I am conscious that other hon. Members wish to speak.

**Mr Cunningham:** No one would disagree with a number of the hon. Gentleman's points. For the record, I have always had straight dealings with the Minister in relation to cases I have pursued. Would it not be better if students from abroad were excluded from the immigration numbers? On restoring the manufacturing base, companies in the west midlands such as Jaguar Land Rover will need more and more highly skilled people, whether from abroad or from within. German companies such as Bosch and a large number of universities are in Coventry and the west midlands. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that a better approach would be to exclude students from abroad from our figures to help our exports?

**Gavin Barwell:** The hon. Gentleman finished his intervention just before the bell, I believe, Mr Deputy Speaker.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** It was just after the bell.

**Gavin Barwell:** I will come to the hon. Gentleman's substantive point at the end of my speech, but on his point on skills, when there are skill needs in our economy, our starting point should be to ask, "Can we train people in this country who have not got work to do those jobs?" However, if there are high-skill gaps, we should of course bring people in if we need them.

The fourth benefit of such migration, which has not been mentioned much, is the contribution to UK science and technology. I studied natural science at Cambridge and was on the Select Committee on Science and Technology for a period, so I feel passionately about this. Some 49% of people on taught postgraduate course in maths, engineering or computer science are international students—that figure has been mentioned. Cutting down on those numbers would have a massive effect on UK leadership in science. Sir Andre Geim, the Russian-born Nobel prize winner from the university of Manchester, has said that the identification of graphene would

"probably not have happened if"

he

"had been unable to employ great non-EU PhD postdoctoral students".

Those are the four clear benefits, but there are problems. The Higher Education Statistics Agency provides figures for enrolments, not for visa applications—enrolments are the best measure. In 2011, there was a slight decline in applications for first-year places at university from non-EU applicants. Admittedly, the position is complex, with significant country variations—there was a big increase in applications from China, but a big decrease in applications from India. I should be grateful if the Minister would offer an explanation for those significant variations if he has time. Students from different parts of the world tend to apply for different courses. Indian students are more likely to apply for STEM courses, so those variations have an impact on universities. In 2012, for the first time in 10 years, the total number of non-EU postgraduate students fell.

The hon. Member for Cambridge (Dr Huppert) correctly identified the three issues we need to address, the first of which is bureaucracy and the process people must go through when they want to come here. I pay tribute to the Minister and the Home Secretary, because the decision to split the UKBA up into two organisations—one focuses on customer satisfaction and processing applications for people who want to come here, and the other focuses on the entirely different job of enforcement and removing people who should not be here—was the right decision, and a welcome one. However, there is more to do to improve the process and the experience people have when they apply.

The second issue is the tone and the message we send out in debates on migration—that is not totally within the Government's control, because we must also consider the tone of the migration debate in our media. The Government have recognised the importance of sending the message that the UK is open for business, as we saw during the Prime Minister's recent visit to India.

The third issue is policy. We have a target for reducing net migration and should ask who is included in it. One hon. Member has mentioned the Migration Advisory Committee, which has said that an equivalent reduction in all different forms of migration could reduce student migration by 87,000. I put it to the Minister that, in 2009-10, the National Audit Office identified that about 50,000 students looked as if their principal reason for coming here was work rather than study. All hon. Members would accept that there was significant abuse of the process. That happened through institutions—bogus colleges—but we all see what we might regard as serial students, meaning people who have come here and done a number of courses but still not reached undergraduate level. Clearly, their primary motivation for coming to this country is to work in the UK, whatever their visa application says. All hon. Members accept that there was potential to reduce the numbers without having an impact on the positive aspects we have discussed.

On the long-term situation, the House has made its view clear on the policy, but I am interested in what the Conservative party will say in its next manifesto. As hon. Members have said, the sector has the potential to nearly double by 2020. At the moment, about 4.1 million around the world study in tertiary education abroad. The projection is that that will go up to 7 million by 2020. We should at least set ourselves the objective of maintaining our market share, which is currently about 13%. We have done the job of squeezing down on student migration abuse, but if our objective is to maintain or grow our market share and continue to recruit the people we want in this country, it will creep up over time.

I support what my party had to say at the previous election. It was absolutely right to focus on this, and I think many Opposition Members recognise that. In the longer term, we need to think more clearly about how we differentiate to the public the kinds of immigration that we are looking to control—the bits that we do not think are good for the country and want to squeeze down on, both illegal immigration and immigration through the existing system. We should not get ourselves into a position where we are trying to control things that we all recognise are positive and good for the country. I wish the Minister, for whom I have a very high regard, the best of luck as he grapples with the

difficult balance that has to be struck between ensuring that we win the global race, but address the legitimate concerns many of my constituents have about the level of immigration.

1.50 pm

**Mr Andrew Smith** (Oxford East) (Lab): I would like to join in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey) and other colleagues on securing this important debate. He made some important points, as have all the subsequent speakers. It is good to see cross-party agreement emerging that we have to remove students from the immigration target in domestic policy.

With two universities and numerous independent colleges in Oxford East, my constituents are among the hardest hit by the ill-judged policies on student visas and immigration that the Government have brought in. They have inflicted serious damage on the reputation and attractiveness of the UK, and on the economic and cultural contribution that overseas students, and those who teach them, make to our country. The Government's policies amount to a perverse and stupid act of economic self-sabotage. They hit a part of our economy where Britain in general, and Oxford in particular, have a strong global strategic competitive advantage. There is a logical contradiction in the Government protesting that there is no cap on student numbers, while persisting in including student numbers in their overall target of reducing net immigration to tens rather than hundreds of thousands. They find it so difficult to control other areas of immigration, including illegal immigration, that there is continual downward pressure on student numbers.

We are fortunate in Oxford to have many high-quality institutions. It shows how ludicrous this policy is if we imagine it being applied to another area; for example, to our Mini plant—to manufacturing, as opposed to educational exports. Imagine a Government who have an overall limit on manufacturing exports because they do not want too many foreigners getting their hands on our goods. As the number of BMW Minis being exported falls because overseas dealers worry that they will not be able to fulfil orders, the Prime Minister flies out to the far east and attempts to reassure people that while he is determined to bring down net manufacturing exports, there is no cap on the export of Minis! Such a policy would be barmy, way beyond swivel-eyed, and yet economically that is exactly what the cuts in overseas students amount to.

**Roberta Blackman-Woods** (City of Durham) (Lab): My right hon. Friend is making a powerful speech. Does he agree that it is simply no good for the Prime Minister to be going on these visits overseas supposedly to increase our exports when one of our very best exports, higher education, is being undermined by the Government's policy?

**Mr Smith:** Indeed. That the Prime Minister felt he had to say that was a tacit acknowledgement of the damage done to the UK's reputation.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** It is my understanding that applications from overseas students to Oxford university have gone up by 22%. Is the right hon. Gentleman not

mis-characterising the objective of the policy, which is to cut down on bogus student applications while still allowing our higher education sector to thrive?

**Mr Smith:** The problem is that not enough is being done to encourage it to thrive. As was pointed out earlier, Universities UK takes issue with some of the figures, but however we characterise them the current position is pretty flat. For a global market that is expanding so quickly, it simply is not good enough.

Of course the closure of visa factories masquerading as colleges is a good thing, not least because of the impact on applicants, as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) pointed out. They damage the reputation of UK education as well as undermine legitimate immigration control, but it is important to understand that the way the Government and UKBA have gone about their wider changes have hit legitimate universities and colleges that are an enormously important source of intellectual capital, jobs and prosperity, both now and for the future, that is worth tens of billions of pounds.

The hon. Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price) mentioned Oxford university. Its briefing for this debate points out:

“The cumulative and frequent changes to Tier 4 policy guidance over the last few years have created increased anxiety amongst our current and prospective student body especially when some of the rule changes were applied retrospectively.”

It goes on to say:

“We have received feedback and comments from prospective students and institutions overseas about the numerous UKBA rule changes over the last few years that indicate it may be a determining factor in students choosing to study elsewhere.”

The Government have to understand that those damaging effects have an impact at a time of intense international competition, in particular for the highest calibre of undergraduates, post-graduates and researchers. The funding shortfall for postgraduates, especially compared with the United States, makes it an increasing challenge to recruit and retain the best. Oxford university makes it clear that it supports the recommendations of the Select Committee reports referred to in the motion.

Let us also recognise that the damaging impact of Government policy has not been confined to universities and university students. Indeed, the effects have been even more serious for independent colleges, whose educational and economic contribution rarely gets the credit it deserves, and seems to be totally ignored by this Government. It is deeply ironic that a Government with an ideological obsession about liberating schools for home students from state control are hammering private colleges that support thousands of jobs and billions of pounds of overseas earnings.

**Nicola Blackwood:** As a fellow Oxford MP, the right hon. Gentleman will know that I share some of his concerns about student reforms, but it is important that the debate continues with factual information. The 22% figure quoted by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price) is based on data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency, and is used in both the Universities UK and Million+ briefings. The points that he was just making are important, because the falls we have seen are in the FE college and private college sectors. The main concerns from the university have

[Nicola Blackwood]

been about the frequent changes to student visas, which are much more of a difficulty for both students and the university. Perhaps he might like to comment on those issues, as they are the main challenges that are actually faced by the university's students.

**Mr Smith:** I will take those comments as warm and strong support for the points I have made about the damage the changes to the visa regime have done.

The Government are denying independent colleges a level playing field and disadvantaging them in a number of respects. These include: the 2011 two-year cap on international student numbers; all the uncertainties of the twice-yearly Highly Trusted Sponsor renewal application; the denial of part-time work for students either in term time or holidays; student exclusion from the new post-study work schemes for PhD and MBA graduates; and the fact that unlike university students, PhD students at independent colleges are not exempt from Tier 4's five-year time limit, so they cannot do a first degree in the UK before their PhD.

It is little surprising that international student enrolments on higher education courses at independent colleges fell by over 70% between 2011 and 2012, with a fall of 46% in college sector visas for the year ending March 2013. This has destroyed tens—possibly hundreds—of college businesses, cost thousands of jobs and resulted in a loss of income to the families accommodating students and to the local businesses and communities within which they spend their money.

I strongly support the motion. I hope that the Government will listen to the Select Committees that have come to the same view and take international students out of the migrations statistics used to steer UK immigration policy. I hope that Ministers will remove the unfair penalties imposed on independent colleges, work in partnership with them to develop longer-term, highly trusted accreditation and promote the contribution these colleges make. I also urge them more generally to think further and positively about how to encourage, not discourage, overseas students at all levels who want to come here, as those students invigorate universities and other education institutions and generate lots of overseas earnings, jobs and economic demand, which people here desperately need. Doing so would rebuild Britain's reputation in the world as somewhere that welcomes international students and researchers and recognises their enormous potential contribution to our culture and economy—which, let us remember, is to the benefit of us all.

2.1 pm

**Damian Hinds** (East Hampshire) (Con): In the media, international students at our universities are generally seen through one of two lenses: the positive one is that they are a cash-cow, premium product that historically has cross-subsidised domestic students in our universities; the negative one is that, because of this, they might end up getting too many places at our universities, thus keeping out some of our home-grown talent. Both are completely the wrong way of thinking about international students. This is a huge growth market in the world and vital to our economic growth.

Education ought to be for us a focus sector, alongside life sciences, advanced manufacturing, the digital and creative industries, professional services and tourism. It is also a market in which, thankfully, we have strong competitive advantages. We have some of the best brand names in the business: Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh, St Andrews, Birmingham, Manchester, Queen's Belfast, the London School of Economics—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] I can name check others, if anyone wants me to.

**Julian Smith** (Skipton and Ripon) (Con): Leeds.

**Damian Hinds:** Thank you.

All in all, about one fifth of the top 100 universities and about one fifth of the top 50 business schools in the world are ours, and of course we have that great asset, the English language.

The sector has other advantages. The first and most obvious is export earnings and the jobs it supports in this country, but it is also important in the battle for talent, in bringing into the country the people we need to help our economy succeed. It also helps with what people have called soft power—or, as I would prefer to describe it, the promotion of Britain abroad and the fostering of business and cultural links throughout the world.

The sector has several secondary advantages. For one, unusually among the key growth sectors, its employment and economic growth prospects are well distributed throughout the UK, not concentrated in one place, such as London. Secondly, university rankings depend on having a certain proportion of foreign students at a university, because international rankings consider that if a university is not good enough to attract foreign students, it is probably not very good. Thirdly, having a vibrant, cosmopolitan HE sector helps to reinforce several other growth strategy objectives, particularly to bring forward research and development in key sectors and to make this country the headquarters location of choice for multinationals.

As many hon. Members have said, this is a growing world market. In 1980, about 1 million students were enrolled in institutions outside their country of origin, but by 2010 that figure was 3.3 million. We know that more recently the compound annual growth rate trend—obviously it has moved a bit in the last couple of years—has been about 7%, which is a strong growth rate for an attractive industry. According to the McKinsey report on the seven long-term priorities for the UK, if we can hold our share—grow it as the market grows—and harvest just half of the benefit, it would be worth an additional 80,000 jobs in the country by 2030.

**Roberta Blackman-Woods:** Does the hon. Gentleman agree that holding that share is becoming more difficult, because of the challenge from countries such as Australia and Canada, and that the Government should be strengthening our universities' ability to attract overseas students, not making it more difficult, as they are doing at present?

**Damian Hinds:** The hon. Lady brilliantly anticipates my next point. Of course, she is absolutely correct. As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon Central (Gavin Barwell) said, we are, to coin a phrase, in a global race,

and we are not the only ones who have spotted that this is an attractive sector and who are doing things differently, as we will continue to do in order to protect and grow our own share. The most obvious competitive set are the Anglophone countries, led by the United States, but also including Canada and Australia. Increasingly, however, non-English speaking countries are offering English-speaking courses. The third competitor is potentially the biggest, and that is the choice of staying at home. In China, India, Nigeria and elsewhere in the world, there is a big business opportunity in attracting students from those countries to stay in institutions there. So, yes, we have to redouble our efforts all the time in order not only to forge ahead, but just to hold our own.

We should be talking always about quality higher education, pre-higher education preparation and certified colleges. These institutions should not be selling visas; they must be selling education, and we know that there have been recent substantial abuses. The National Audit Office says that in 2009 up to 50,000 alleged students were here primarily to work, rather than study. We had this cadre of serial students who were forever renewing their visas without showing any substantial progress in their studies. Clearly, if we are serious about curbing immigration in what has become a chaotic situation and about reducing the numbers and getting rid of abuse, we have to tackle the student visa route.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight the abuses under the old system, but there are two sides to tackling the problem—tightening up the rules for people coming in, and removing those abusing the system—but the NAO concluded that not enough was being done in the latter department. Does he agree that the Government need to make that more of a priority?

**Damian Hinds:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. It must indeed be a clear priority.

I welcome the action that the Government have taken. I do not think that everyone would agree, but I welcome the removal of the blanket two-year right to work for all graduates, because it looked a bit too much like a bribe to sweeten the degree. There is a role for it, however, in certain circumstances and categories, such as in subjects where there is a shortage—we talked about STEM subjects earlier—and for MBA students, who, by definition, will already have worked for several years and have done their first degree and who are valuable and mobile students.

I welcome the removal of the right to work for private college students, the requirement to show real academic progress and, of course, the closure of bogus colleges. I also acknowledge that the Government have put in place a sensible and proportionate regime for student visitors. A lot of people have thrown statistics around, but overall it appears that the falls in the numbers have been concentrated primarily in those sectors and parts of the market where abuse was most prevalent. I also welcome the fact that there is no cap on the numbers of people coming to university. It is right that the Prime Minister goes out and gives that message, as we saw him doing recently at the KPMG offices—I think—in India, but it is a constant battle against possible perceptions. For example, the message on

MBA student blogs in India is that Britain is not as welcoming a place—or not welcoming at all—as it once was.

**Nicola Blackwood:** Does my hon. Friend agree that one reason for that ongoing perception might be the efficiency, or lack thereof, of in-country UK Border Agency officials? With the expansion of credibility interviews, that will only increase. Some of the reports that I have heard about the reasons for people being turned down at interview—those where the decision was later overturned at appeal—are concerning. Does he agree that if we are to increase the caution with which we agree to visa applications, we should also increase the efficiency of UKBA in-country?

**Damian Hinds:** As always, my hon. Friend makes her point clearly and well. I do not have enough knowledge about the interview to comment, but overall, with or without a cap, and whatever happened last year or this year—we know that there is no cap, and we know that the figures look broadly okay—it nevertheless remains the case that, given the intense scrutiny to which immigration numbers will rightly be subjected, how students are treated in those statistics must inevitably affect the extent to which we as a country seize this market opportunity in the years ahead.

In one way it is blindingly obvious, but it is worth saying that not every student adds to immigration. In the steady state, so long as we are reasonably good at counting people leaving as well as those coming—

**Chris Bryant:** That is a big “if”.

**Damian Hinds:** We took over from Labour.

So long as we are reasonably good at that, it is only growth in the numbers that will add to immigration. However, I would ask the Minister to look again and consider counting people towards net immigration only at the point at which they settle. The key counter-argument—in some ways it is quite strong—is that a student is a human being like any other, and if there is a net increase in their numbers, that is an increase in net immigration, which will lead to the same strain on housing, public services and so on as with any other type of immigration. I would argue that that is not quite true. I do not want to sound trivial about it, but one could argue, with some sense, that students do not take up quite as much residential living space as others and, being younger on average, they are—*[Interruption.]* I do not mean that students are smaller. I myself was thinner as an undergraduate—that is history—but I was thinking more about housing. As younger people, typically, students are probably less likely than the average person to make demands on the national health service, places at primary schools and so on.

**Chris Bryant:** It is an absolute pre-condition of any student visa that that person is unable to make any claims on the taxpayer or, therefore, the NHS.

**Damian Hinds:** I am conscious of the time and I do not want to get into a long debate about this, but any person in this country will be consuming public services to some extent—for example, roads—and is financed by the rest of us. In any case, broadly speaking we are making the same points.

[*Damian Hinds*]

We could also mitigate those effects. Given that housing is particular issue, we could do that by requiring universities that want to expand to provide additional accommodation. Local areas that want to benefit from such economic growth should also have to be willing to accept the provision of extra accommodation, over and above residential housing.

The truth is that there are downsides—additional strains and calls on public resources and residential accommodation—to having more people in the country. It is not without cost; it is a choice to be made. We have to weigh up the costs and downsides against the benefits that so many people have talked about—the revenues, the export earnings, the jobs that are created, the talent we can bring to this country and the strengthening of our links around the world. If, having made that calculation, we decide that this should be a focus area in contributing to our economic growth—I think the case is very strong—we must be bold in seizing that opportunity.

2.14 pm

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson** (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey) on opening this important debate, and I congratulate him and others on securing it.

The wording of the motion says it all. Five parliamentary Committees—the Select Committee on Business, Innovation and Skills, the Select Committee on Home Affairs and the Public Accounts Committee in the Commons, as well as the Science and Technology Committee and the EU Sub-Committee on Home Affairs, Health and Education in the other place—have all arrived at the same conclusion and the same recommendation. They are united in their belief—it is a considered belief, based on the vast amount of evidence they have taken—that including students in net migration numbers is the wrong thing to do, for a number of reasons, and that the Government should reverse that decision. The reason for that belief is obvious. The students we are talking about are not migrant workers. They have paid to come to the UK to study. They have chosen to invest in the UK and are sponsored to remain only for the period of their studies.

I speak as an MP for a constituency that benefits from the positive contribution that overseas students can make to university life and the wider community. According to the University of Sunderland's annual review, more than 2,600 overseas students were enrolled in taught undergraduate or postgraduate courses last year. What does that mean for the university and the wider city? Those students are paying their fees, which are crucial to the university as a means of investing in the facilities and opportunities they can provide to all students, particularly as grants are repeatedly cut, but there are wider benefits too. Those students need places to live and therefore pay rent to local private landlords, usually through local letting agents. Those students need to eat and therefore spend money in local shops and restaurants. They probably need coats and gloves—they have probably also needed wellies over the last couple of years—to deal with the harsh north-east weather, and they will obviously buy those in local shops. Those students will also want to have a good time, as do

students the world over, spending money in local cinemas, bars and clubs, and going to gigs, football matches and so on. They might even need books and stationery, which they will buy from local bookshops and stationers.

According to evidence that the university submitted to the Home Affairs Committee when it considered this issue in 2011, overseas students bring an income to the university of £15 million in tuition fees and £1.5 million in accommodation fees. The university estimated the additional income to the city to be around £10 million a year. That figure is probably a conservative estimate, given that it amounts to only £385 a month or so for each student, and we know that many international students who come to the UK are from pretty wealthy families—after all, how else would they afford the large up-front fees that they have to pay? That is probably reflected in the revised estimate that I recently received from the university, of £37 million of total benefit.

When international students come to the University of Sunderland, they do not just bring their wallets; they bring a wealth of culture, which adds to the diversity of the university's campus. That can be seen in the development of the various student societies—they include the Hong Kong and Malaysian society, the Nigerian society, and the middle east and north Africa group, to name but a few—but it is a two-way street. The university encourages international students to experience the culture that the north-east has to offer, such as Washington old hall in my constituency, which has an obvious attraction for students from the United States, and the various other cultural and historical activities that the city of Sunderland and the whole region have to offer.

**Roberta Blackman-Woods:** My hon. Friend is making an important point about students in the north-east adding to diversity—a diversity that would not necessarily exist without them. Figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency show that the number of new entrants—particularly new international student entrants—is reducing. Does she agree that the Government are being a bit complacent and are not factoring in the positive contributions that students make to areas such as ours?

**Mrs Hodgson:** That is exactly the nub of the matter. We have to factor in those extra elements, including the contribution that such students make to the local economy, as well as—I will come to this point—the long-term benefits from those relationships and links in the years to come.

Another great project at Sunderland university is the international buddying programme, in which students at the university pair up with international students to provide them with advice on what they can experience in the region. The programme enriches the experiences not only of the international students but of their buddies from this country. When the students are visiting regional tourist attractions such as Washington old hall or Durham cathedral, they inevitably spend money in the local and regional economy.

I understand that some programmes run by the student union have involved international students volunteering with local community organisations such as Age UK. This all contributes to giving students a great experience while they are over here, which means that they will develop an affinity with the UK, and with the city and region in which they stay. We have to remember that

many of these students come from well-connected families, and that among them will be the political leaders and captains of industry of tomorrow. It is therefore crucial to our long-term diplomatic and economic relationships with their home countries that we warmly welcome these young people, rather than making them feel unwanted, as this Government are undoubtedly doing at the moment.

That is particularly important in the north-east, where international links and trade and exports are fundamental parts of the economy. The independent “North-east Economic Review” recently commissioned by the local enterprise partnership and authored by my noble colleague Lord Adonis reported that the north-east is one of the leading exporting areas of the UK, with over 1,500 companies exporting goods. In 2011 and 2012, it was the only region in England to achieve a positive balance of trade in goods, with figures of £2.5 billion in 2011 and £4.8 billion in 2012. So we do well, but we are reliant in many ways on orders and investment from overseas companies. The role that our universities play in keeping and creating those relationships is crucial.

One country that often comes up when we talk about the need to get more people over to the UK is China. The University of Sunderland works hard to attract Chinese students, as do other higher education institutions. I was lucky enough to visit China in September 2011. I visited the offices of the University of Sunderland in Beijing, where I was able to talk to the local staff there about the work they do. Their biggest concerns by far were the new visa requirements, coupled with the way in which some Chinese students they had recruited were treated at customs when they arrived here in the UK.

Both those factors are a source of humiliation to students. What will happen when word gets out that the UK does not want them and that it will put them through that kind of experience? Students who would have come to the UK, and who might well have come to Sunderland, will go elsewhere in the world. They want to learn and develop their English, and they will go to the USA, Australia, New Zealand or Canada, all of which exclude students from their migrant figures and are currently welcoming them with open arms. Those countries are benefiting from our loss.

While I was in China I also visited Suzhou, where the University of Liverpool has established a joint campus with a local university, with the aim of providing opportunities for UK students to visit an economically and culturally significant area of China as well as providing a form of embassy or advert for its UK institution. I met a young man from Suzhou who had been studying computer science at Liverpool and is now doing his postgraduate qualification at University College London. That shows that the process definitely works. The development of more such partnerships and recruitment drives in a country with which we desperately need to build links is surely at risk, given the way in which this Government’s attitude towards overseas students is now seen in that country, and undoubtedly in others.

The University of Sunderland posed two questions to me, which I believe cut to the heart of this debate. I would be grateful if the Minister could address them in his response—if indeed he is listening to what I am saying. First, can the Government meet their net migration targets without reducing the number of international students coming to study at British universities? My suspicion is that they probably cannot, and are therefore

knowingly and willingly accepting the devastating economic impact that this policy will have on localities and regions, particularly those with a track record of success in global enterprise.

Secondly, what is more important to this Government: economic growth and sustainability or a falsely painted picture of immigration and immigrants that includes those who choose to come and invest in the UK and bring substantial short and long-term economic and social advantage to our country? I am sure the Minister will say that it is the former, but actions speak louder than words, and the actions of this Government firmly suggest that their priority is political headlines, rather than what is right for our higher education sector and for the country.

Of course we must tackle bogus colleges and bogus students. Everyone agrees on that. I am afraid, however, that such action is being used as a smokescreen to justify this damaging and short-sighted policy. Well, the Government are fooling nobody. We all know that this is about using overseas students to reduce the net migration figures in order to fulfil a promise made by the Prime Minister that he would otherwise be unable to fulfil. That is a disgrace, and it must stop. I hope that this debate will spur a change in policy and a more grown-up and thought-through approach. This Government are well-practised in the art of the U-turn, and I hope that we will see one being performed on this issue sooner rather than later, before too much more damage is done to our universities and our international reputation.

2.26 pm

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Lab): I am pleased that we are having this debate, as it will enable us to draw attention to a number of issues relating to overseas students in this country. We should start from the premise that the students who come here to study and work are a big help to our economy, to local economies and to the experience of UK students in our higher education institutions.

London First, in calling for the removal of students from the UK migration target, states:

“Taking students out of the migration target would be the strongest positive message that the government could send out but, if this remains too politically difficult, then a more measured and consistent approach to addressing applications for visas would be a good first step.”

Many of us have met students in other countries who are considering coming to the UK to study, and discovered that they are put off by a number of factors. One is the complication and cost of applying for a visa, as well as the delays that often occur in that process. I know that the Minister is aware of those problems, and I look forward to hearing his response to this point. Those students are also put off by the image that has been created by the treatment of overseas students here.

I am not going to defend the bogus colleges that purported to teach the English language to people in London and other cities. They often short-changed their students, many of whom ended up as victims of a particularly nasty system. It is right to prosecute those who were perpetrating that fraud against those students, but we should have more sympathy with those genuine students who came here thinking that they were going to be taught English only to find that their college was a

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sham. They lost out, and some of them were deported even though they had done nothing wrong. Behind every statistic lies a human story, and we should look at the human story as well as the overall statistics when we deal with these issues.

The National Union of Students has pointed out in its advice on this debate that, following a perception study, 40% of respondents to an NUS survey of 909 international students carried out last year said that they would not advise a friend or relative from their home country to come to the UK to study. We cannot afford that perception to be spread abroad. This debate is therefore important, and the Minister's response to it and the way in which he handles this issue are possibly even more important. If we want to remain a place to which students want to come, we will have to ensure that they are treated properly and that they are allowed to work at the end of their course, particularly if they pursued a semi-vocational or professional qualification. If they cannot complete a period of work at the end of their course, the prospect of studying here will be less attractive and the prospect of studying elsewhere will become more so. The UK loses out as a result.

As I said in a couple of interventions, I represent a constituency that includes London Metropolitan university, which has been put through the mill in media treatment and with funding problems like no other university in this country, so I would like to say a few things in its support. As a university, it is an amalgamation of many institutions, as most of them are, and it has given many people the huge opportunity to become the first in their family history to get into higher education. It has an unprecedented record of bringing in students from minority ethnic communities and diverse backgrounds, and it should be applauded and complimented for that.

Although the name is relatively new, London Metropolitan university is an amalgamation of a number of local institutions in north-east London that started serving the community in 1848. It is not exactly a Johnny-come-lately, although of course the situation has changed a great deal. Two things have happened. First, the Higher Education Funding Council for England decided some years ago to fine the university a great deal of money, but after a lot of representations, that money is now being repaid and the university is coping with that.

Secondly, on 29 August last year, it had revoked its tier 4 licence and highly trusted status required to recruit non-European Economic Area students. That placed 2,000 international students at risk, including the current student union president and members of the student union executive. A survey done by the United Kingdom Border Agency claimed that there was a lack of attendance and monitoring, insufficient English language testing and overstaying of student visas. The students concerned were told that they had 60 days to find another institution or they would have to return to their own country. That resulted in a great deal of debate, including an urgent question in this Chamber and statements from the Government. The university sought High Court action against UKBA and was granted a hearing last September, when Mr Justice Irwin granted an order allowing all current international students to stay at the university until the end of the academic year 2013; judicial reviews are still continuing.

Since then, there has been a great deal of discussion and negotiation between UKBA and the university, and procedures have been put in place. My concern was that a lot of wholly innocent international students were put under a great deal of stress and pressure. The university was not allowed to recruit international students for the forthcoming academic year, and that obviously has an impact on the local economy and on the university itself. I hope that the Minister can provide us with some hope—if not here today, perhaps by correspondence—that the negotiations will result in the revocation of the original ban on recruitment and that a number of overseas students can be recruited in the forthcoming academic year.

I would be grateful if the Minister would answer some brief questions. A number of students who transferred to other institutions last September—nine months ago—still await a decision on their visa applications even though they were submitted in good time. Two additional cases, where students who completed their studies in February 2013 and put in applications for visa extensions, are still pending and have not been answered. That is a very long time to wait. In addition, there are many students who are no longer in contact with the London Met university, yet the Home Office was supposed to establish a casework team in Sheffield to deal with applications from both current and former students of London Met. I would be grateful if the Minister would explain exactly what has happened about that; is the Home Office still in touch with those students?

I want London Met to be a successful university. I want it to be able to recruit international students as it did before, and I want those students to benefit from the experience of living in north and east London while they are studying there. I also want to highlight all that they bring to the university and all that they—and, indeed, the local economy—gain from it. The damage done to the international reputation of higher education by the handling of London Met is pretty serious indeed, on top of all the other problems that the Select Committee has rightly pointed out. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell me how many students have actually been removed from the country as a result of the decisions concerning London Met.

The Home Office uses the words “probationary licence granted” for the restoration of tier 4 status, but there is nothing in legislation that talks about probationary licences. An institution either has tier 4 status grade A or a most-trusted status, which we obviously hope will be restored. I do not know where the word “probationary” comes from. Is a new point of law being introduced?

Finally, will the Minister provide assurances that the 20 London Met students who submitted passports nine months ago and who now wish to leave the country will receive an answer in the next 28 days? In all fairness, those students spent a great deal of money coming to this country, many of them are from poor families who scrimped and saved to send them here, and they had to go through a dreadful experience. We want to move on. We want international students back at the university and the university to be thriving and providing good-quality education. That is the message I want to give. Our local community benefits from that university, and it frequently benefits from the community when community events and many other things are held there. We want it to be a good place of learning. Every colleague who represents



a constituency with a university or a higher education institution in it wants that for those institutions. It is up to the Minister to ensure that we continue to recruit overseas students and that they benefit from their learning experience in this country.

2.36 pm

**Chris Bryant** (Rhondda) (Lab): Let me first pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey) and all other Members who signed up to ensure that we had this afternoon's debate. It is perhaps a sort of irony that the quality of the debate has been high, with an enormous degree of unanimity on the issues. I suspect that if the Chamber had been fuller, the debate might have been more partisan and there might have been less unanimity, but the debate we have had is a tribute to the way in which the argument has been advanced in several Select Committees and through the Select Committee process itself. Sometimes if we just look rationally at the facts, it is easier to reach a cross-party position.

I studied abroad. I did part of my primary education in Spain; I studied theology at the Instituto Superior Evangélico de Estudios Teológicos in Argentina; so I understand the complications and difficulties of studying in other countries. I note that the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), of whom I am particularly fond, referred to Erasmus, talking about what has happened since Erasmus came here in the 16th century. It is interesting because when Erasmus first came here to study at Cambridge university in 1506, he did not complete a whole year so I do not think he would have been included in the net migration target. When he came again, in 1511, staying until 1515, he taught as the Lady Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge university. In that case, he would have come here under the tier 2 visa, which would have been completely different and not the subject of this afternoon's debate.

**Mr Andrew Smith:** Does my hon. Friend think that the Home Office still has Erasmus's passport?

**Chris Bryant:** That is a point well made.

Another hon. Member—I cannot remember who it was—referred to the fact that many Heads of State from around the world have studied in the United Kingdom. [*Interruption.*] It was the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Gavin Barwell), who speaks sanely and sensibly on many of these issues. As he said, some studied at Sandhurst, as many have been military leaders as well. It must surely be good, in terms of our soft power, that the Heads of State of Denmark, Portugal, Iceland, Norway, Turkey and many other countries have studied in the United Kingdom.

I would also point to those who have had a more courageous political career, such as Aung San Suu Kyi, and, for that matter, to the large number of people who have come to the United Kingdom, studied here, stayed on and ended up teaching here, gaining Nobel prizes in classic instances such as Sydney Brenner, César Milstein and Aaron Klug. Perhaps most interesting of all, T S Eliot, now thought of as the quintessentially British poet of the 20th century, was originally born in the United States of America, came to study here at the beginning of the first world war and ended up staying

here for the rest of his life. Perhaps it was because he had the experience of being a migrant student that he ended up writing so much about travelling and the difficulty of living in other cultures.

**Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con): The hon. Gentleman just mentioned Sandhurst, and I ask him not to forget the royal naval training college at Dartmouth and the RAF training college at Cranwell, which I attended. During my flight officer training we often thought it was the Omani officer, with the overseas costs, who actually funded the training costs of the British RAF officer cadets.

**Chris Bryant:** Indeed, that is an important point. If we look at the number of people from Latin American militaries—air force, navy or army—who have historically had the Prussian tradition of military and then come to the UK to train in a British environment and completely changed their attitude towards democracy and the way in which the military operate in a democratic society, we see another positive aspect of people coming from other parts of the world to study here.

Many hon. Members have rightly referred to the economic benefit of international students coming to study in this country. The Government estimate in 2009, produced by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, was that this country's higher education exports came to a value of some £8 billion and could rise to £16.9 billion by 2025. That is one of the most significant areas of growth potential in the economy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield) said, the University of Sheffield has produced an important report on the economic benefits that can arise from international students coming here. My hon. Friend the Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson) referred to the importance to the north-east of not only people studying and paying for their courses—many British people do not understand that international students pay fully for their course and, indeed, pay over the odds compared with British people, doing so in advance—but all the other benefits that come to the local economy. According to the University of Sheffield's study, the relevant figure for Sheffield is £120 million a year.

In addition, we need to consider the wide range of subjects studied. Some people want to say, "It is just about the brightest and the best coming to the United Kingdom." I wholly agree with those who have said that it was absolutely right for the Government to deal with issue of bogus colleges, but it is not just university degrees at Oxford and Cambridge that we should be concerned with; this is also about postgraduate studies at many different universities and the English language. I would prefer people who are learning English around the world to learn about taps, not faucets, and about pavements, not sidewalks, because I would prefer them to have a British understanding of the English language and get it from the horse's mouth.

Many schools and universities have valued enormously exchange students coming to the United Kingdom, and they are important in relation to the shorter-term student visitor visa. There is not only an economic advantage to consider, but a social advantage, in terms of, the quality of the education students are able to get. If they are studying international politics or history and people

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come with completely different experiences from elsewhere in the world, that enlivens, informs and improves the quality of the education of British students in universities and colleges. Also, this is about ensuring that we provide the strongest possible opportunity for overseas students to develop their understanding of what it is like to be in Britain and to do business in Britain. We hope that they will then do greater business with us further in the future.

I would also point out that, as many hon. Members have said, this is an area of migration—if we want to term it as such—that is warmly welcomed and accepted by the British public. Leaving aside the matter of bogus colleges, where foreigners were exploited and not given a proper education, and British taxpayers were exploited because proper controls were not in place, it is warmly accepted in this country that international students are important for our economy. If we are to prosper in the future as a country that is in “a global race”, to use the Prime Minister’s term, we have to be able to compete for international students—for that market around the world.

**Mark Reckless** (Rochester and Strood) (Con): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that not only have we had bogus colleges, but quite a lot of colleges have provided relatively low-value courses, be they in business, accounting or IT, where the incentive of being able to work part-time, stay on to work afterwards, bring dependants and potentially stay on has been much of the reason why international students have stayed, and that the Government have been right to crack down on that?

**Chris Bryant:** I want to see more evidence of precisely what the hon. Gentleman mentions. I believe he has been in his Committee all afternoon, so I understand why he has not been able to take part in the whole of this debate, which is a shame. I merely wish to cite the Government’s own Home Office paper from this year, “The Migrant Journey”, which showed that just 1% of students who came here in 2006 were permanently residing here five years later. So those myths that have sometimes grown up of—[*Interruption.*] There are others who are still studying and who have gone on to study other courses, but according to the Home Office’s own report only 1% are permanently residing. Some of the myths that have been mentioned in previous debates about 20% or 30% of students staying on afterwards are misguided.

I wish briefly to discuss the Government’s record. The hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Nicola Blackwood) referred to the Higher Education Statistics Agency. Its figures showed, contrary to the figures often provided by the Government, that the number of first-year, non-EU, new-entrant students at universities was down by 0.4% in 2011-12. In particular, the number of postgraduate new entrants has gone down from 105,195 to 103,150, which is potentially a worrying trend that we need to examine for the future because it is the first time there has been a fall in those figures for a decade—in effect, for all the time that similar statistics have been available.

As several hon. Members said, the number of students coming from India has fallen by some 8,000. That number may have been made up for by the number coming from China, but, as my right hon. Friend the

Member for Oxford East (Mr Smith) said, it was a sign of the Government’s “forked-tonguedness” or two-facedness that the Prime Minister actually had to go to India to say that there is no cap on international students coming to the United Kingdom. There may not be a legal cap, but it certainly feels as if there is a cap, and the Government have to address that. As the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon said, if this is a growing market, we need to be holding our market share, and that means advancing and not stepping backwards. I would like us to increase our market share, because we have a unique and very valuable offer, and this would be good for the British economy. I worry that the way the Government’s immigration target is crafted has made that more difficult for us to achieve.

All the estimates show a significant fall in Britain’s attractiveness as a place for study, while Australia and Canada have seen dramatic improvements in their attractiveness. One Australian who works in this business told me recently, “I am delighted at what your Government are doing, because you are giving us lots of business.” That should really worry the Government.

I wish to raise one other minor point, which a number of hon. Members have mentioned and which relates to the number of overseas students who come to study degrees in science, technology, engineering and maths. That is the area in which we saw the most significant drop—8%—in 2011-12 in the number of non-EU new-entrant students coming to the UK. That must worry us, because it will affect our future competitiveness and productivity.

I now want to ask the Minister about London Metropolitan university. On 3 September 2012, while responding to an urgent question from my hon. Friend the Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn), the right hon. Member for Ashford (Damian Green)—the Minister’s predecessor—said that more than 60% of students at London Met were involved in the “problems” of dubious education and were not proper students. He added:

“It was not a small, isolated number of students; the sampling showed significant systemic problems throughout.”—[*Official Report*, 3 September 2012; Vol. 549, c. 26.]

I should have thought that if that had been the case, a significant number of people would have been removed from the country.

That one boomer-booted intervention, made at a time of the year—the autumn—when many people were coming to study in the United Kingdom, sent a message around the world that Britain was not open for business. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us precisely how many students from London Metropolitan university were deemed to be “not proper students” and have been removed from the country. If he cannot do so now, perhaps he will write to me.

In his report on tier 4 visas, John Vine said:

“We found a potential risk of non-genuine students opting to apply for Student (Visitor) visas”,

which, he said,

“are not subject to the same stringent rules that are applied to Tier 4... The Agency needs to be alert to this to ensure that this route is not exploited in the future.”

The dramatic increase in the number of people applying to study shorter courses is almost in direct proportion to the fall in the number applying for tier 4 visas. I fear

that a displacement activity may be taking place, and I think there is a danger that unless we impose far more significant controls on shorter-term visas, they will be open to abuse.

2.50 pm

**The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper):** I congratulate the hon. Member for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey) and others who signed the motion asking for the debate. I also thank the Backbench Business Committee for deciding that it was an appropriate use of time in the Chamber. It has been a very good debate.

Let me start, in an unashamedly positive way, by quoting from the letter that the hon. Member for West Bromwich West received from the Prime Minister earlier this year in response to his own letter.

“The UK has a fantastic offer for international students. Those with the right qualifications, enough money”

—obviously they would need enough to pay for their courses—

“and a good level of English can study here, with no annual limit on numbers. University students can work part-time and do work placements during their studies. When they finish they can stay, providing they get a job paying £20,000”

—now £20,300—

“a year or more, or as a Graduate Entrepreneur, under the first scheme of its kind in the world.”

The Prime Minister confirmed:

“The number coming to our universities is up.”

He also confirmed, importantly—and, to be fair, a number of Members on both sides of the House have acknowledged this—that there was no cap, and that there would be no cap, on the number of students coming to the UK.

**Paul Blomfield** *rose*—

**Mr Harper:** I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I finish this point before I give way to him. I think I know what he is going to say, because I took careful note of what he and others said earlier. Let me deal with what I think he is going to say, and if I am wrong I will give way to him later.

I believe that we have a very positive story to tell. I know that newspapers do not always report a positive story, but Ministers try to convey a positive message and, indeed, Members on both sides of the House have tried to do that today.

**Dame Joan Ruddock:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Harper:** Let me make some progress first.

The Government have been clear about the need to bring control to the immigration system, but we have also been clear about our wish to welcome those whom we want in the country. A common view, which many Members will share, was expressed particularly well by my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon Central (Gavin Barwell), who said that his constituents had voiced no concern either about those who come here to study at our excellent universities, or about those who come here to do highly skilled jobs in business. I agree with my hon. Friend. That is why we have deliberately designed our system to attract people like that, and to deter those who are not coming to work in skilled occupations, or who are coming for other reasons.

The statistics show that we have achieved that selective balance. The number of university students and the number of people working in skilled jobs have risen. However, as my hon. Friend said, it should also be borne in mind that our constituents are anxious for us to have some control over the system. We must design a system that attracts the best and the brightest—to use the buzz words—from around the world to study, and appeals to global companies based in Britain that want to import some of their engineers and senior managers for a certain period to run their businesses, while also deterring those who will bring no benefit to the United Kingdom.

As Lord Mandelson has said, the previous Government did not have a controlled system. Indeed, they had a completely uncontrolled system: they just went out grabbing people from around the world. We have been determined not to overreact to that, but also to ensure that we have a system that focuses on the right people coming to Britain.

**Paul Blomfield:** I was expecting the Minister to anticipate my question and respond to it, but as he has not, let me ask it. It is about the cap. Is it not disingenuous, and the sort of misuse of language that brings no credit to this House, when we say on the one hand that there is no cap on the number of students coming, and on the other that we have a target to reduce the number of people coming and students are included in that?

**Mr Harper:** I do not agree, for the following reason. The point was best made by my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Damian Hinds). There are two aspects to this. First, over a period, international students who come here to study and then go back to their home country make no contribution to net migration at all, because they come to Britain and then leave. In a steady state, therefore, they make no contribution to net migration at all. My hon. Friend is right, however, that in a growing market, as a consequence of the difference between those coming in a year and those leaving in that year, there will be a gap, but it is only the gap that contributes to net migration, not the total number.

One of the complexities here is that the data on those leaving are not brilliant. The Office for National Statistics, which is independent and which measures the numbers of people coming to and leaving Britain, measures those coming to study, but does not currently measure those who were studying and left. One of the improvements it has made to its system is that it is now starting to do that, and we will get the first of those statistics in August, I think. Coming back to a point that the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) made, that will give us a much clearer picture of how many students do leave each year, and we will then get a much clearer idea of the impact of student numbers on net migration. It is worth remembering that a lot of genuine students are still in the UK quite a considerable time after their arrival. According to one study quoted by Opposition Members, about 20% of former international students are still in the UK although they might not have decided to settle here permanently.

The other important point shows why we need a robust system. The NAO study has been quoted several times. In the past there were significant numbers of purported students who were not here to study, but who

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were working in low-skilled jobs, and significant numbers of students were renewing their visas over a period of time without any academic progression at all. It does no credit to our immigration system or our genuine academic institutions that such abuse is possible. We must deal with that, as well as welcome those we want to welcome to Britain.

**Dame Joan Ruddock:** I want to relay to the Minister my experiences and those of my constituents in respect of those moving from one course to a higher course who need to renew a visa. It is taking at least three months, and during that time the student has no access to their passport and cannot travel for academic or personal reasons. Is the Minister really satisfied that that is good enough? Will he put more resources into this whole area of endeavour in the Home Office?

**Mr Harper:** The point the right hon. Lady makes about in-country performance is absolutely right; it is true that the performance in the last financial year of what was the UK Border Agency was not good enough, as I know very well from conversations and correspondence with Members. Out-of-country performance has remained very good, however. Part of the reason why the Home Secretary made the changes she has made to the border agency was to fix the problems in the UK visas and immigration part of the business. The good news is that we have put a lot of resource and effort into turning that around, and the performance of the Home Office for in-country operations—which used to be a UKBA responsibility—has got immeasurably better. The latest figures are much better. It has taken some time to do that, but I ask the right hon. Lady to let me know of any specific outstanding cases, and I will look at them and see if there is anything we can do.

**Chris Bryant:** The Minister slipped in the words “academic progression”. I fully understand why, in the vast majority of cases, someone would want to go from an undergraduate degree to a postgraduate degree and so on, but there are cases, in particular for vocations and some STEM degrees, where a student who had first done an undergraduate degree in their home country might want to come to the UK to study for another undergraduate degree, which would not count as academic progression. I worry that people might therefore be being excluded who would be perfectly decent and sensible to have studying here.

**Mr Harper:** I was referring to people who, as I have seen when we have removed them, have been in the UK for a decade or more, perpetually renewing a student visa and clearly making no progress. That is an abuse of the system. We were talking about that, not about trying to micromanage someone’s academic career.

Let me do something that I cannot always do and give some positive news to the hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) about London Metropolitan university. I will not rehearse the past in great detail, but I have put a lot of work into this—it happened just about the time at which I was given this job and at which my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Damian Green) became the Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice—and I am absolutely convinced that

the UK Border Agency, as it was, took exactly the right decision to revoke London Metropolitan university’s sponsor licence. It was not fulfilling its responsibilities by any measure. Nobody in the sector has defended it and its behaviour was, I am afraid, well known.

The positive news, which shows that the system works, is that we have worked closely with London Metropolitan university and it has made significant improvements to its system and to the administration of how it delivers on its requirements. It has now been awarded an A-rated sponsor licence, which means it can sponsor international students, and it has 12 months to build up a track record and apply again for highly trusted sponsor status. That is very positive. The Home Office has worked very closely with the university—[*Interruption.*] I think the hon. Member for Rhondda is asking how many students there are. The university can recruit only 15% of the number it could originally have while it is an A-rated sponsor.

The hon. Member for Islington North asked me about this subject first. I do not have the specific details of all the students that were there and what has happened to them, but we have those data because we wrote to every single one. I will write to the hon. Gentleman, since the university is in his constituency, and I will put a copy of my reply in the Library—[*Interruption.*] I will also send a copy to the hon. Member for Rhondda and I will include the details of how many have left the country.

**Jeremy Corbyn:** I am grateful for that information and look forward to receiving the Minister’s letter. Does this mean that students who started their second year last September will now be able to complete the third year of a three-year degree course and that we are back on track towards getting highly trusted status restored in a year’s time?

**Mr Harper:** It might be more sensible if, rather than trying to answer a lot of specific questions, I set out the detail about the university when I write to the hon. Gentleman. As I said, I shall copy the letter to the hon. Member for Rhondda and will put it in the Library so that other Members can see it. The story is positive, as the university has started to deliver on its compliance requirements.

The Home Office is now working closely with universities and Universities UK on a co-regulation initiative to set out their responsibilities clearly for them. We have had a number of workshops with those universities and they have found that very helpful. I have certainly had positive feedback from UUK, the Russell Group and individual universities I have visited, and they have seen a change in their relationship with the Home Office. It is important that we continue to improve that and I have asked the Home Office to continue to do so.

**Jason McCartney:** On the theme of positive news, will the Minister join me in welcoming the good news from the award-winning Huddersfield university, which saw its number of international students increase from 1,430 in 2010-11 to 1,845 in the last academic year, an increase of 29%? It is an award-winning university and it contributes massively not only to Huddersfield but to growth and enterprise in the whole of Yorkshire and the north of England.

**Mr Harper:** That is a helpful point, which has been mentioned by several hon. Members—for example, the hon. Member for City of Durham (Roberta Blackman-Woods) told us about sharp increases in the number of international students at her local university.

As my final point—I do not want to test your patience, Madam Deputy Speaker—I will touch on the student visitor visa route, on which the hon. Member for Rhondda expressed two slightly different views. First, he said he was pleased that international students are coming here on shorter courses, but then he voiced some concerns. I hope he noticed that yesterday we published some detailed research that I think makes it clear that the visitor route is being used exactly as intended. It is attracting high-value, low-risk migrants who contribute positively to economic growth; in large part, they attend institutions that are accredited by bodies approved by the Home Office, and most are doing English language programmes or university exchanges. There is literally no evidence of displacement from tier 4 into the student visitor route. The number of students from countries where we have seen abuse under tier 4 and where we have cracked down on that abuse is rising in single figures—fewer than 10—so there is no evidence of further abuse, which I think is very positive. It is perfectly proper that the hon. Gentleman raised the question, but the evidence shows no risk at all.

In conclusion, Madam Deputy Speaker—

**Mr Andrew Smith:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mr Harper:** Yes; I think I am allowed to give way briefly.

**Mr Smith:** Before the Minister concludes his remarks, will he tell the House how he intends to respond to the Select Committee recommendations and his reasons for that response? He has not yet done so.

**Mr Harper:** The right hon. Gentleman knows that the Government have responded to the Select Committee reports and to each of the Select Committees. The clearest response is this: we do not have a cap on student numbers, and I do not think our net migration target means that we will have to take action that damages universities. Universities were originally concerned that having a net migration target and counting student numbers, as all our international competitors do, would drive the Government to take decisions on future policy that would damage universities. The fact that we have stated clearly that not only do we not have a cap but we are not going to have a cap—that was stated not only by me but by the Prime Minister—should reassure universities.

We will take every opportunity to communicate that positive message about our excellent offer for international students, and we will work in partnership with our excellent universities to continue to increase the number

of international students who come here from around the world. In that, I think I can say that I speak for every right hon. and hon. Member who participated in the debate.

3.7 pm

**Mr Bailey:** Conscious of the time, I will be brief. I thank everyone who contributed to the debate. When I applied for it, my objective was a debate that was constructive in tone and would enable us to discuss issues and to present facts and figures that are not normally publicised to the extent that they should be. In its own way, the House today may have helped to change the perception abroad by making it clear that this House recognises and understands the contribution that international students make to our economy and welcomes them.

My second point, however, is that the Minister has not really resolved the contradiction at the heart of current policy. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield Central (Paul Blomfield) said, it is contradictory to say that bona fide students are welcome and there is no cap on numbers and, at the same time, to say that there is a target to reduce overall immigration to fewer than 100,000 and student visas should be included in the numbers. The Minister exercised some fairly sophisticated arguments in justification, but I put it to him that, were he to undergo a credibility interview on that point, he would find it hard to persuade Members and would-be international students in foreign countries that what he said is the case.

Lastly, I remind the Minister that the consensus that has emerged during the debate is reflected more widely. Although I did not anticipate the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills coming to the House to vote for the motion, his public utterances have made it clear where he stands on the issue. The Mayor of London—it shows how passionately I feel about it that I quote the Mayor of London—has also made public statements in favour of the arguments set out today, and my hon. Friend the Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn) has made similar statements. When we get three such representatives across the political spectrum, I hope the Minister will accept that there is an enormous and growing consensus in favour of the recommended course of action.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House notes the recommendations of the House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee, the Home Affairs Select Committee, and the Committee of Public Accounts, together with the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee and the EU Sub-Committee on Home Affairs, Health and Education, for the removal of students from net migration targets; and invites the Home Office to further consider the conclusions of these Committees in developing its immigration policy.

## Pollinators and Pesticides

[*Relevant document: Seventh Report of the Environmental Audit Committee, Session 2012-13, Pollinators and Pesticides, HC 668.*]

3.10 pm

**Joan Walley** (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the matter of pollinators and pesticides.

I thank the Backbench Business Committee for allocating time for this debate. Despite the fact that there are so many conflicting events going on outside the House, we have a healthy number of MPs here who wish to participate. I am grateful to everybody for attending.

The debate today is especially appropriate given that this year is the 50th anniversary of the publication of “*Silent Spring*”, Rachel Carson’s seminal work on the environmental cost of pesticides such as DDT. It is right that we should revisit the important issue of ecology and the relationship of plants and animals to their environment and to one another.

The Environmental Audit Committee, which I chair, conducted an inquiry on pollinators and pesticides from November 2012 to March 2013. We extended it because there were so many new developments as we carried on with our inquiry. We received 40 written submissions and we held seven oral evidence sessions. I thank all the witnesses to the inquiry. It was a unanimous report and I thank members of the Committee, some of whom are able to be present today and some of whom have sent their apologies. I also thank the Committee staff, who did a phenomenal amount of work helping us to compile our report, and put on record my thanks to Chris Miles of *cdimagesanddesigns* for his generosity in allowing us to use his photograph, “Pit stop” to grace the cover of the report. We are often told how accessible or otherwise House of Commons reports are, and we feel that thanks to him, the cover on our report is fitting. Bees like to go to bright, colourful flowers and we thought we would have the same for our report.

The EAC report was published on 5 April. In normal circumstances we would have been content to wait for the Government response to our report, but given that the European Commission took significant regulatory action in this area on 29 April, shortly after its publication, we felt that a debate was urgent and timely, and on behalf of the Committee I sought the opportunity to hold the debate today.

Let me put on record the favourable response that we have had from many who care about nature and wildlife. I thank Buglife, which affirmed that our report provides robust recommendations for the future of pollinators and the agricultural industry, and Friends of the Earth, whose recent reception in the House was attended by well over 100 MPs, although I was not able to be there myself. That testified how much support there is in our constituencies all around the UK for its bee action plan. The all-party group on agro-ecology welcomed our support. It, too, welcomes the recent decision by the EU to ban three types of neonicotinoid pesticides. The all-party group believes that to be the right decision, and calls for decisions on our food supply and environment

to be based on science and not on extreme lobbying and scare-mongering by those who have an immense vested interest.

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Lab): I compliment my hon. Friend for the report and her work on this issue. While I welcome the decision on particular pesticides, does she recognise that there is a wider question of eco-diversity that we have to address? If we do not, that will be something else that kills off the bee population in future. We must have a different approach to our natural environment in relation to agriculture.

**Joan Walley**: I welcome my hon. Friend’s intervention. Our report clearly states that there is no one solution and that we need, as he rightly says, a whole new systemic approach. The core of our report is that we need to get the balance right between scientific evidence and the precautionary principle, but there are very many issues that relate to all this.

We have had further support from many members of the general public and concerned interest groups, not least Bedfordshire Beekeepers Association, which said:

“Your work has been an inspirational example of democratic scrutiny in action...we hope that you will be able to hold government to account and influence policy making both at national and EU level.”

This is exactly what we are doing today and intend to continue doing. This debate is by no means our only follow-up to the report. We are raising the issue today to see how the many things that need to be done can get done, with the direction of the Government.

The Committee decided to conduct our inquiry because the available evidence indicated that insect pollinators have experienced serious population declines in the UK in recent years. For example, we heard—this is quite shocking—that two thirds to three quarters of insect pollinator species are declining in the UK. Indeed, the 2013 report “*State of Nature*” assessed 178 bee species in the UK and found that half were in decline. For the benefit of the House, I should explain that insect pollinators include not only honey bees and wild bees but other insects such as hoverflies, moths and butterflies. At the moment, the honey bee is the sentinel species for all insect pollinators, which means that most scientific studies involve bees, but given the biological differences between the various insect pollinators, it is vital that the Government monitor a wider range of species. I hope that this is an uncontroversial point on which the Government will agree with my Committee.

**The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr David Heath)** *indicated assent.*

**Joan Walley**: I am very pleased to see the Minister nodding. I refer him to our recommendation 13: “Defra must”—I stress “must”—

“introduce a national monitoring programme to generate and monitor population data on a broad range of wild insect pollinator species to inform policy making.”

We felt that that is the bottom line and the starting point of what now needs to be done. As we went through our deliberations and came to reach our decisions, we endeavoured to find as much common ground among members of the Committee as we could before we turned to the issue of neonicotinoids.

Let me move on to the question of why insect populations might be declining. I want to make it clear at the outset that the health of insect pollinators is defined by a range of factors, including not only pesticides but urbanisation, loss of habitat, agricultural intensification and climate change; obviously, weather patterns affect things as well.

**Dame Joan Ruddock** (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): My hon. Friend will know that the Government intend to issue—shortly, I believe—planning guidance on biodiversity. Does she agree that councils need to be encouraged and given the impetus to protect and restore bee-friendly habitats in their own neighbourhoods, which would make a real contribution to addressing the point she is making?

**Joan Walley:** I thank my right hon. Friend; she makes exactly the right point, and I absolutely agree. We need safe havens for wildlife, especially in urban areas, although it is not just about urban areas. The planning system underpins the whole issue of our natural capital and biodiversity. If we do not have guidance on how we protect and enhance our natural environment, the bees do not stand a chance.

Throughout our inquiry, the Environmental Audit Committee acknowledged the importance of sustaining agricultural yields, controlling pests effectively and maintaining food security. Indeed, those concerns were reflected in our final report. Equally, we were mindful of the value of insect pollinators as an ecosystem service to UK agriculture. I think that Members will be aware of the various estimates of the agricultural value of insect pollination, ranging from £500 million to £1.9 billion, depending on whether one takes into account the cost of replacement hand pollination. We felt that those issues ought to be given a value and taken into account.

In case anyone thinks that our report is just about a moratorium on certain neonicotinoids, I hope they will have a chance to read it in full and make themselves aware of the cross-cutting nature of our work and the importance that we give to using the common agricultural policy control to help British farming move as quickly as possible to integrated pest management.

As I have said, the Committee considered a range of factors that affect insect pollinators, but we were driven to scrutinise the effects of one family of insecticides—neonicotinoids—by the weight of peer-reviewed scientific evidence. For Members who are not familiar with neonicotinoids, I should say that they are a class of insecticide derived from nicotine. Following their introduction in the mid-'90s, they have been widely used in the UK on oilseed rape, cereals, maize, sugar beet and crops grown in glass houses. The body of evidence indicating that neonicotinoids cause acute harm to bees grew appreciably in the course of our inquiry, as new studies were published in heavyweight journals such as *Science* and *Nature*. In this case, harm to bees includes increased susceptibility to disease and reduced foraging and reproduction. If Members are interested in the particular scientific studies, I refer them to the Henry, Whitehorn and Gill experiments.

We heard that 94% of published peer-reviewed experiments on the effects of neonicotinoids on bees found evidence of acute harm. The Department for

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the agri-chemical industry argued throughout our inquiry that the dosage used in those laboratory experiments was too high. In response it is worth pointing out that those studies used dosages derived from the best available data on the concentrations of neonicotinoids that bees encounter in the field.

The agri-chemical industry also likes to cite its own tests as proof that neonicotinoids cannot harm bees. However, the industry studies by which neonicotinoids were licensed for use in the European Union were not peer reviewed and are not open to scrutiny due to the supposed commercial sensitivity of the data. Furthermore, we found evidence in relation to the licensing of imidacloprid which calls into question altogether the rigour of the testing regime.

Against that background, we went on to consider the precautionary principle. By definition, insecticides kill insects. The precautionary question is whether neonicotinoid insecticides have an unsustainable impact on insect pollinators. The 1992 United Nations Rio declaration on environment and development states:

“Where there are threats of serious and irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.”

That internationally agreed definition of the precautionary principle was later enshrined in the Lisbon treaty and it underpins much of the work that has been done on sustainable development, including when the work of the Rio conference was built on at Rio+20 only last year in Brazil.

Throughout our inquiry, DEFRA used what it identified as a lack of full scientific certainty as an excuse for inaction. For example, at one stage the Department stated that it would require unequivocal evidence of harm before acting on neonicotinoids.

**Dr Sarah Wollaston** (Totnes) (Con): In medical research, there is a huge issue with drug companies not publishing inconvenient data. Does the hon. Lady feel that that is a serious problem with neonicotinoids?

**Joan Walley:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for raising that point about commercial confidentiality and the lack of transparency. We hear a lot at the moment about lobbying and related issues, but if the agri-chemical industry wishes to make claims about the value of its products, it must open up the evidence to full scrutiny. There is no case for hiding behind so-called “commercial confidentiality”. That prevents the open, transparent and informed policy making that is so badly needed. I agree with the hon. Lady and her point relates to one of the recommendations in our report.

When the weight of peer-reviewed evidence rendered untenable DEFRA's position on the need for unequivocal evidence, it claimed that it would commission the Food and Environment Research Agency to conduct a realistic field study to resolve the matter. That study was not peer reviewed and it was, as one witness to our inquiry presciently pointed out, clearly too small to provide conclusive results. It was undermined by fundamental errors in its execution, such as placing the various hives that were used in the experiments outside on different days of the year.

[Joan Walley]

Our view on the study, which was that we should not accept it, was confirmed by the European Food Safety Authority on Tuesday, when it identified the same weaknesses as we did.

**Mr Heath** *indicated assent.*

**Joan Walley:** I am glad to see the Minister nodding his head. The conclusion was that there was no reason for EFSA to change its view.

DEFRA told us that its pesticides policy was underpinned by the precautionary principle. I fear that in this case, that statement of intent has not been matched by DEFRA's actions. Interestingly, the private sector appears to be more willing than DEFRA to implement precautions. In the course of our inquiry, we heard that major do-it-yourself chains such as B&Q, Wickes and Homebase were withdrawing neonicotinoids from sale for domestic use, and supermarket chains such as the Co-operative have prohibited their suppliers from using neonicotinoids in anything other than exceptional circumstances. I also welcome the press release from Waitrose, which states that it is looking to do the same in respect of flowering crops.

As our report was taking shape and we were having involved discussions among ourselves, we had to extend the length of our inquiry to take account of developments elsewhere, because it was clear that we were being overtaken by events such as the European Commission's regulatory action. Although the growing weight of published scientific research did not impress DEFRA, it led the EC to take action. The EC is responsible for licensing chemicals for use in European agriculture. It instructed EFSA to draw up new risk assessments for neonicotinoids in relation to bees. The revised risk assessments led the EC to propose measured regulatory action, with a two-year EU-wide moratorium on the use of three of the five neonicotinoids on crops that are attractive to bees.

The EC proposal was put to a qualified majority vote on 15 March. As we all know, the vote was inconclusive and the UK abstained. The hung outcome of the vote allowed the EC to implement the appeal procedure, which led to a second vote on 29 April. I understand that between 15 March and 29 April, there was intensive lobbying and negotiation in Europe. Indeed, I went out personally to present our report to the European Commissioner. Finally, the EC amended its initial proposal. It recognised the need to delay the introduction of a moratorium to allow the seed supply chain time to adjust, which was a recommendation of our report. That is an example of how my Committee focused on the practical outcomes for the agricultural sector. We did not want to make any knee-jerk recommendations and we wanted there to be time for the matter to be properly understood and acted on.

In the second vote, on 29 April, the UK shifted from abstention to active resistance by voting against the proposed moratorium, despite the concessions made by the European Commission. However, countries such as Germany, France, Spain and the Netherlands all voted for the moratorium, which will consequently be introduced across the EU on 1 December 2013.

What effects will the two-year moratorium have on UK agriculture? First, I want to highlight that when neonicotinoids were banned for use on maize in Italy, there was no negative effect on yield. Secondly, the moratorium will prevent farmers from using neonicotinoids on "crops that are attractive to bees",

which of course excludes sugar beet, crops grown in glass houses and winter wheat; it is quite a proportionate measure. Thirdly, neonicotinoids are a relatively recent innovation. Oilseed rape, for example, was a viable UK crop before the introduction of neonicotinoids in the mid-'90s.

Some have argued that a moratorium on neonicotinoids will lead farmers to spray greater quantities of other more environmentally harmful pesticides, such as organophosphates and pyrethroids. However, it is open to DEFRA to ensure that that is not the case. It is clearly in the interests of the environment, food security, minimising resistance among pests and maximising agricultural incomes that the least possible amount of pesticides is used in agricultural production. Indeed, in talks I have had with different bodies they have said that such a moratorium will mean that there must be a focus on what to do and what alternative proposals to come up with, so that we incentivise a more healthy approach to crops.

To that end, integrated pest management is a broad approach to plant protection that minimises pesticide use and encourages natural pest control mechanisms. By 1 January 2014, all pesticide users will be required to adopt IPM under the European directive on the sustainable use of pesticides. If UK farmers practise IPM, the argument that a moratorium on neonicotinoids will lead to unfavourable environmental outcomes does not hold. I believe that was very much a deciding factor in the Committee's reaching its unanimous decision.

DEFRA does not appear to have prioritised compliance with the directive on the sustainable use of pesticides. The directive states:

"Member states should adopt...quantitative objectives, targets, measures and timetables to reduce...the impact of pesticide use on the environment."

However, a DEFRA official dismissed such targets as "meaningless", which sits uneasily with the Department's stated commitments to integrated pest management. Indeed, our report was halted or delayed because the Government were slow to make a full response to that European directive.

Other than the recommendations on the moratorium of certain neonicotinoids, the importance of monitoring the health of pollinators and the introduction of integrated pest management, many other detailed issues arise from the Committee's report that relate to risk assessment and risk management. Those include reforms involving the European food safety authority, where our Government, should they wish to, could take the lead, CAP reform and recognising the importance of less secrecy and greater transparency in the risk assessment trials undertaken by the agrochemical industry—the point raised by the hon. Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston). I am disappointed that the Government have chosen to delay their response to our report, which was due this week, but I look forward to their detailed response on the work we have carried out. For now, however, events have moved quickly and DEFRA did not take our advice when the issue was raised by the European Commission.



In conclusion, I have three questions for the Minister. First, I believe DEFRA has said it will commission further field research on neonicotinoids and bees. Will that research be published in a journal and be peer reviewed? Will the Minister consider commissioning the British scientists who participated in the Gill and Whitehorn studies, rather than FERA, whose previous report was discredited? Is it DEFRA policy to reject all laboratory studies—and, by extension, scientific method—as a basis for action? Secondly, how will DEFRA ensure the effective implementation of the sustainable use of pesticide directive? Thirdly, will the Minister explain what changed between the first EU vote on 15 March, when the UK abstained, to the second EU vote, on 29 April, when the UK voted against a moratorium?

The UK public are concerned about bees and pollinators. When I raised this at Prime Minister's Question Time, he stressed the importance of the precautionary principle. As we look forward to the summer, people's minds will be on gardening and planting, and farmers' minds will be on planting and harvesting. It is critical that we hear from the Government on how they will respond to the EU moratorium.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. May I suggest each speaker takes around 10 minutes?

3.35 pm

**Neil Carmichael** (Stroud) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak in the debate, not least because I am a member of the Environmental Audit Committee. I thank our Chair for the excellent leadership she has provided with this report and others. She is right on the importance of establishing a broad agreement, which the Committee did in its report—we have always achieved such agreement in previous reports, too. That is a good illustration of the Committee's effectiveness, which I hope will continue, because we will do important work on investment in the green economy, which will result in a thought-provoking and important report.

I am a former farmer, so I am familiar with the pesticides argument. I was principally a livestock farmer, but I could not escape other types of farming. I fully support the report's recommendations. It is important that we recognise that bees are essential to our environment and to successful farming. That is well illustrated by my constituency—Stroud is recognised as world bee place. We have done a huge amount of work to promote the protection of bees, including wild bees, which are also at risk. I am extraordinarily proud of my constituency's bee protection reputation.

It is important to recognise that there are more threats to bees than pesticides. We have heard about bee starvation and bee diseases such as varroa—I hope I pronounced that correctly; as a Northumbrian, I sometimes get my vowels slightly mixed up. We also know of a variety of other threats to bees. We should recognise that the Government see the problem and are taking action with the bee protection plan. I hope the Minister outlines how extensive that plan is, because we need to demonstrate that the coalition Government are determined to protect bees.

It was disappointing that the UK did not vote in favour of the moratorium on neonicotinoids, but the moratorium is in place. As our Committee Chair correctly

noted, that reflects the concerns and interest the Committee has spelt out. We had a lengthy debate on the seeds supply chain, and recognised that, for any moratorium to be effective, it would have to start later than we envisaged, which is right. It is good that Europe noticed that as well. The changes our Chair outlined are extremely welcome. It is good that the Government, through the field studies we have heard about, are determined to recognise the importance of the impact of neonicotinoids.

Transparency is critical. As my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) noted, there are too many occasions when one wonders how much we really know about what is being discovered or being hidden, so this matter would benefit from true transparency. I urge the Minister and the Department to consider the transparency of field studies, so that we know exactly what is going on and what the tests reveal. As the Chair noted, maize in Italy did not really suffer as a result of neonicotinoids being banned, but that is just one example. Everybody would benefit from more study and a more comprehensive understanding, including pesticide manufacturers. One problem that has to be borne in mind is that banning one type of pesticide might mean that other pesticides are used in an uncontrolled way. We have to monitor the use of all pesticides, especially when withdrawing neonicotinoids, as using different pesticides might make matters considerably worse. I am sure the Government are minded to do that.

On the wider question of the common agricultural policy and overall farm management, as we move towards a reformed CAP it is important to recognise good work, such as that done by the Environmental Stewardship scheme. I would like to see more farmers using such schemes, and for those schemes to become more tailored towards the kind of issue we are debating today.

**Dame Joan Ruddock:** The hon. Gentleman speaks about further reform of the CAP. I am sure he is aware that recent reforms to the CAP have given national Governments discretion to switch subsidies to agri-environment schemes, which could bring in much more bee-friendly habitats. Does he agree that the Government ought to be taking that step, rather than going on so much about what might be done in the future? Let us use what we have got now.

**Neil Carmichael:** The Government are a Government of positive action. We are a coalition Government. We benefit enormously from having Conservatives on one side and Liberal Democrats on the other, and I am certain that that combination will bring about exactly what the right hon. Lady says.

The right hon. Lady raises an interesting point about what amounts to the devolution of the CAP. From its inception, its impact has been characterised by either dominant nation states promoting certain types of produce, or, as in this case, by policy filtration, with different levels of government influencing outcomes by changing the nature of the policy. That was particularly prevalent in the early days in certain Mediterranean countries with regard to olives and so on. We should recognise devolution, but it is a double-edged sword. We in this country are able to do the right thing, but can we always guarantee that that will be the case in other countries that might have other priorities? I welcome those changes in the CAP, but urge the Government to do as the

[*Neil Carmichael*]

hon. Lady suggests. Indeed, I would go further and argue that we need to amplify the CAP's impact environmental protection. It needs to be understood more clearly by the wider public. If people understood its more positive implications and outcomes, we could generate greater support for the CAP.

To sum up, I think it is right to have the moratorium on neonicotinoids and that it was postponed to allow the supply chain to adjust. It is necessary, however, to maintain a weather eye on neonicotinoids, so I welcome the Government's commitment to field studies. It is important that they be conducted transparently and that their outcomes be made transparent. It is also important to recognise the value of good management and the impact that the reformed CAP can have. I would like more farmers encouraged down that path. In broad terms, we should celebrate the fact that many organisations—including those in my constituency I mentioned—are doing a lot of good work for the protection of bees. We should be supporting and welcoming those local solutions. Gardeners, too, have a responsibility, because in the past they have used neonicotinoids. It is important to recognise that all of us—I indulge in a spot of gardening myself, though I do not use neonicotinoids—should promote good practice wherever it is necessary, and it is necessary in our gardens, as well as on our farms.

3.46 pm

**Martin Caton** (Gower) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Stroud (Neil Carmichael), who is a fellow member of the Environmental Audit Committee, and I join him in paying tribute to the leadership of our Committee Chair, not only on this vital inquiry, but on all our inquiries.

I strongly support all the conclusions and recommendations in our report, but my interest in what is happening to our pollinating insects goes back quite a bit further than last November, when we started taking evidence. In fact, it probably dates back more than 40 years to when I was at agricultural school and undertook a course in apiculture. The certificate I secured at the end remains a treasured possession. More recently, about three years ago, that interest was further spurred by a 2009 report produced by the organisation Buglife, which our Chair has already mentioned, and the Soil Association. It was a review of the scientific literature on a group of systemic pesticides called neonicotinoids on non-target insect species.

Although the combined evidence in the report was not conclusive, even at that time it rang serious alarm bells that should have received an urgent response from the Government. I secured a Westminster Hall debate on the subject, which a surprising number of Members from across the House attended to express their shared concern about the potential threat posed by these pesticides to a vital group of invertebrates—pollinating insects. Since that debate, thanks to intelligence supplied by Buglife and other environmental organisations, I have tried to keep track of further research and, when significant, have drawn it to the House's attention through early-day motions and other parliamentary means.

As our Chair said, last autumn, the Committee decided to conduct what has turned out to be a major inquiry taking evidence from the organisations she mentioned.

The first thing the Committee had to recognise was that many of our pollinating species appeared to have been in decline for some time. Of course, when we look at pollinators—especially any threats to them—the first focus is usually honey bees. That has been particularly the case in Europe and the USA in recent years, with alarming reports of what is sometimes called colony collapse on an international basis.

As a result of their economic significance, honey bees attract far more scientific attention than any other pollinator. Their decline has been ascribed to a range of causes—pests and diseases, such as the varroa mite, which has been mentioned, along with weather conditions, poor nutrition, poor husbandry, urbanisation, agricultural intensification, habitat degradation and the use and misuse of pesticides. However, honey bees are not the main pollinators in the UK—far from it. Ninety per cent of insect pollination is done by the thousands of other, wild pollinators—other bees, hoverflies, butterflies, carrion flies, beetles, midges, moths, and so on. These other pollinators are not monitored or studied like honey bees, so we do not know exactly what is happening to them. However, we received disquieting evidence from some witnesses of how, as the Chair has said, two thirds of wild pollinator species are declining, including moths, butterflies, hoverflies and bumble bees. We were told that of the 25 UK bumble bee species, two or three—no one is sure because the research has not been done—have already become extinct, while probably 10 others have suffered large range decline.

We were advised that DEFRA has a bee unit that does a good job of monitoring honey bees. There are 70 Government scientists dedicated to researching honey bees, but just part of one scientist looking at the health of wild bees. That has to change. We cannot afford to remain ignorant about our wild pollinators. That is why we call in the report for DEFRA to introduce a national monitoring programme to generate and monitor population data on a broad range of wild insect pollinator species. If we do not really know what is going on, we cannot make the right policy decisions to halt decline.

Most people looking at pollinator decline would come to the conclusion that, at least in most cases, multiple factors are at play—those that I have listed for honey bees and perhaps others. Most of our witnesses who addressed the wider picture accepted that there were probably a range of causes. However, the representatives of mainstream farming and especially the agricultural industry were absolutely adamant that the decline had nothing to do with pesticide use and especially not the use of neonics. Our Chair has described how neonicotinoids work, which I will not repeat, but I will add that they are systemic, which means that they get into every part of the plants that are treated with them. Pollinating insects absorb them and carry them back to their nests or hives, even though they are not the target species.

**Dame Joan Ruddock:** My hon. Friend is making some interesting points. Does he think, as I do, that the Government perhaps need to rewrite their national pesticides action plan? There are methods other than the use of chemicals. They ought to be encouraged so that farmers and horticulturalists do whatever they can to reduce the chemical pressure on the environment and the pollinators.

**Martin Caton:** I completely agree, and I am coming to the Government's pesticides action plan, which is actually an "inaction plan"—to be quite honest, it is a disgraceful document.

We looked at the pesticide approvals regime at EU and UK levels, and found a system flawed at both. Put simply, it works like this. The chemical company puts together the scientific data to support its application and submits a dossier to the regulatory authority in any EU member state. That authority's experts make their own assessment, which is set out in a draft assessment report. That is then reported to the European Food Safety Authority, which conducts a peer review by experts from other EU countries. Its conclusions are sent to the Commission, which makes a proposal—for approval or not—to the Council of Ministers. After approval, companies can apply to the regulatory authority in any member state for permission to market their product. The regulatory authority in the UK is the chemicals regulation directorate of the Health and Safety Executive. The CRD prepares a scientific evaluation, which is considered by the Advisory Committee on Pesticides, which is a statutory, independent body that advises Ministers on whether approval should be given.

On the face of it, the whole thing sounds quite rigorous, but we found significant flaws. First, as our Chair said, the pesticide manufacturers that commission the research to submit to the regulators keep control of that research. In practice, that means that the data on safety under which a chemical is licensed are not put into the public domain, denying effective academic access and, therefore, independent criticism. In contrast, some of the academics who gave evidence to us reported that their research was openly published, which meant that where it showed a link between pesticide use and pollinator decline, defenders of the agrichemical industry would go through their work with a fine-toothed comb looking for a way to rubbish it, sometimes deliberately misinterpreting it to do so. We believe that it should not be beyond the wit of humankind to ensure maximum transparency without threatening genuine commercial sensitivity.

Another problem with the process is that, up to now, the EU approval system has explicitly addressed only the risk to honey bees. That probably would not be too bad if the honey bee were one of the more fragile and sensitive pollinators. If that were the case, and it survived exposure to a product, it would be likely that other, tougher pollinator species would be fine. In fact, we heard evidence that the honey bee is probably the most robust of the pollinators when it comes to pesticide exposure. Bumble bee research, for instance, shows the clear detrimental impact of neonicotinoid use. Some pollinators, such as hoverflies, have very different life cycles from any bees, and therefore have different exposure routes. Such pollinators remain unconsidered at present. We urge DEFRA to introduce a representative range of sentinel pollinator species in UK pesticide risk assessments, and to work for the same arrangements across the EU.

We also came across an example that showed that, however good the approval system might be in theory, it can fall down badly in practice. The neonicotinoid imidacloprid had to be re-evaluated in 2006. Germany's regulatory authority produced the draft assessment report. One of the properties to be assessed was the propensity of the pesticide to accumulate in soil and water, and the

assessments were carried out in two trials here in the UK. The results of the tests were misreported in the draft assessment report, however. It concluded that "the compound has no potential for accumulation in soil".

That is exactly the opposite of what the trial evidence showed. When the European Food Safety Authority conducted its peer review of the German assessment, it identified the pesticide's apparent tendency to accumulate, and concluded:

"The risk assessment to soil dwelling organisms cannot be finalised because the assessment of soil accumulation is not finalised."

This formed part of the text of the EFSA peer review sent to the Commission, so one might have expected that body to refuse approval until the accumulation question had been answered.

The European Commission Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health considered EFSA's report and, astonishingly, gave imidacloprid its approval, stating that it presented

"no unacceptable risks to the environment".

There was no mention of accumulation in soil. That was a clear and dangerous failure of the assessment process. We argued that the process needed to be tightened up by empowering EFSA to include in future peer reviews action points that the Commission must address.

We looked at the growing body of evidence linking neonicotinoid use with pollinator decline. This was taken seriously by a considerable number of academics, but dismissed by the agrichemical companies, mainly for two reasons. First, they claimed that the trial doses were higher than would be used in practice. Secondly, they stated that the experiments had been carried out in the laboratory or only partly in the field, and claimed that they could trust only field trials. That Orwellian mantra, "Field trials good, laboratory trials bad", was repeated often during our inquiry.

DEFRA's real underlying attitude to assessing the risks of pesticide use was inadvertently given away in a 2012 document, "Neonicotinoid insecticides and bees: the state of the science and the regulatory response". As our Committee Chair has said, the Department stated that it needed unequivocal proof in order to support a moratorium.

**Joan Walley:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making these points. This sums up the flawed basis on which permissions were being given throughout the whole regulatory procedure. We are now presenting the Government with the opportunity to take a leadership role, and we want them to follow up exactly on the recommendations in our report.

**Martin Caton:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I will now conclude my speech, as I have gone over the 10 minutes you suggested, Mr Deputy Speaker.

3.59 pm

**Dr Alan Whitehead** (Southampton, Test) (Lab): It is true to say that very little of what is discussed in this Chamber is beyond dispute. Indeed, only on Tuesday, a scientific hypothesis that has been shown to be supported by 97% of scientists writing about it in a review of 12,000 papers—namely, anthropogenic global warming—was nevertheless merrily being debated by hon. Members as though that near certainty did not exist. Questions

[Dr Alan Whitehead]

concerning what is happening to bees and pollinators, what the causes are and what role pesticides may or may not play in the problems that we have heard this afternoon are occurring with bee populations are far less certain than that. It is thus potentially a matter for a great deal of dispute.

I want to reflect on the related problem that we as legislators have in addressing those issues and deciding how best to take action on them. The Select Committee's work on this issue was an exemplar of how to go about that when the members themselves are not experts. Interestingly, however, as we have heard, the Environmental Audit Committee has rather more experts on it than one might think in respect of those who hold a certificate in apiculture. Also, several members are active or former farmers who have a great deal of knowledge and information about how these things work in general. The Committee did not go about its business in any kind of sensationalist manner. It operated carefully, quietly and at some length, seeking a large range of thoughts, opinions and experts in order to shed some light on what is a very knotty problem.

The problem was well summed up in a book published recently by the Canadian author, Douglas Coupland. He posited as a starting point of his novel that bees had been declared extinct. Then, across America, five people were found who had been stung by bees, and they were all arrested and immediately investigated by scientists on the basis of that apparently counter-scientific fact relating to the continuous existence of bees. Douglas Coupland was, I think, a little unscientific in setting out a world in which there were no bees, without taking account of the large number of other pollinators that exist alongside bees.

We know from the evidence produced before the Select Committee that the problem is not just about honey bees; in fact it is not just about bees as it is about all the pollinators that operate in our environment in such a fundamentally important and basic way to ensure that our ecosystem continues in a recognisable way. If the sort of declines that the Committee heard about are to continue at the same rate over the same sort of period, not just several bumble bee species but large numbers of bumble bees will be extinct.

The Committee was told that 600 solitary bees can pollinate as well as two hives containing 30,000 honey bees, so it is not just about honey bees. As our Committee Chairman mentioned, they are a sentinel species, but it is nevertheless the case that hoverflies, butterflies and all sorts of other pollinators are in steep decline. We were told that 66% of larger moth species in the countryside are declining, as are most of the bumble bees—we were told that six species had declined by at least 80% in recent years. As we have heard, hoverflies are declining, and 71% of butterfly species are declining at an alarming rate. We do not have data on the vast majority of the other pollinators, and we have to take some of those sentinel species as indicators for those other species, but we certainly do know that something is beginning to go seriously wrong with the species that pollinate our crops, flowers and food.

So I do not think the Committee had a choice in the conclusions it might reasonably draw from the material presented to it, given that, as legislators, we have to

make choices when we are not necessarily complete experts in a subject. We are responsible for what happens and we have to take the best shot we can in terms of getting the best evidence available to inform our judgments. The evidence that came before the Committee demonstrated clearly a strong relationship, not only where neonicotinoids were used, but, for example, where crops were routinely dusted. Farmers cannot purchase oilseed rape seeds in this country that have not been dusted. Whether or not they think there is a problem with their crops, they simply have to plant those crops, which have, systemic within them, the effect of the neonicotinoid with which they have been dusted.

The Committee heard about the various studies done by Henry, Whitehorn and Gill, which demonstrated a strong causal link between neonicotinoids and an effect on bees in a laboratory. We also heard about the continued difficulty in conducting adequate field trials. One person who contributed to our evidence suggested that getting scientific certainty from field trials would cost about £20 million and take 10 years, if that is what one wanted to do. So we cannot deal in absolute scientific certainty on these things and, in terms of decision making, nor should we. The conclusions that the Committee reached on what should be done about neonicotinoids are absolutely right, given what we, as legislators, are charged with doing. I continue to be a little dismayed about the extent to which it appears that this is not quite the route the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is taking in its representations on pesticides, pollinators and bees.

I welcome the notion that further, and, we hope, much less flawed, field trials will be carried out urgently, which can get further indicators to the fore. I also welcome the idea that we should try to ensure that integrated approaches are brought to the fore in the future management of pesticides. It has been implied—the Committee unanimously felt that this was not the case—that there are no alternatives to neonicotinoids if they are taken off the roster of usable pesticides for those plants. I hope that we can use different methods of pesticide management and ensure that the crops are well maintained, with advice and assistance from DEFRA, in a way that a number of people say is not possible to do.

We remain in a world in which there is an enormous amount that we do not know. I hope that DEFRA will monitor developments involving non-bee pollinators much more closely, will keep them well to the fore in terms of the views that it expresses and the action that it decides to take, and will continue to look at the evidence that is being produced about elements that are thought to be having an impact on colony decline. I hope that its consideration will bring together such issues as varroa mite habitats, food availability, husbandry, and, indeed, climate change, in order to create a more complete picture of what is going on.

Let me emphasise again that we do not know the details of what is going on. We do not know what is the prime cause of decline. What we do know is that there is a decline, that it is very serious, and that we can do things about it. That is the essence of what the Committee is saying in the report. It does not seek to provide all the answers; it does not look for a silver bullet; but it does suggest that there is a strong case for taking action. I hope that DEFRA will take precisely the sort of action

that we need, in order to ensure that our pollinators are healthier in the future and our ecosystem revives as a result.

4.11 pm

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): The debate about pollinators and pesticides tends to be seen as a debate about bees and the decline of our bee population, but, in fact, more than 250 pollinating insects are threatened with extinction, including more than 50% of all wild bee species. A third of European butterfly species are in decline, with about 10% at risk of extinction. Over the last 70 years two species of bumble bee have become extinct in the United Kingdom, and six of the remaining 24 are listed as endangered.

I was recently told by a constituent who is a county moth recorder for Gloucestershire that, according to "The State of Britain's Larger Moths 2013", produced by Butterfly Conservation and Rothamsted Research, Britain's moth population has declined seriously in the last 40 years, and more than 60 species have become extinct since 1900.

There are about 400,000 species of flowering plants. While some rely on wind to move pollen and a much smaller number rely on water, the vast majority—about 90%—depend on animals and insects to transfer pollen between flowers. The considerable decline in pollinators to which some of my hon. Friends have referred today poses several risks, but in particular it poses a risk to our food supply. Bees are thought to be responsible for the pollination of about a third of the food eaten by the world's population. Twenty per cent. of the UK's cropped area is made up of pollinator-dependent crops, which include most fruit and vegetables.

I must confess that, as became clear when I met representatives of Friends of the Earth to discuss their campaign, I tended to think of bees as flower pollinators, and had not really thought about the food chain. However, almost all blueberries, grapefruits, avocados, cherries, apples, pears, plums, squashes, cucumbers, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and macadamia nuts, along with many other products—I think that cabbages were mentioned—depend on the foraging activities of bees. Moreover, pollination is responsible not just for the quantity of food but for its quality, in terms of both taste and nutrients. Watermelons that are visited more frequently by pollinators tend to have darker fruit with a richer flavour. It is estimated that without bees, the availability of vitamin C could drop by 20%.

The decline in pollinators also poses an economic risk. Their value to the UK Government is conservatively estimated to be £430 million per annum. Unless we halt the decline in British bees and other pollinators, our farmers might have to rely on hand pollination, which could cost farmers £1.8 billion a year in labour and pollen alone. That is increasingly happening in China, causing food prices to rise.

There is also a risk to the environment. Pollinators are important for the quality of our gardens, parks and countryside. Their decline gives us a worrying early warning indication about the health of our environment. Tony Juniper says in his book, "What has nature ever done for us?":

"While governments would not consider neglecting our spending on power networks and transport infrastructure, the 'green infrastructure' was taken for granted."

He goes on to say:

"We clearly possess the means to keep the world's pollinator populations strong and robust, if we want to. All we have to do is invest in the many practical and often simple steps that will take us in that direction."

What are the remedies? I have received hundreds of e-mails from constituents, many of whom are gardeners, witnessing the decline of the bee population. They are also helping to create bee-friendly gardens and habitats to help bees to thrive. Unlike some rural areas, which can be a monoculture in terms of pollination potential, Bristol's parks, gardens and even buildings are being used as rich sources for flowering plants. Cities have great potential as places for restoring habitats for bees.

The Welsh Assembly is leading the way in taking action. It is currently consulting on its draft "Action Plan for Pollinators for Wales", published in April. I have been urging the Bristol council member responsible for the environment, communities and equalities to adopt a pollinator action plan for Bristol along the same lines, given the importance of this for the Bristol area. A range of decisions taken by the current mayoral cabinet, from planning issues to management of public spaces, could have an impact on bee numbers. Indeed, local authorities could take proactive action to protect and create habitats for bees and other pollinators.

Bristol is an ideal city to take the lead in reversing bee decline. We have been shortlisted alongside Brussels, Glasgow and Ljubljana to become European green capital for 2015, and we will find out next week whether we have won. We have a well-deserved reputation as the most sustainable city in the UK, with organisations including the Soil Association and the Environment Agency based in the city, and with our growing number of innovative green businesses and community-led initiatives. We were one of the first cities to set up a food policy council, which is driving sustainable food policies for the city, including by increasing the amount of land available for allotments, and Feed Bristol is running its "get growing" garden trail this weekend; the public can visit 27 sites and be inspired to get growing.

I am delighted that a project to plant flower meadows across the city has won the mayor's genius award for its efforts to transform the urban environment for pollinating insects. This urban pollinators project, led by the university of Bristol and working in partnership with the city council's "meadow Bristol" project, is planting flower meadows in Bristol's public parks and at schools, turning them into a haven for pollinating insects, as well as a beautiful display that everyone can enjoy. On 17 June in Bristol there will be a seminar called "bees, blooms and Bristol", at which Professor Jane Memmott of the university of Bristol and others will be talking about how we can make Bristol even more pollinator-friendly. I hope that when the Government issue their planning practice guidance on biodiversity, which is expected soon, they will work with councils and the Welsh Assembly, giving them the guidance and impetus they need to protect and restore bee-friendly habitats.

Finally, I want to turn to the issue of pesticides. It was remiss of me not to congratulate at the beginning of my speech the Environmental Audit Committee on its work. Scientists have stated conclusively that neonicotinoid pesticides pose unacceptable levels of risk to honey bees. I hope the Government will adopt the Committee's recommendation that they should rewrite

[Kerry McCarthy]

their national pesticides action plan to incentivise farmers to use non-pesticide methods of pest control and set out a route for reducing overall pesticide use. There needs to be a real shift towards more wildlife-friendly farming in the UK.

I was pleased that the Committee investigated the use of pesticides both on agricultural seed and on plants and seeds sold by garden centres. One constituent, a secondary school teacher who has been planting a wild meadow in the school where she works, recently wrote to me when she was appalled to discover that the plants she was buying to attract insects could actually be harming them. I am pleased to learn from the report that many of the UK's largest gardening retailers, including B&Q, Wickes and Homebase, have voluntarily withdrawn non-professional plant protection products that contain neonicotinoids, but I urge the Government to accept the Committee's recommendation that we should implement a full ban on the sale of neonicotinoids for public domestic use, to help create an urban safe haven for pollinators.

My final point is about the EU vote. As we have heard, the UK Government were one of eight Governments who voted against a ban, but thankfully the vote was carried by a narrow majority and the UK will not be able to opt out. The press has carried reports of intense secret lobbying by British Ministers on behalf of chemical companies in the run-up to the vote. In a letter released to *The Observer* under freedom of information rules, the Environment Secretary told the chemicals company Syngenta that he was "extremely disappointed" by the proposed ban. He said that "the UK has been very active" in opposing it and that "our efforts will continue and intensify in the coming days".

We know that the Government said that they opposed the ban because they felt that there was insufficient scientific evidence from field trials to justify one, but I would be grateful if the Minister explained why the Government went beyond that in working so closely with chemical companies to oppose this moderate two-year suspension while further tests are carried out.

I congratulate the Environmental Audit Committee on its report. Out of all the Committees in the House, it has produced some absolutely fascinating reports, such as its report on protecting the Arctic and the report on green investment that is coming up. This has been a very interesting debate.

4.20 pm

**Nia Griffith** (Llanelli) (Lab): I, too, congratulate the Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Joan Walley), and her team on the very thorough work they have done in this report. I also want to take the opportunity to express my concerns about the Government's commitment to reversing bee decline, particularly in the light of the decision to vote against an EU-wide ban on neonicotinoid insecticides.

The need for action to reverse bee decline is highly urgent. All species of bee in the UK, including wild bumble and solitary species as well as managed honey bees, are suffering steep decline. In the last century, the

UK has lost 20 species of bee and 47 surviving species are considered to be vulnerable or endangered. Such a rapid decline in bee populations, not just in the UK but across the world, poses a serious threat to global food production, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) has just mentioned.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation estimates that about a third of all plants or plant products eaten by humans are dependent on bee pollination. The vital importance of bees to our environment and economy has long been known to the experts, but the critical role of our natural pollinators is only beginning to gain a wider appreciation.

Imaginative national campaigns, such as the Friends of the Earth campaign for a bee action plan, have had an impact in informing people about bee decline and gathering momentum for a comprehensive strategy from the Government. It is clear that the importance of the issue has also hit home in countries such as France and Italy. Italy is not always known for its interest in the environment, but it has led the way in banning certain types of pesticide before the moratorium was voted on by the EU.

For those of us who have been waiting for the Government to step up to the mark and action a comprehensive plan to reverse the ruinous decline in the UK's bee population, the recent decision by Ministers to vote against the EU ban on neonicotinoid insecticides came as a blow. Thankfully for the bee population, the weight of support for the ban among other EU member states enabled the European Commission to proceed with a two-year moratorium on the use of neonicotinoids, but the UK's action confirmed the Government's fundamental misunderstanding of their responsibility on the issue and betrayed a worrying lack of insight into where their priorities should lie.

DEFRA Ministers are hiding behind the need for what they call "clearer proof" of harm to bees caused by neonicotinoids. Indeed, they attempted to discredit the findings of the European Food Safety Agency, which concluded that the insecticides represented a "high acute risk" to honey bees and other pollinators, by pointing out that they were based on the results of lab tests rather than "field evidence". There were those that hoped that by capitalising on the difficulty of obtaining field evidence they could get away with maintaining the status quo.

The UK field study cited by DEFRA Ministers as proof that neonicotinoids did not pose a risk to bees was pronounced hopelessly inadequate by EFSA. The bumblebee hives intended as controls in the experiment had been contaminated by neonicotinoids, and the study was found to be deficient in a large number of other ways. EFSA also expressed pointed concern about the manner in which the authors had

"elaborated and interpreted the study results to reach their conclusions".

Needless to say, the study was brushed hastily under the carpet and Ministers were forced to stop touting it as sufficient proof that a ban was unnecessary, but the disregard for suggestive evidence that neonicotinoids cause harm and the massaging of scientific evidence to suit current policy causes real concern. Most troubling is that the Government have completely missed the point: in this situation, given the potential truly devastating

effects of bee decline, it is the Government's duty to act with appropriate caution—a duty they have utterly failed to recognise. In other words, DEFRA Ministers must apply the precautionary principle, as set out in the 1992 United Nations Rio declaration and the Lisbon treaty. It is not for the Government to entertain a value-based preference for false negatives—a desperate willingness to conclude that neonicotinoid pesticides are safe when they might not be. As the Environmental Audit Committee report states,

“economic factors should not blur environmental risk assessment and risk management, where the protection of people and the environment must be paramount.”

The sense of disappointment in the Government's actions on bee-harming neonicotinoids is compounded by the fact that this is exactly the sort of issue—one that has far-reaching and potentially devastating environmental and economic implications—that we expect the UK to champion. We of all countries have always had a reputation for thorough scientific research, real concern for the environment and respect for the precautionary principle, and that the Government did not decide to take a proactive leading role in tackling bee decline related to pesticide use reflects very poorly on our nation's attitude to environmental issues and severely damages the UK's reputation for diligence and responsibility regarding the environment. The Government have not lived up to expectations. They should have had the foresight to lead; instead, they have allowed themselves to be beaten around by the big companies—a point my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East made clearly—and left us trailing behind.

Now the Government must seize the chance to make a fresh start. The two-year moratorium on the use of three neonicotinoid pesticides on crops attractive to honey bees will provide an opportunity for DEFRA Ministers to carry out careful and impartial monitoring of the effect on bee populations of the removal of pesticides. That will be a positive action that demonstrates the UK's appreciation of the seriousness of bee decline and its commitment to working to reverse it. It will also demonstrate the UK's support for the work of the European Commission, which also plans to use the two-year suspension period to review new scientific evidence on how pollinators are faring more generally.

The Government must also overhaul their national action plan for the sustainable use of pesticides. It was necessary to take legal advice on whether the action plan complied with the minimum standards of the EU directive, which strongly suggests that the Government failed to see the directive as an opportunity to address the wider issue of pesticide use. In fact, UK use of insecticides on crops pollinated by bees remains on a steady upward trend. The Government must abandon their irresponsible, lacklustre approach and rewrite the action plan to incentivise farmers to use non-pesticide-based methods of pest control, making sure to include targets, measures and timetables for the reduction of pesticide use overall.

The Government must also recognise their duty to apply the precautionary principle. Given what is at stake, DEFRA must commit itself to erring on the side of caution in matters relating to bee decline and in future complex matters relating to the protection of people and the environment. The Select Committee observed:

“There is no compelling economic or agricultural case for neonicotinoid use in private gardens and on amenities such as golf courses”

and said that that might provide DEFRA Ministers with an immediate opportunity to prove their commitment to the precautionary principle.

It is time for the Government to turn themselves around and to move away from their disappointing behaviour on neonicotinoid insecticides by accepting the European moratorium with grace and applying themselves to tackling the harm caused to bees by pesticides. They also need to look more widely at their policy on bees and work to formulate and introduce a comprehensive bee action plan to save threatened habitats, promote bee-friendly farming and construction practices, and guide councils and the public on how they can protect our nation's vital pollinators.

On pesticides and on all these measures, the UK Government must take the lead. What steps will the Minister take to ensure that a UK-wide moratorium on the three neonicotinoid pesticides is fully in place by the deadline of 1 December? Will the Minister prove his commitment to countering the bee decline by setting quantitative targets for the reduction of all pesticide use and working hard to encourage the use of alternative pest management methods, as the EU directive requires? Will the Minister follow the example of the Labour Welsh Government's draft action plan for pollinators, which sets out measures to help all bee species across all policy areas, including farming, conservation and planning? If so, when will he implement a UK-wide bee action plan? I very much hope that the Minister will be able to provide some answers this afternoon.

4.30 pm

**Mr Tom Harris** (Glasgow South) (Lab): I begin by echoing other Members' tributes to my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Joan Walley) for initiating the debate. Her Committee has published an important and powerful report on the subject and I commend all members of the Environmental Audit Committee for producing it. I am sure the Minister has pored over the document in detail and will give us his thoughts on it later this afternoon.

Outstanding contributions have been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gower (Martin Caton), the hon. Member for Stroud (Neil Carmichael) and my hon. Friends the Members for Southampton, Test (Dr Whitehead), for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) and for Llanelli (Nia Griffith). As usually happens when Front Benchers wind up these debates, we tend to be left with only the task of repeating many of the points that have already been made. It reminds me of the old saying that at any meeting everything that has to be said has already been said, but not everyone has said it yet. So I shall plough on regardless.

The debate around neonicotinoids has brought the decline of bee and pollinator populations into sharp focus. The profound effects this will have on the future of horticulture, agriculture and the wider environment cannot be overstated. Bees and other pollinating insects play a vital role in our food supply, providing essential pollination services estimated to be worth £440 million to UK agriculture each year, as well as enriching our natural environment and biodiversity.

[Mr Tom Harris]

Two months ago, in April, I convened what I ambitiously entitled a bee health summit, which was attended by leading academics, environmental groups, biotechnology companies, farming unions and representatives from leading apiary organisations. I apologise to the Minister for forgetting to invite him. I am sure his contributions would have been worth while. Predictably, there was a lack of agreement on the topical issue of a ban or moratorium on neonicotinoids, and the evidential base was hotly contested. It is clear that pesticides currently play an essential part in achieving high levels of crop production in the UK and elsewhere, providing affordable food for consumers and contributing to our food security. Getting the right balance between the benefits of natural pollination services and the benefits of pesticides to crop production is crucial.

At the summit, there were passionate calls to support the use of the precautionary principle, which have been echoed in the debate today, to protect against further decline while additional evidence is gathered and analysed. These calls were countered by some bee health experts, bee organisations and, yes, the companies that produce neonicotinoids, which took a more cautious line based on the lack of any assessment of the impact of a ban on farmers' use of alternative pesticide products and the impact on UK food production and food security.

Such divides are not reserved to the UK, and a split in opinion was also observed at an EU level. However, now that the Commission has approved an EU-wide moratorium on the three types of neonicotinoids beginning in December 2013, it is vital that the Government work with all parties concerned to ensure that any negative, unintended consequences on bee health—for example, the hon. Member for Stroud referred to the wider use of spray insecticides—do not materialise.

What plans do the Government have in place to support farmers in the build-up to and during the moratorium? Does the Minister agree that the moratorium provides an excellent opportunity to help farmers and growers to adopt integrated pest management and reduce the use of pesticides in line with the Government's own pesticides action plan? Does the Minister agree with the Society of Biology, which has pushed for adequate and stable investment in agricultural research and environmental monitoring, in order to avoid periodic crises where sufficient evidence has not been available for necessary policy decisions? Will he outline how the Government will take advantage of the breathing space afforded by the moratorium to bridge the current gaps in scientific knowledge on the effects that neonicotinoids have on bees and other pollinators?

It is crucial that a monitoring programme is put in place to assess the full impact of a moratorium and the effect that it will have on wild and managed bees and on farmers and their crops. Will the Minister assure the House that an effective monitoring programme will be put in place? I am sure that he, like me, is aware of significant concerns raised in the scientific community that two years will not be sufficient to monitor the effect on bee health of a moratorium on neonicotinoids, not least because of the multiple variables in the natural and farmed environments.

**Mr Heath** *indicated assent.*

**Mr Harris:** I see the Minister nodding. Does he agree that those concerns should not deter the Government from co-ordinating the most effective scientific monitoring programme possible so that we can learn from the moratorium period?

Although divides will undoubtedly pertain over a ban on neonicotinoids, during my bee health summit there was unanimous demand for a coherent strategy to reverse the decline in bee numbers and a recognition of the complex factors that need to be addressed, which go well beyond pesticides. Indeed, many warned that a ban on neonicotinoids could be seen as a panacea for the wider range of measures necessary to tackle bee decline. A moratorium does not represent a silver bullet.

The first event that I attended after being appointed to the Front Bench just over a year ago was the Friends of the Earth bee breakfast. I soon got over my initial shock and disappointment—nay, anger—at the lack of breakfast actually being served, because the point was to show what would be available to eat in the event of a world that no longer had bees. That was a very clever, though frightening, way of getting the point across. I can assure Members that people did finally come forward with the toast, butter, honey and jam. They made the crucial point that neonicotinoids and pesticides were important, but only as part of the wider environmental impact that is resulting in bee decline and hive collapse.

There are many causes behind pollinator decline, including changes in agricultural practice in the UK and across Europe; the growth in monocultural crops; the removal of hedges and other wildlife corridors; the increased use of fertilisers, pesticides, insecticides and herbicides; bee pests, including the Varroa mite and deadly pathogens such as Nosema; and the effect of climate change on patterns of flowering, hibernation and food availability. Those are all contributing to falling populations of bees and other pollinator insects. I have frequently voiced the opinion that if we allow ourselves to see the moratorium on neonicotinoids as a silver bullet for bee decline, we become complacent, think “Job done,” and fail to address the many other important issues that we face. It is clear that there is no single solution to the multiple threats that pollinators face, and that is why it is vital that we do not see the moratorium as a panacea.

Labour believes that the Government have a crucial part to play in reversing falling populations. We commend Friends of the Earth for their work in promoting their national bee action plan, which would put a comprehensive set of UK-wide measures in place to tackle the many drivers of pollinator decline. Though Ministers have cited a number of Government-led initiatives to improve bee health, these ultimately fail to meet the scale and urgency of the task in hand. Current failure to tackle habitat loss, which needs to be approached from both a conservation and a planning perspective, is a prime example of where the Government are failing to make headway. On the conservation side, in their biodiversity strategy for England, “Biodiversity 2020”, they have not set out specific measures to help threatened bee species or to protect or restore habitats most important to bees, such as lowland meadows and upland hay meadows. Worryingly, DEFRA's latest habitat trend data show that those habitats are in decline. Will the Minister ensure that they are urgently restored and that specific measures are put in place to help threatened bee species?



The Government are set to publish planning practice guidance on biodiversity. That is an important opportunity to give councils guidance and impetus to protect and restore bee-friendly habitat through the planning system. However, so far there has been no evidence that the Government are planning to take that opportunity or even to issue the guidance for public consultation. Has the Minister spoken yet with his colleagues at the Department for Communities and Local Government regarding this matter, and if so, has he impressed upon them the importance of the issue?

Labour will continue to work with farmers and horticulturists and with bee and environmental organisations to create a future of secure and affordable food produce from a natural and farm environment that minimises the risk to our pollinators and enhances our countryside, wildlife, habitats and biodiversity. In order to do that, I urge the Government once again to use the moratorium period to fill the gaps in scientific knowledge of the effects of pesticides and to bring forward urgently a comprehensive national bee action plan to reverse the awful decline in bee health.

4.40 pm

**The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr David Heath):** This has been an extremely good debate and I thank the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Joan Walley) and her Committee for their report. She knows that we have had a short delay in responding to her, for the precise reasons that she had a short delay in producing the report. The circumstances have been changing quickly and we want to get it right, so I apologise to her and her Committee for that. My noble friend Lord de Mauley is responsible for this area, but the hon. Lady will appreciate that it falls to me to respond to the debate in this House.

I also thank the hon. Member for Glasgow South (Mr Harris) for his balanced remarks, which showed that this is a complex issue. I am interested in it, not least because as Minister for agriculture I know that bees and pollinators are crucial. I cannot underline sufficiently how important pollinators are to agriculture and horticulture, so of course I have that interest.

I also have an enormous personal interest in the issue. I spoke from the Opposition Benches about bees for a very long time. I spoke on the subject right back in June 1998, when I said:

“We need a step change in investment in the investigation of bee disease if we are to stem a worldwide phenomenon that is lapping at our doorstep and has the potential to become a crisis, both for the insect population and in economic terms”.—[*Official Report*, 17 June 2008; Vol. 477, c. 204WH.]

That is what I said in 1998, so people are now free to quote that back at me, but I meant it. We were arguing then in the context of very little work at Government level on bees. It took the best part of a decade before we pressed the previous Government to start taking the issue of bees and pollinators seriously, which they did: we now have the national bee unit and I think we now need to go one step further in our approach.

I welcome the opportunity to highlight what the Government have been doing in relation both to pollinators and pesticides and to our future plans. We take this issue extremely seriously. It is crucial. Contrary to what some have said, specifically in relation to neonicotinoid insecticides, we have kept the evidence under close and

open-minded scrutiny and we continue to do so. We will restrict the use of insecticides. Obviously, neonicotinoids are now dealt with under the moratorium, but we will deal with others as well, if the evidence shows that there is a need to do so. I will come back to that point later.

The hon. Members for Stroud (Neil Carmichael) and for Glasgow South pointed out that pollinators face many other challenges. It is critical that one issue, such as the use of particular pesticides, does not dominate the debate, because so many other individual factors, when taken together, have a complex effect on our pollinator population.

**Joan Walley:** The Minister has said that the Government will take action if the evidence shows that they need to. Will he explain how that relates to the moratorium delivered by the European Commission?

**Mr Heath:** I will come back to the specific issue of neonicotinoids in a moment. The moratorium is in place, so we will, of course, fully comply with it. We do not not comply with decisions of that kind. I will return to the evidence, because it is a critical issue.

I repeat that bees are essential to the health of our natural environment and the prosperity of our farming industry. The “Biodiversity 2020” document has been mentioned. We have set ourselves the challenge of achieving an overall improvement in the status of our wildlife and preventing further human induced extinctions of known threatened species. We have put a landscape scale approach to biodiversity conservation at the heart of “Biodiversity 2020”. It is vital that that approach is effective in helping to conserve our most threatened species.

Nature improvement areas are beginning to make a difference for species on the ground. The 12 Government-funded NIAs are by no means the sum total of our ambitions. We want to see that approach rolled out more widely by enthusiasts across the country. The hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) is seeing exactly that in her city. We want that to be extended and it is clearly already happening.

We want to make environmental stewardship more effective. As the House knows, we are in the process of negotiating CAP reform. It is not clear what the outcomes will be. We do not know the extent to which greening measures will be in pillar 1 or pillar 2, or the exact recipe that will emerge from our decisions on agri-environmental schemes that derive from pillar 2 or voluntary modulation. This matter is a key consideration in that context and I will certainly be pressing for it in the outcome.

**Nia Griffith:** The European Scrutiny Committee has requested a debate on CAP reform. Will the Minister say when that is likely to be scheduled?

**Mr Heath:** I am responsible for a large number of things in my Department, but the scheduling of House business is not one of them. In my previous post, I might have been able to give the hon. Lady an answer, but in my current post I cannot. To be honest, now would not be the best time to have that debate because we are just reaching what we hope will be a conclusive meeting of the Council of Ministers. After that, we will have a much clearer idea of the outcomes and how they will be effected in the UK.

[Mr Heath]

We recognise that there is still a need for targeted conservation action for our most threatened species. Natural England's species recovery programme is designed to help with projects to support priority species, such as the short-haired bumblebee. Many Members have made the point that we are talking not just about the honey bee, but about many other native bee species and other non-bee pollinators. My noble Friend Lord de Mauley has announced that he is considering the development of a more holistic health strategy to cover all pollinators. He has been meeting interested parties, such as Friends of the Earth, to explore what added value that approach could bring.

We will continue with our wider work to understand and counter the various factors that harm bees and other pollinators. DEFRA's chief scientific adviser and Ministers have met a number of interested parties to discuss that work, including non-governmental organisations. We will seek to host discussions with other stakeholders over the summer.

As I have said, there are many things that we do not yet understand about the reductions in pollinator populations. There are many major factors, including the varroa mite, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Stroud (Neil Carmichael), foulbrood and the undoubted effects of climate change and environmental and ecological changes in this country. That is why some experts are very unclear as to the quantifiable effect of pesticides. The British Beekeepers Association keeps an open mind on that, as do we. We want to know what the connections are and to see the evidence.

Let us return to the issue of pesticides. As we heard in the debate, the European Commission recently adopted a ban on the use of three neonicotinoids on crops that are "attractive to bees" and on some cereal crops. The ban also covers amateur use, so the Government do not need to bring in an extension.

It is documented that we did not support action, the reason being that we had urged the Commission to complete a full assessment of the available scientific evidence, taking into account new field research that we had carried out. Let us talk about that because it is a serious issue. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North asked whether we reject laboratory evidence, but of course we do not; it is extraordinarily important. However, we would like some coherence between what we see in the laboratory and what we see in field trials. That does not make field trials the only thing that matter, but such a correlation is not presently there.

From laboratory tests we are clear that neonicotinoids have a toxicity for bees. We do not know, however, what the exposure is in a natural environment, and the two things go together. Many things are toxic but do not create a deleterious effect in the field simply because the exposure is too low. That is where we must do a lot more work, and that is exactly where we are commissioning it. We were clear that the work done by FERA was by no means a satisfactory field trial. We never pretended that it was; it had to be done quickly to meet a timetable—set not by us, but by others—to give at least some indication of whether that correlation was there. Incidentally, I will not accept criticism of FERA scientists on that basis. They are extremely good and do their work in a totally dispassionate and independent way on the best scientific principles. They were asked to do a quick piece

of work—which they did—and that is why it was not peer reviewed, as would be normal practice. We felt it was important to put the matter in the hands of the Commission, which was about to make a decision on a highly contentious subject.

I make no apologies for recognising that there is, of course, a strong imperative to look at evidence that suggests a toxic consequence and, where possible, to take a precautionary approach to these matters. However, a precautionary approach is not as two-dimensional as sometimes suggested and must take into account the consequences of the action in question. The hon. Member for Glasgow South mentioned the economic consequences, and of course that is a factor, although not an overriding one.

Of far more concern is a point also raised by hon. Members about alternative pesticides that are fully legal under EU law and that it would be perfectly proper for people to use, such as pyrethroids, organophosphates or carbamates, because the potential is that they would be even more damaging to the pollinator population. That concern does not mean that we should not take action against neonicotinoids if the evidence is clear that they are causing problems in field conditions, but it was not unreasonable to say that the paucity of field-trial evidence was astonishing.

I do not have portfolio responsibility for this matter, but when I looked at it with a view sympathetic to what the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North was saying, I was amazed at how little evidence there was in field conditions, which I think exposes a failure of the scientific world to address the problem. I hope that we can play our part in persuading others across the European Union to take a more rational view of where we concentrate our research so that we get the evidence we need, and that is what we are trying to do. Although our assessment is that the risk to the bee population from neonicotinoids, as currently used, is low, we may be wrong and evidence may come forward from trials that shows otherwise. If such evidence is there, we shall, of course, accept it, but we need more complete evidence than we currently have.

The European Commission has committed itself to a review of evidence by 2015, which we want to be founded firmly on a strengthened scientific evidence base. We will play our part in that and are currently talking about the design of field trials that might be in place during the moratorium period, so that we can gather evidence, not just on the honey bee, but on other bee species as well. The FERA research was on the bumblebee rather than the honey bee. It is important that we understand how other species are affected.

**Andrew Stunell (Hazel Grove) (LD):** I take a great deal of pleasure in knowing how much my hon. Friend knows about the subject and how sincerely he takes it to heart, but does he understand that some of my constituents see the careful words he has just spoken as indicating that the Government are ducking and weaving? May I ask him, in the nicest possible way, whether the Government will be in a position to take a decision when the further research is done or whether they will want still more research to be that little bit more certain?

**Mr Heath:** Let me be very clear—I am not the world's greatest scientist, although I have a scientific degree—that we cannot have scientific certainty; we can have only a balance of probabilities based on evidence. We think

that the evidential basis for the decision is weak because we do not have evidence from field trials. If the evidence suggests that laboratory results are replicated in field conditions, we will want to take a decision, because we want to protect our pollinator populations. That is important.

I have very little time left because the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North needs to respond to the debate. She asked three questions, including one on the precautionary principle. I hope I have explained our approach on that. She asked about the research and the difference between laboratory and field studies, and about the EU directive on the sustainable use of pesticides, which I believe the Government will implement in full. More work needs to be done on pesticides across the board. It is a misrepresentation to say that the wicked seed companies are pulling the wool over the eyes of the rest of the world. We need transparency of evidence so we know exactly what is happening during the regulatory process and beyond. We are speaking to those companies to ensure that they provide the greatest possible transparency.

The hon. Lady asked what changed between the abstention and the decision to vote no. The answer is that we pressed and pressed again on the need to commission the evidence that we believe would have given a sound basis for the decision, but we did not secure agreement. That is why we are in the position we are in.

The Government are determined to do everything we can to protect our bees and pollinators. They are essential not only to our economy, but to our environment and our ecology. We will take all necessary steps to do so.

4.58 pm

**Joan Walley:** This has been a useful debate. I thank all hon. Members who have spoken, including the

hon. Member for Stroud (Neil Carmichael), and my hon. Friends the Members for Gower (Martin Caton), for Southampton, Test (Dr Whitehead), for Llanelli (Nia Griffith), for Glasgow South (Mr Harris) and for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy). The Environmental Audit Committee will consider what we can do to support my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East in her efforts to make Bristol the capital of green cities. We have had the Friends of the Earth breakfast. In view of our debate, the question is whether, at quarter to 3 or two minutes to 5, there is honey still for tea.

The Committee has sought to produce a timely and considered report. We intend our recommendations to be part of an ongoing process of parliamentary scrutiny. It might be in our interests that the Government response will be delayed, just as the integrated pest management report was delayed—it might be in our interests if the delay means we will get a more informed response, and if the Committee will have greater engagement on how such multifaceted issues can be developed. The breathing space of the moratorium we have as a result of the European Commission might help to take the debate forward, and we would welcome a fully informed response from the Government. However, we do not want the Government simply to dismiss the Committee's work, and we do not want the lack of targets and everything else in the integrated pest control plan to continue. The Committee is a team and this has been a team effort. We want to engage with the Government on how we can ensure, working with farmers and business, and all those people in the British countryside—

5 pm

*Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).*

## Augmentative and Alternative Communication Services

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—(*Mr Syms.*)

5 pm

**Paul Maynard** (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate on this very important issue. I mean no disrespect to you, Mr Deputy Speaker, but it is a shame that Mr Speaker is not in the Chair, because he has been a great champion of speech, language and communication needs down the years. It is worth quoting his key comment from the Bercow report:

“Communication is crucial. Recognising that is right in terms of equity for those in need and right in the national interest as we all wish to cut the costs of failure”.

Nowhere is that clearer than with augmentative and assistive communication. As that is rather a mouthful, I shall refer to it as AAC.

AAC is a series of aids, some complex and some not so complex, that assist those with neurological conditions that make it hard for them to express themselves. I was delighted when I received a commitment from the Prime Minister during Prime Minister’s questions in March that, as a result of the new commissioning landscape in the NHS, it would be available to more children and adults. I welcome that, and my aim is to ensure that it can actually happen.

I have a personal interest in this subject; it is not something I acquired when I was elected. I attended Hebden Green special school at the age of just three or four, and many of my fellow pupils would have benefited from these complex aids. It gives me real pleasure that one of my pupils, Alexis Egerton, recently gained a PhD thanks to utilising a complex powered aid—an example of how AAC can change people’s lives.

I am grateful to the Minister for the time he was able to spend yesterday meeting me and representatives from Communication Matters and the ACE Centre. I apologise for detaining him further today with a variation on the same theme. It is worth focusing on how the users of the aids feel about how the system currently works. Toby Hewson is an AAC user. He said:

“I cannot express adequately how frustrating it is for people with disabilities to have to battle with the system in the way we are forced to do...like a game of pass-the-parcel, people like me are sidelined and marginalised until we are exhausted.”

That is just an indication of the frustration so many people, and their families, feel about a system that has not yet worked properly for them.

I would be misleading the House and unfair to the Government if I did not make it clear that a great deal of progress has been made, not least through the Bercow report, the work of communication champion Jean Gross and the decision to ensure that most of the commissioning will occur at a national level. I hope that the Minister can act like a statin in the arteries of NHS England to allow what is good to occur, and for policy to be implemented in the way that I am sure everybody in the Department of Health wants it to be implemented.

However, I would also be misleading the House if I did not express some of the concerns about how policy is being implemented. The issue can be as fundamental as the funding mechanism deployed. I am sure that we

would all agree that NHS England has to start from somewhere in deciding how much money it will allocate to this type of provision. I am reminded of the farmer leaning over a fence who is asked by a walker, “How do I get to Blackpool?” He replies, “Well, I wouldn’t start from here.” I would not start from where NHS England is starting, because it intends to use historical budgets, which might sound perfectly sensible—perfectly obvious perhaps—but if all that involves is ringing up a local hospital manager and asking how much he spends on AAC, when he might not even know what AAC is, I do not think it a particularly satisfactory starting point.

It is more frustrating still given the work done on levels of need by the communication champion—available to NHS England—and further reports since from the University of Manchester. We know the level of provision and unmet need: 0.014% of the population currently use a powered aid, but total need is 0.05%. I am sure that the Minister can do the maths. It is about 3.5 times what is currently being funded. I am not making the predictable everyday point that more must be spent—far from it—but I want NHS England to begin from a sensible starting point when making its decisions.

**Mr Gordon Marsden** (Blackpool South) (Lab): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, my constituency neighbour, for giving way. I warmly commend his work to bring this matter to public attention. He and I have constituents at Highfurlong school and other special schools in Blackpool where these issues are very important. I have had correspondence from two constituents involved with the school. I know that Governments are not always keen on ring-fenced budgets. Does he agree, however, that NHS England should take account of the technology to come, rather than relying on past practice?

**Paul Maynard:** Indeed. We disagree on many things, but on that issue the hon. Gentleman and I can agree. In Highfurlong, we have an excellent provider of specialist communication provision, so I hope he shares my concern at the proposals, which look to be coming from the local council, that could result in Highfurlong being shut. It causes me great concern, as it does many parents in his constituency and mine, so I hope he will join me in ensuring that Highfurlong is not threatened in the way it might be.

The funding decisions being made have consequences for the proposed hub-and-spoke model. I would welcome a commitment from the Minister that clinical commissioning groups should not interpret the existence of specialist hubs as a justification for winding down their investment in local spokes. That, to me, is crucial, if only because of the issue of complexity. The hon. Member for Blackpool South (Mr Marsden) alluded to that.

**Dr Sarah Wollaston** (Totnes) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree with me and my constituents with children using these important assisted technologies that what matters is not just providing the equipment, but the cost of providing training and support, without which children and adults cannot benefit fully from these important technologies?

**Paul Maynard:** I thank my hon. Friend for that perceptive contribution. The concern is that NHS England’s budget for AAC will not be sufficient for training. The

only way that the hub-and-spoke model can work effectively is if the hub can train up more people in the spokes to deliver the more complex tools. Complexity is at the heart of the problem in the structure. AAC is one of five areas for which complex disability equipment is to be commissioned nationally—incidentally, another is artificial eyes, the national centre for which is based in my constituency. It would be remiss of me not to congratulate that centre during an Adjournment debate on a parallel issue. As I was saying, though, complexity is the key: it determines whether a patient is treated at the hub or at the spoke.

A stroke patient will receive a relatively straightforward medical diagnosis—it might be a devastating incident in their personal life, but its medical nature is relatively simple. None the less, what will restore the power of communication to someone who has lost it will be a complex piece of kit, yet under the current rules, as I understand them, it would be commissioned in the spoke. If the skills are not there to utilise that piece of equipment, that stroke patient will not benefit, so complexity of need has to be balanced by the complexity of the product being supplied. That is crucial.

The other issue on which I want to draw out the Minister is the concerns of worried providers in the voluntary sector about their ability to bid for commissions from NHS England. There has been a long-running battle over whether AAC should be based in the education or the health sector. It is now clear that it will be based in the health sector, but one of the key elements of what NHS England seeks to commission is an educational component in a multi-disciplinary team. That component is most often found in organisations such as the ACE Centre, the Dame Hannah Rogers Trust, near the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston), or the Percy Hedley school, up in the constituency of the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr Anderson). They all have immense expertise, yet they greatly fear that the mood music emanating from NHS England suggests that they will be unable to bid for such provision, because of an understanding that it must be supplied by an NHS provider. That seems strange, given all that the Government have said down the years about trying to ensure a broader spectrum of provision—that more civil society organisations can provide such services. I hope the Minister can provide some reassurance on that.

I would also like a commitment from the Minister—this is another fundamental aspect—that this really is a health issue and no longer just an education issue. I hear far too many heartbreaking stories of children who are equipped with complex equipment when in school but, because it is funded by the Department for Education, lose it when they leave. It is not just a piece of kit they are losing; it is their ability to express themselves as fully formed adults. That is why it is so important that this becomes a health issue, not just an education issue.

My final query is rather technical—I beg the Minister's forgiveness, but this goes back to acting like a statin in NHS England. A clinical reference group has been set up, but it has yet to meet—it is in a form of limbo, as it were. There is yet greater uncertainty, not merely because it has not met, but because the gentleman who chairs it, one Dr Thursfield, is shortly to retire from his academic post at the University of Birmingham. There is grave concern that his uncertain status in the clinical reference

group is imperilling its ability to meet, take decisions and do its job. Alexis Egerton—the gentleman I mentioned earlier—was disappointed not to be appointed as a patient representative on the clinical reference group. I have known Alexis since my youngest days. He did his PhD on the funding of AAC provision, and it would be immensely valuable to the Government and the nation as a whole if we could find a way to allow him to play a role in that.

Finally—I want to ensure that the Minister has time to respond fully—will he bear in mind that the right to have a voice is a fundamental human right? We have an opportunity in this place to represent our constituents. If, in doing so, we give a voice to some who hitherto did not have one, we will have spent a useful half-hour in this debate. I look forward to hearing the Minister's response.

**Cathy Jamieson** (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. I apologise to hon. Members for having to raise this point of order at the end of a passionate speech in an important debate. I seek your guidance, Mr Deputy Speaker. Today I had a telephone call from someone in the press asking me to comment on a parliamentary question I had asked and for which they had the answer. Unfortunately I was not party to that answer, as it had not been delivered to me. When I contacted the Table Office, it could not elucidate either. I was, however, able to obtain a scanned copy from the press. Would you agree, Mr Deputy Speaker, that this is not the way to conduct business and ensure that Members are appropriately briefed?

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle)**: It certainly is not good form; in fact, it is very bad form. The Member should always know at least at the same time, but preferably before. The matter is now on record and I hope that those on the Front Bench will pass it on, so that we can get to the bottom of it.

5.14 pm

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Norman Lamb)**: I am really grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard) for raising this issue, and for his work, together with that of colleagues, as a member of the all-party parliamentary group on speech and language difficulties. An occasion such as this is particularly valuable, as was the meeting that we had yesterday, in ensuring that Ministers focus on issues that might otherwise not get attention. I learned a lot from the meeting yesterday, and from my hon. Friend's impassioned speech today. He clearly speaks with real authority on this subject. I was struck by his point about the lad who ended up with a PhD as a result of the support that these facilities can provide. He made the point very powerfully that they can change lives.

Augmentative and alternative or assistive communication is one of the more specialised areas of health and education provision. The number of children who will require support in this way is relatively small, perhaps less than 0.5% of the population, so it is important that we do not lose sight of them. My hon. Friend rightly made the point that the ability to speak and communicate is a pretty basic human right, and that it should be recognised as such.

[Norman Lamb]

Augmented communication has the potential to have a tremendous beneficial impact on the health and well-being of those whose condition places barriers between themselves and others, which until recently were insurmountable, and indeed, on their families and friends. Technological and therapeutic advances have in recent years revolutionised the support that can be given to those who have lost, or never had, the tools of speech and language that allow us all to interact and that are critical to development, to education, to work and to living one's life. Augmentative and assistive communication—AAC—aids range from tools for paper-based communication to pretty sophisticated electronic equipment.

Support in the past has not always been of sufficient consistency and quality, and the Bercow review in 2007 and the subsequent work of the Communication Champion, Jean Gross, have helped to identify systemic improvements, culminating in a new approach to the commissioning of AAC that began just a few months ago. It is worth pointing out that the new system is in its very early days. I was pleased that my hon. Friend acknowledged that it had the potential to work effectively. It is perhaps understandable that we have not got it quite as we would want it to be, given the early stage that we are at, but I agree that it has enormous potential. There is significant clinical consensus behind the new approach, and I am proud to say that it has been developed from the new structures of commissioning that this Government have introduced into the NHS.

In April this year, NHS England took on responsibility for the direct commissioning of specialised assessment and the provision of augmentative and assistive communication aids for adults, children and young people. NHS England's role as an independent national commissioner is particularly suited to the effective commissioning of extremely complex, yet relatively low volume, services of this kind. Let us bear in mind that the patients who require AAC aids have extremely complex needs and in many cases require bespoke equipment that has been designed for them. My hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) mentioned the training involved in the use of such equipment. It could not feasibly be provided by small-scale local services. Assessment and provision is needed by specialised tertiary providers with their concentration of expertise.

Previously, we had no national commissioning of AAC services and improvement across the board was essential. There was no standard or nationally consistent definition of those services, which were the commissioning and funding responsibility of the NHS. The effect of that was variation in the organisations commissioning and funding specialised AAC services and, crucially, inequitable access to them. There was a mix of non-NHS commissioning agencies, including social care and the education sector, to which my hon. Friend referred, and charity and third sector funding agencies that were commissioning the assessment and provision of specialised AAC aids. It was haphazard, depending very much on where people lived. That was unfair to those in need, and far from ideal for commissioners or providers.

That has now changed. NHS England—committed to ensuring national consistent commissioning of high quality, equitable and effective specialised services—has

worked with the expert partners on its clinical reference group for complex disability to develop for the first time a nationally consistent specification for specialised AAC aids, which was subject to public consultation. The specification has allowed a clear demarcation of the responsibilities of clinical commissioning groups in relation to less specialised AACs—around 90% of the total provision. The highly specialised services will be commissioned by NHS England. It will be an important role for NHS England to work to support CCGs in their commissioning of the less specialised end of the spectrum and to ensure that we build capacity rather than lose it, as my hon. Friend feared could happen. If we get this right, the potential of having this specialist team working nationally with local commissioners could be significant.

In implementing the specification, NHS England will draw on the recommendations of the Bercow review and the Government communication champion to consider, in particular, how best to ensure more consistent and responsive commissioning of AAC aids across England and the implications of meeting unmet need. We know from recent research from Communication Matters that there is variation in service provision across England—the postcode lottery to which I referred—and inconsistency in identifying, assessing and providing AAC services.

A key priority is therefore to ensure that commissioning arrangements for this specialised service are placed on a much more robust and equitable footing across England. NHS England is working with its clinical reference groups and area teams to identify areas where there may be inequalities and where additional resources may be required to bring about better access. The clinical expertise both embedded in the organisation and accessed through its close association and close partnership working with organisations such as ACE—Aiding Communication in Education—will be decisive in this. I met Anna Reeves of ACE yesterday, and I would like to pay tribute to the amazing work she has done in leading the case for much better access to these services. She has worked tirelessly in that regard and should be credited for doing so.

I would also like to acknowledge the potential benefits of clinically-led commissioning of services for children with special educational needs as part of new joint arrangements, which will also provide far more tailored support, focused on the health and lifestyle outcomes for the child, for the developmental needs of children who require AAC aids. The Children and Families Bill sets out a framework for a new integrated approach to meeting the needs of children and young people with special educational needs. This will include many children, potentially the majority, of children in need of AAC aids.

In brief, the Bill's provisions will get clinical commissioning groups and local authorities—and, in some cases, the NHS Commissioning Board, where it is acting as a commissioner of services for a child or young person—to enter into joint arrangements to assess, plan and commission the services needed by children and young people with special educational needs. Each child's improvement outcomes, and the services they need to deliver them, will be captured in the education, health and care plan, to which the relevant commissioners will contribute. That is a much more joined-up approach than we have ever had in the past.

The new arrangements will be introduced in 2014, Parliament allowing. Twenty pathfinder local authorities are piloting new approaches to integrated assessments and the plans currently. The amended Bill now includes a duty on CCGs to secure the services that they agree the individual needs and which comprise the education, health and care plan. We have specifically required in the mandate for the NHS—the Government's priorities—the need for improvement, through partnership working, to support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and for ensuring that children have access to the services identified in the agreed care plan. AAC support will be a significant part of these plans for many children.

NHS England and CCGs will need to work closely with local authorities and, of course, health and wellbeing boards, which will include the local authority director of children's services and the local healthwatch. That is the vehicle for a consensual local identification of needs and a local strategy for meeting them. The health and wellbeing board must, as our guidance makes clear, have particular regard for hard-to-reach groups and those with complex conditions, which will require more specialised health services, as well as ensuring it has an in-depth understanding of more widespread health needs among the population.

**Mr Andrew Smith** (Oxford East) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard) on initiating this important debate. In the allocation of resources and the approval of plans, what mechanisms for appeal will there be for individuals who feel that they have not been fairly treated, or indeed for areas that feel that?

**Norman Lamb:** There will be the potential to challenge and question to ensure that the individual is satisfied that their case has been properly heard, but I will also write to the right hon. Gentleman to fill in the details further to ensure that he understands the position fully.

Let me make a quick point about the historical budgets to which my hon. Friend the Member for

Blackpool North and Cleveleys referred. To start with, NHS England has worked on the basis of the amount spent hitherto. It is important to say that work is very much ongoing on this matter, and it is absolutely recognised that it is important to get it right and to assess the level of need so that we can identify how much needs to be spent on it. This is not a done deal and he should not assume that this is the end of the story. He also made a point about organisations with great expertise which could be excluded from being able to play a part in this. I can reassure him that they will be able to bid to do work. He also made the point about loss of equipment on leaving school, and it is really important that that is avoided; that sort of thing is utterly crazy and we must ensure continuity. As he rightly said, this is a health issue and it must be recognised as such. He talked about the hub-and-spoke issue. The relationship between the expert team nationally and the CCGs has the potential to work well to build capacity within the system to improve the level of expertise available and to ensure a more consistent approach.

I hope that what I have said today provides significant reassurance to hon. Members about the robustness of the new approach to deliver AAC aids, not least in the role of NHS England in leading the development of expert service specifications and implementing them in a national programme of commissioning to deliver improved and responsive communication support. We are not complacent and, together with NHS England, we understand that more needs to be done to ensure absolute consistency across England, so that everyone who needs it has access to high-quality, equitable and effective AAC support. But we have in place the right system to deliver that; my profound belief is that we will shortly be able to recognise NHS England, in this regard, as an exemplar of the effective design and commissioning of specialised services.

*Question put and agreed to.*

5.29 pm

*House adjourned.*





# Westminster Hall

Thursday 6 June 2013

[HUGH BAYLEY *in the Chair*]

## Drugs

[*Relevant documents: Drugs: Breaking the Cycle, Ninth Report of the Home Affairs Committee, Session 2012-13, HC 184, and the Government response, Cm 8567.*]

*Motion made, and Question proposed, That the sitting be now adjourned.—(Mr Jeremy Browne.)*

1.30 pm

**Keith Vaz** (Leicester East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bayley, in this important debate. I am pleased to see the Minister here, as well as the colleagues from the Select Committee on Home Affairs who said that they would come. I pay tribute to those Committee members who participated in drafting and agreeing the report: the hon. Members for Northampton North (Michael Ellis), for Oxford West and Abingdon (Nicola Blackwood), for Hertsmere (Mr Clappison) and for South Ribble (Lorraine Fullbrook), my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe) and for Walsall North (Mr Winnick) and the hon. Member for Rochester and Strood (Mark Reckless). In particular, I commend the hon. Member for Cambridge (Dr Huppert) and our colleague the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon, who first pressed for the inquiry. The hon. Member for Cambridge is in his place. Like me, he is torn between two debates in the House on Home Affairs. We are occupying the time of Home Office Ministers in both Westminster Hall and the main Chamber: gladly, not the same Minister. I am also grateful to Committee staff, particularly the specialist Ellie Scarnell, for all their hard work.

The Committee's report, published on 3 December 2012, is entitled "Breaking the Cycle". It is our first report on drugs for more than a decade; the last time we considered the issue, in 2002, a young Member of the House, the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr Cameron), was on the Committee, which should give other Committee members heart that they have a great political future ahead of them. We spent a year looking in depth at drug education, prevention and treatment for drug addiction, at reducing the supply of drugs in both the United Kingdom and abroad and at the evidence on which drugs policy was based. We visited two countries: Colombia, where we travelled into the jungle to see where cocaine is produced, and Portugal, to examine the drug laws there. We had nearly 200 evidence submissions and 48 conclusions and recommendations. We heard views from people as diverse as Sir Richard Branson, Russell Brand and Peter Osborne. The ex-president of Switzerland, Ruth Dreifuss, also gave evidence to the Committee.

This debate, for which we canvassed so many people's support, is current. Just today, there was a letter in *The Times* calling for an independent review of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, signed by the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) as the former leader of the Green party, Professor David Nutt, Sting and

many others, including the hon. Member for Cambridge and myself. Public response to the report has been overwhelming. Society cares deeply about the issue, because it affects us all and the costs are borne by each and every one of us. In the United Kingdom alone, drug addicts commit between one third and one half of all acquisitive crime, and drugs cost our health and justice system £15.3 billion a year.

The debate following the report's publication caused great excitement in the press. *The Mail on Sunday* front page read:

"MPs pave way to legalise drugs".

The front page of the more sober *Guardian* said that MPs were calling for

"a royal commission on failing drugs laws".

It has become a feature of reports by the Home Affairs Committee and other Committees that we do not just make recommendations; we also monitor them to see whether they have been implemented. I call it our traffic light report. Each recommendation is awarded a colour: red when the Government have done nothing about it, yellow when they are moving in the right direction and green if the recommendation has been accepted. After all—you will know this, Mr Bayley, from your distinguished service on Select Committees—there is no point in having a Select Committee inquiry, going into a subject in depth and providing recommendations if nobody wants to implement them.

I am pleased to say that the Government have accepted or partially accepted just under 50% of the conclusions and recommendations in our drugs report. That is not as much as in other reports, but they are moving in the right direction. It was, however, disappointing that they rejected our main recommendation calling for a royal commission, although I warmly welcome the Deputy Prime Minister's support for it.

I am delighted that the Minister of State, Home Department, the hon. Member for Taunton Deane (Mr Browne), who is here today, is following our recommendations and considering drugs policies abroad, visiting countries such as Denmark and Sweden. In particular, I am glad that he is considering visiting Portugal, or may have done so already; we will hear his travel plans and where he has been in his speech. We visited Portugal, as I have said, and saw at first hand what the Portuguese are doing. I hope that when he went to Portugal he met, or that if he goes to Portugal he will meet, Dr Fernando Leal da Costa, the Portuguese Health Minister, who was kind enough to attend our drugs conference in September and give the 200-plus attendees a fascinating insight into the impact of their policies.

We decided to call our report "Breaking the Cycle" because we identified a number of critical intervention points where, if the right action is taken, the devastating cycle of drug addiction can be broken. The first critical intervention point is during childhood. Prevention is better than cure, and the education system has a vital role to play in ensuring that children and young people resist peer pressure and understand the risks involved in taking drugs. We found that drugs education provision was patchy. The Department for Education noted that most primary and secondary schools provide it once a year at most. A number of our witnesses were highly critical of the quality of awareness provided in the

[Keith Vaz]

education system. In some cases, they believed that it was likely to inspire children to take drugs rather than the opposite.

The Government have now told us that education will be their focus in the third year of the drugs strategy. In our view, we cannot wait three years for a resolution to the issue. This is the earliest possible chance to break the cycle of drug addiction, and we cannot squander it. Local authorities are being left to decide and fund the most appropriate way of educating children about the dangers of drugs. As focus rightly moves from enforcement for possession to tackling supply and demand, it is vital that our children are aware that there are more risks to drug taking than just being arrested.

Another critical intervention point is recovery from addiction. In 2011-12, some 96,070 people were given a prescription for a substitute drug as a method of treatment. Another 30,000 people were given a prescription and some sort of counselling. Only 1,100 people were in residential rehabilitation.

If the Government are serious about their policy of recovery, they must improve the quality and range of treatments available. There is an over-reliance on prescription treatment, and no recognition of the importance of also treating the psychological symptoms of addiction. Each individual needs a treatment plan tailored to their needs. Intensive treatment is more expensive in the short term, but if it breaks the cycle of drug addiction, the long-term benefits to society are enormous and the cost to society is greatly reduced.

Treatments that we know work, such as residential rehabilitation and buprenorphine as an alternative to methadone, are under-utilised. In 2011, more than 400 deaths were related to methadone. Treatment must also be supplemented by housing, training and employment support, if required, because the end goal of recovery is integration into society. A league table of treatment centre performance should be established so that patients do not waste time and money on care that is not up to scratch. The Department of Health and the Home Office should lead jointly on drugs to ensure that the focus on recovery is maintained. If we reduce demand, we automatically reduce supply.

Many groups are working hard to bring such matters to the Government's attention, and we met some of them during our inquiry. I want to commend the work being done by Mitch Winehouse, and the living memorial that he has set up to his daughter Amy. He has been one of the most vocal and articulate voices about the provision of rehabilitation support to so many people.

Prison is another critical intervention point. Tackling drug addiction, as the Secretary of State for Justice has said, is vital to the prevention of costly reoffending. Some 29% of prisoners reported having a drug problem when they arrived in prison, 6% developed a drug problem after having arrived and 24% reported that it was easy or very easy to get drugs there. Last year, Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons, Nick Hardwick, reported an increase in the number of people in prison with prescription drug addiction.

The Committee visited Her Majesty's Prisons Brixton and Holloway, and we were impressed by their voluntary testing schemes, which were having a real impact on

addiction. I want to thank the governors of Brixton, Edmond Tullett, and of Holloway, Julia Killick, for helping to make that happen. We were, however, concerned that funding for such schemes was under threat.

I welcome the Justice Secretary's commitment to a rehabilitation revolution, with inmates being met at the prison gates to be given support. To identify those who need rehabilitation, we need compulsory testing on entry to and exit from prison, including for the use of prescription drugs. We must also ensure that the voluntary sector, with its valuable experience, has a chance to win rehabilitation contracts against large procurement companies such as G4S that are cheaper but, frankly, just do not have the expertise.

The Committee's visit to Miami alerted us to the epidemic scale of prescription drug addiction in the United States. More than half of American drug addicts are prescription drug addicts. It is difficult to measure the exact scale of the problem in the UK, because treatment is by general practitioners and is not treated as drug addiction. However, valuable reports by newspapers such as *The Times* highlight that it is a ticking time bomb in British society that we are doing very little to address. It is a problem not just in our prisons, but right across the country.

I was pleased that the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry), who has responsibility for public health, highlighted her concerns about the abuse of prescription medication several months ago. I hope that the Government will heed the Committee's warning and push the issue up their agenda as a matter of urgency. In Miami, we heard about the first prosecution of a doctor for giving out multiple prescription drugs. People sometimes say that if we look at America, we see what might very well happen in Europe: it is on an epidemic scale, and I urge the Government to consider that very carefully.

If prescription drugs are a powder keg awaiting a spark, legal highs have already exploded. In 2012, the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction identified 73 new drugs in Europe, which is 10 times the number of new substances identified in 2006. A survey on the drug use of 15 to 24-year-olds found that 8% of them had taken a legal high.

The drugs market is changing, and as well as warning our children of the dangers of heroin, cocaine and ecstasy, we need to worry about the creation of a culture in which people can order so many legal highs for next-day delivery through the internet. The Government have introduced temporary banning orders, but just last month Maryon Stewart, who gave evidence to our inquiry, found legal highs on sale on Amazon. There are 200 different substances that are not covered by our drug laws, and we do not know the dangers of those psychoactive substances because, clearly, we have not tried them. Temporary banning orders work, and once a substance has been banned it can no longer be used, but what are the Government doing about the five substances that are created for every one that is banned?

New Zealand is introducing a law to regulate such substances, under which the requirement to prove that the drugs are safe is a duty on the manufacturer. I do not want to extend the Minister's travel plans, because I know how much he likes staying in his constituency, having been a Foreign Office Minister and gone all over the world, as he did so assiduously, but we should look

at what New Zealand is doing, I am suggesting not that he needs to go there, but that he engage with what New Zealand Ministers have done, because we should adopt such good practice in future. I urge the Government to follow our recommendation to make retailers liable for the harms caused by untested psychoactive substances that they have sold. Just as a garage would be responsible for a crash involving a faulty car, legal high sellers should be accountable for the effects of their products.

The cost of ineffective drugs policy reaches far wider than the United Kingdom. During the Committee's visit to Colombia, we witnessed how the devastating impact of drugs extends far beyond the addict. In 2010, coca was cultivated on 149,100 hectares in Andean countries—an area roughly one and a half times the size of Hong Kong—that cannot afford to fight the drugs war on their own. The value of the global cocaine market is £543 billion, while Bolivia's national budget, for example, is just £1.69 billion. Despite damage to their land, farmers receive only 1% of the revenue from global cocaine sales. When the Committee met the President of Colombia, Juan Manuel Santos, he asked us why his policemen, his judges and his citizens should die in the war on drugs when members of the British public were the ones who wanted to use those drugs. The responsibility lies with us.

I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to President Santos and his soldiers and police officers who, day after day, die protecting us from the scourge of cocaine. We owe them a huge debt of gratitude. I shall be meeting him this afternoon as he is in London and I will again convey the thanks of our country. I also want to thank the Colombian ambassador to the United Kingdom, His Excellency Ambassador Rodriguez, for his assistance with our visit to Colombia and for keeping us informed with a regular dialogue.

Some 85% of profits are earned by distributors of drugs in the United States or Europe, and the United Nations estimates that global drugs profits stand at £380 billion, the vast majority of which ends up in our financial system. Antonio Maria Costa, the former head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, has said:

"I cannot think of one bank in the world that has not been penetrated by mafia money."

Banks with British bases, such as Coutts and HSBC, have been found guilty of laundering drugs money, yet there have been no individual prosecutions, just fines, which are basically a drop in the ocean for multinational banks. Those companies need to hear the rattling of handcuffs in their boardrooms. We must bring forward new legislation to extend the personal criminal liability of those who hold senior positions in our banks and who have been found wanting for not dealing with money laundering.

The Financial Services Authority did not come up to scratch on that issue, as it ignored almost \$380 billion of money laundered by the drug cartels and dealers. I hope—I look to the Minister for assurance on this matter—that the new Financial Conduct Authority will be much tougher than the FSA, because we were not overly convinced by the FSA's work.

After a year scrutinizing UK drugs policy, it was clear to the Committee that many aspects of our current drugs policy were simply not working and needed to be reviewed. When the then Lord Chancellor, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke),

gave evidence to the Committee, he told us that the war on drugs had failed. The Prison Governors Association also recently said that we needed to rethink our approach to drugs. We are not dealing with the dealers or focusing on the users. Drugs still cost thousands of lives and billions of pounds each year.

People are already describing Guinea-Bissau as the world's first narco-state. That is why we felt that, even after a year's inquiry, the visits that we made and the evidence that we took, it was vital that the Government established a royal commission. We felt that the best way forward was to bring all the people with great expertise, including those who have been affected by drugs, before a royal commission headed by a High Court judge so that we can study in huge depth this subject that even we, after a year, have not got to the bottom of.

I urge the Minister to reconsider our proposal on a royal commission. I think that he supports the idea of one, but the problem is with other parts of the coalition Government. It is the policy of his party and his leader, the Deputy Prime Minister, to support a royal commission, and it is a policy that has been advocated by the hon. Member for Cambridge. I cannot remember the quote of the Deputy Prime Minister, but he once lavishly praised the hon. Gentleman, saying that as far as he was concerned, on certain aspects of policy, what the hon. Member for Cambridge said went. I hope very much that the royal commission can be established and that the Government will look at all aspects of drugs policy, so that there is a proper debate. We do not want a situation in which politicians run away as soon as the word "drugs" is mentioned and everyone hides under the table. We want a proper and open discussion, as I had in Leicester. I asked the *Leicester Mercury* to conduct a citizens' poll to tell me what the people felt about the matter. I pay tribute to the *Leicester Mercury* and all the other local papers that were part of that debate. Let the people decide; let them put forward their views to a royal commission. I believe that that is the proper way forward.

To those who say that a royal commission could last forever, let me say that we thought about that, which is why we suggested that it should have an end date of 2015—that magic year in the history of our country when all things will change and all things will become visible. This matter is a great challenge for us and for our generation of politicians and I hope that we will rise to it.

**Hugh Bayley (in the Chair):** I think that the Chamber should hear from the hon. Member for Cambridge (Dr Huppert).

1.56 pm

**Dr Julian Huppert (Cambridge) (LD):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Bayley, and to follow the Chair of the Select Committee, especially after his kind words. I am not sure that they were entirely accurate. I think that he was referring to the draft Communications Data Bill, which he and I and various others have discussed in the past.

I congratulate the Chair of the Select Committee on having the courage to ensure that the Committee considered this issue, because it is so sensitive and can lead to a

[Dr Julian Huppert]

huge amount of concern in some parts of the press. I also congratulate him on his leadership and on his speech, which took much of the content out of what I was planning to say, so I will only focus on a few key issues. There is a huge amount in this very thick and detailed report, and I support it completely.

I want to begin with the basic principles of how we start to work. First and fairly obviously, drugs are harmful. They are harmful whether they are legal or illegal; whether they are cocaine, marijuana, paracetamol or one of the new legal highs. They all have harms, and many of them also have benefits. As we say in one of the key parts of the report, the question is how we deal with those harms. Paragraph 14 of the report states:

“Drug use can lead to harm in a variety of ways: to the individual who is consuming the drug; to other people who are close to the user; through acquisitive and organised crime, and wider harm to society at large. The drugs trade is the most lucrative form of crime, affecting most countries, if not every country in the world.”

The principal aim of the Government drugs policy should be first and foremost to minimise those harms, but how do we go about doing that? How do we reduce the harms from alcohol and heroin and the harms from prescription drugs, which can be abused? For more than 40 years now, the answer has principally been to separate drugs into a category of legal or illegal—I use the term loosely of course because the drug itself cannot be legal or illegal, but possession can be. For the illegal ones, we have focused principally on the criminal justice approach—policing, courts, prisons and all the sanctions of the Home Office.

When the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 was passed—interestingly, it has never been reviewed since 1971—the debate was all about how it would lead to the end of the use of illegal drugs. That was the Act’s aim. It certainly has not worked in that respect. If we were in a world now where no one had any of the drugs for which possession was illegal, we would be having a very different debate.

The Act simply has not worked, and that has been very expensive. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction has estimated that 0.48% of the UK’s GDP is spent on our overall drugs strategy. I think that that is the highest rate of expenditure in Europe, and yet for many drugs, we have among the highest rates of use in Europe. We are spending lots of money, but there is lots of drug use—the Act is just not working.

In the process, we have hit many people’s lives. We have left people to languish in jail for a long time. Also, we have made people who possess small amounts of drugs go to jail, and many of them suffer problems trying to live and work afterwards. Even a caution for the most minor offences can still affect people’s ability to live and work. So we need to change things.

I have heard it said—there is some basis for saying it—that drug use is currently down. However, that is only true when looking at the drugs that we have made illegal. What we know—as the Chair of the Select Committee highlighted—is that there are now many other new psychoactive substances that people are moving to because of the pressure that we are putting on for legal reasons. We have no idea whether encouraging

people to stop taking marijuana and to start taking one of the new things that they can find legally online somewhere is better or worse for them. We have no idea whether the harms caused by the other drugs will be better or worse. So we may well be pushing people to things that are far worse than the things that we are trying to clamp down on.

We also have to look at this issue in the round. We have to look at the pressures of alcohol. I asked one of the police officers who gave evidence if his officers would rather face, at the end of an evening, a group of four men who were drunk or a group of four men who were stoned. Most police officers would far rather deal with the people who had used marijuana. We have to look at the impacts of some of these other issues.

As the Chairman of the Select Committee quite rightly said, one of the key things that we say is that we need to look again at this issue. These days, we do not allow legislation to sit by for 40 years without looking at it; we try to have post-legislative scrutiny to see whether a law is working and doing what it is supposed to do. That is why the Select Committee has called for a royal commission to look at the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. That is what our report says, and we are not the only people saying it by any stretch of the imagination.

The UK Drug Policy Consortium has done six years of work on the issue and it has called for many of the same things that we have called for; I commend all its detailed publications. Huge numbers of organisations say what our report says; I could mention many of them, such as Transform and Release. Also, we are increasingly getting senior people who have had experience of this fight, including senior people from MI5, MI6 and the police, who say, “No. We’re not doing it the right way. We have to change.” In Cambridgeshire, Tom Lloyd, the former chief constable, who has huge experience of dealing with the criminal justice approach to drugs, is very clear—indeed, categorical—that we need to change.

Our Committee has not gone as far as some suggest. The Chair of our Committee referred to the article in *The Mail on Sunday*, which suggested that we support full legalisation, but that is not what we recommended. However, we supported a proposal that was made more than 10 years ago by the Home Affairs Committee and supported by the Prime Minister, as he is now. That proposal was very clear, and the Prime Minister voted in favour of a proposal that we also endorse. It is that

“we recommend that the Government initiate a discussion within the Commission on Narcotic Drugs of alternative ways—including the possibility of legalisation and regulation—to tackle the global drugs dilemma.”

That is what the Prime Minister said 10 years ago. The key thing in that recommendation is that not only legalisation should at least be considered; we also have to regulate. That may or may not be the right answer, which is why we need a royal commission.

Our Committee called for a royal commission and we published this detailed, thick report. I was impressed that, within only an hour or so of its being published, the Home Secretary was able to say no, nothing in the report was new and that people did not need to learn from it. That was an impressively fast response. I commend my hon. Friend the Drugs Minister for the work that he has been doing on this issue. There have been some

positive things, and the full Government response was rather more positive than the initial comment that came out from the Home Office.

The Chair of our Committee described the Government response as supporting about half of our recommendations. In a number of cases, the suggestion from the Government was that what we were recommending was already being done. We could argue about the extent to which that is true, but my summary is that the Government response was largely saying no to most of our new suggestions.

However, I strongly welcome two things in the Government response to our report, because I think that they will make the difference. Again, I strongly commend my hon. Friend the Drugs Minister for his work to get them into the Government response. One of them is set out at the top of page 15, where an interesting sentence says:

“High quality drug treatment is the most effective way of reducing drug misuse and reducing drug related mortality.”

I agree completely with that. To start off by putting treatment as the principal aim rather than the criminal justice focus is exactly what many of us have been arguing for. We now need the Government to follow through on their own statement that we need to focus on the “high quality drug treatment” and not on the policing or the criminal justice. That fits with our recommendation that we need to get the Department of Health far more involved.

With the greatest of respect to my hon. Friend the Drugs Minister, having a Drugs Minister based in the Home Office means that the starting point will always be the criminal justice-led approach. There is co-operation and working with the Department of Health, but many other countries have the lead for drugs policy based in their departments of health—or their equivalent—because the focus needs to be on treatment, as the Government here have now accepted.

The other key thing that came out of the Government response was the international comparators study. I was very pleased to see that. During our evidence sessions, it was clear that although there was a stated commitment, in the words of the Drugs Strategy 2010,

“to review new evidence on what works in other countries and what we can learn from it”,

that commitment was being honoured—certainly at ministerial level—in a slightly more relaxed way than perhaps some of us might have liked. It is absolutely right that we should proactively look at other countries to see what they achieve.

My hon. Friend the Minister has been to Portugal already, and I am sure that he will talk a bit later about what he saw there. When our Committee went to Portugal, we saw a few things that were really striking. The Portuguese model is often misdescribed. In Portugal, it is still an offence to possess large amounts of any drug and it is still a criminal offence to supply drugs. The key difference is that possession of a relatively small amount of any drug—up to 10 days’ personal supply, and there are estimated figures for what that amount is—is treated outside the criminal justice system. There are dissuasion commissions that deal with those cases in a non-judicial way; there is no criminal sanction and the focus is on treatment. The aim is to have individualised care, to make sure that people can get out of using drugs.

We were impressed by how fast people could be set up with treatment in Portugal. There are often delays in the UK in trying to find appropriate treatment facilities. In Portugal, people said that it was very frustrating that sometimes they would have to wait for two days, which would be amazingly fast for many of the people in my constituency who I have spoken to. So Portugal has this process whereby people who are addicts are pushed towards treatment. There are other ways that they can be dealt with, but none of them involves dealing with the criminal justice process and none of them affects people’s ability to work, except in a very few special circumstances.

The Portuguese approach was controversial when it was established but it seems to have worked, and there are a number of ways to look at it. According to the official Portuguese figures, the number of long-term addicts has declined from more than 100,000 people before the new policy was enacted, which was about 10 years ago, to half that number today. The Portuguese have also found less drug use in prison.

What was striking when we went to Portugal and spoke to politicians from across the political range—from the Christian democrats on the right to the communists on the far left—was that none of them disagreed with the policy. With the Christian democrats, we had an interesting meeting with a very impressive woman from the party who had opposed the policy when it was introduced. The Christian democrats had made all sorts of dire predictions about what would happen—the sort of thing that we can read in *The Daily Mail*—but they said, “We were wrong. We didn’t see increased drug use, which we were concerned about; we didn’t see drug tourism; we didn’t see any of the problems.”

The live debate in Portugal around drugs policy is whether treatment should be funded on a national or regional basis.

That was the debate across the political spectrum. Nobody was questioning whether the decriminalisation of possession of small amounts was the right thing or wrong thing to do. The hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr Clappison), who was leading us on that occasion, made a point of asking everybody whether they agreed in principle with the policy. Not a single person disagreed; we could not find anybody who did so. We spoke to the police, who had originally opposed it, and they said, “Actually, this has been better for us for policing. We don’t have to spend so much time on people who are addicts, who are small users. Instead, they can help us to deal with the people who are dealing, who are causing the higher-level problems with gangs and organised crime.” Nobody opposed the policy.

We met a gentleman who leads a non-governmental organisation that is staunchly anti liberalising the drugs policy—it was the closest we came to meeting somebody who disagreed—and he said that 10 days’ supply was too much and that it should be more like two or three days’ supply. I explained that that would be seen as phenomenally liberal in this country, and he was shocked. They all agree that that is not the right way to go. I hope the Minister found things much the same in Portugal—I am sure he will speak for himself—and that there was a strong sense that the policy worked well.

The principle of focusing on not criminalising people in possession has already been accepted by the Government in a different context: temporary class drug orders,

[Dr Julian Huppert]

brought in a couple of years ago to allow the temporary ban on drugs while we are trying to find all the evidence. The Government have made it an offence to supply large amounts of such drugs, but not an offence to possess small amounts. All I am suggesting is that we apply the same principle to other drugs, because it has been found to work in Portugal, to be publicly accepted and to have good outcomes.

I am keen on an evidence base. There is a fantastic piece of evidence from the Czech Republic. The Czech Republic used to have no criminal sanction on possession of small amounts, but in 2001 it changed the law and criminalised possession, and there was a big debate. The sort of arguments were made that might be expected, with people saying that if possession were criminalised fewer people would use drugs, people would be healthier and better, and there would be less drug use—all of that sort of thing. The Government there did something that Governments rarely do and set out their hypotheses, worked out how to measure and test them, and published a proper impact analysis, internationally verified, of their predictions. They found that they did not get what they expected from criminalising possession.

The implementation of a penalty for possession of illicit drugs for personal use did not meet any of the tested objectives, was loss-making from an economic point of view and brought about avoidable social costs. It was found that criminalisation made things worse. That suggests that decriminalisation—not an absolute parallel, but as close as one can get—would not be likely to make things bad.

The summary of results in the Czech impact analysis states:

“from the perspective of social costs, enforcement of penalizing of possession of illicit drugs for personal use is disadvantageous”.

The hypothesis that availability of illicit drugs would decrease was rejected, as was the one suggesting that the number of illicit drug users would decrease; and rather than the number of new cases of illicit drug use decreasing after criminalisation, incidence in the general population increased. Rather than finding no negative health indicators relating to illicit drug use, there were more fatal overdoses from illicit drugs after criminalisation, and the hypothesis that social costs would not increase was rejected. Having done this study, the Czech Republic went back and decriminalised possession, because it found that it was better for its society and was cheaper and more effective at dealing with drugs. We can do this in this country.

Of course, no country is a perfect model, but we know that in Portugal decriminalisation of possession of small amounts works and has societal benefits and is well accepted, and that in the Czech Republic it is better to decriminalise possession than not to. We can try that here. We would need a royal commission to work out the exact details of how to do the work here. We can make a difference.

Although I would love to talk about other domestic issues, I do not have time to go through them in perfect detail. The focus on treatment is right. I am alarmed that there is a push to suggest that abstinence is the only form of treatment that really counts. Where people are having treatment, we want to move them from high

usage to lower usage. For some people that will mean abstinence and for others it will mean maintenance. We want to offer them the choice of whatever will get them to the lowest level we can. The Chair of our Committee was right in what he said about prisons and the need to get smaller providers involved in drugs treatment.

I want to pick up on an issue, drug-driving, that plays into Home Office discussions. It is right to have a criminal offence for drug-driving, just as there is for drink-driving, and the threshold for harm should be the same. We allow drivers to drink up to 0.08 mg per ml, and we should allow the same equivalent harm from drug use. For someone whose drug use has taken them to that risk level, that should be the key test. We make that recommendation in our report in paragraph 2:

“the equivalent effect on safety as the legal alcohol limit, currently 0.08 mg/ml.”

We must ensure that we get health further involved.

Let me finish by mentioning supply, because drugs are not just a UK problem but a huge international problem. Although we have had 50 years of criminalisation, illicit drugs are now the third most valuable industry in the world, after food and oil. That is incredibly damaging. We tracked the routes for cocaine, as our Committee Chair said. We went to Colombia to see where it was grown; to Florida, where we saw how the US military tried to combat it; and we saw the customs' efforts to try to stop it flooding into the US. I spoke to parliamentarians from west Africa, looking at that stage of the process. In Portugal, cocaine is coming into Europe. The message at every stage was clear: supply cannot be stopped. It can be squeezed in various ways. For example, massive military efforts can be made in Colombia to reduce the amount of coca plantation, but it moves to a neighbouring country. Interdiction can be used and the navy can block one side of central America, but it goes to the other side or takes an air route.

It was astonishing to see the mini-submarines now being created by the Colombian drugs lords, which cost about \$1 million and have a range that allows them to reach London. The cocaine loaded on to those can be sold for about \$500,000. The US navy was clear: with the best will in the world, it cannot spot a small submarine somewhere in the Atlantic. Supply cannot be controlled.

**Keith Vaz:** It is more astonishing that it was cost-effective for the drugs barons to sink the submarine when it arrived in Africa, because their profits were so enormous that they could just buy another one.

**Dr Huppert:** The right hon. Gentleman is right. I was flabbergasted to find out just how much money was involved. I was even more surprised to discover that, in Portugal, where there has been a problem for a while with people flying drugs in from west Africa—they have tried to combat that—drugs are now being flown back from Portugal into west Africa. On asking, we were told, “We think it is because the drugs are returned to the sender if they are not of good enough quality.” If people think it is safe enough to transfer drugs internationally that they can have a returns policy, we are nowhere near stopping supply, and in the process we are losing control of country after country to the drugs cartels. The profits are huge, and criminal gangs and cartels across the world thrive on them. The banks have a huge part to play, as the right hon. Gentleman was

right to highlight. This is wrecking many countries. We did not look at the situation with heroin and marijuana, but the same damaging effects apply in different countries.

President Santos has been taking a strong stance, saying that his country will try to control this problem; but we cannot expect countries to be torn apart for ever in an effort to control a problem that cannot be controlled. I am delighted that, in 2016, the United Nations General Assembly will have a special session to look again at its international drugs policy. I hope that, whatever flavour of Government we have then, we will be working with people like President Santos and with the reformers to try to solve this global problem.

We have worked for 40 years with a criminalisation process that has not delivered what we said it should deliver in 1971. It has not worked for the users of drugs, for society at large or for the Treasury. There are much better ways.

2.20 pm

**Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): I welcome you to the Chair, Mr Bayley. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship. I apologise, but I have a very sore throat, so my voice is not quite as it should be. It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Cambridge (Dr Huppert). I will certainly look to his pronouncements in future for an indication of Liberal Democrat policy.

I start by recognising that the report is an important piece of work. I pay tribute to the leadership of the Select Committee's Chair, my right hon. Friend the Member for Leicester East (Keith Vaz). I also pay tribute to all the members of the Committee who contributed to the report, which draws upon the huge experience of different people and organisations. As we have heard, many different countries have been considered.

I had an opportunity to listen to some of the witness sessions. I heard Sir Richard Branson and Russell Brand give evidence, and I attended the Committee's one-day conference in Parliament. I think it was very useful to invite the general public in to hear the deliberations of that Committee.

I visited Colombia after the Select Committee's visit, and I know from my conversations with the Serious Organised Crime Agency officers based in Colombia that they were delighted to be able to explain the international role they play in addressing the drugs problem. They do some very important work, which I am pleased has been recognised in the report.

The report is wide-ranging and contains many recommendations. Because of the time, I will go through some of the recommendations that I believe are key. I look to the Minister to answer some of my questions on the approach the Government will take to addressing the Committee's recommendations.

I start with the recommendation that the lead for drugs policy should be shared between the Home Office and the Department of Health, with a designated point person co-ordinating policy. That might seem an unlikely place to start, but I think it is absolutely essential that drugs policy is co-ordinated across Departments. I will address that theme in the points I raise this afternoon. The Opposition recognise the importance of a co-ordinated approach, and it is certainly important to recognise that there has been a high level of cross-departmental work on drugs over the past 10 years.

The Minister, although based in the Home Office, is responding on behalf of the Government, and I know he takes seriously his responsibilities on drugs. I question whether it should be necessary for two Departments to be involved with drugs, because the Minister is able today to discuss aspects of the drugs strategy that sit not only within the Home Office but within the Department of Education and other bodies, such as Public Health England and the NHS.

That leads me to the report's recommendation on the need to strengthen and open up the inter-ministerial group on drugs, which the Minister chairs. One of the recommendations is that the group's minutes, agendas and attendance lists should be published. I have spent much of the past 18 months trying to get details of those minutes, agendas and attendance lists through parliamentary questions, and I have resorted to freedom of information requests. I have been continually thwarted by the Home Office, so I think that recommendation would help us to understand and appreciate what is happening across Government.

We can see the importance of cross-Government working when we look at the record of achievement over the past 10 years on reducing the health harms of drug use, particularly heroin and crack cocaine use. All the key indicators are improving, and some of them have already been mentioned.

The number of drug users is falling, particularly among the 16 to 24 age group, although, as the hon. Member for Cambridge highlighted, that may not give us a true picture if we take legal highs into account. The number of drug deaths has fallen even more sharply—more than halving between 2001 and 2011—partly because we have had much better access to treatment and because treatment is more successful. The average waiting time to access treatment was nine weeks in 2001; it was five days in 2011, and it is getting more effective. Only 27% of treatment programmes were successful in 2005, but the figure rose to 41% in 2011.

Finally, and probably most importantly, more people are completing treatment. In 2005, 37,000 people dropped out of treatment before completion, whereas only 11,000 completed it. By 2011, those figures had almost reversed: 17,000 people dropped out of treatment, whereas nearly 30,000 completed it. I am sure we could see further improvement, and I am not complacent at all, but we ought to recognise that there has been huge improvement in treatment outcomes over the past 10 years. I say that in particular because much of what has been achieved was within the framework of collaboration.

The National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse was set up as a joint Home Office and Department of Health project to ensure that drugs treatment had the required priority in the NHS. Although the NTA was funded by the NHS, the Home Office had representation on its board because there was clear acceptance that the Home Office had a key part to play. We knew that drug treatment was important in reducing crime. We wanted to ensure that those two parts, treatment and crime prevention, sat together. I think the NTA was an unprecedented success, and I pay tribute to the recently retired chief executive, Paul Hayes, who did an excellent job over many years.

I saw at first hand how collaboration can work effectively when I visited a drugs treatment facility in Wakefield run by Turning Point. In one building there were police

[Diana Johnson]

officers, probation officers, social workers and a range of medics and support officers, which works very well, but I share the Committee's concerns about how such a set-up will fare in the new frameworks. Such facilities will depend on the co-operation of the new police and crime commissioners, who will have some responsibility for funding, and the new health and wellbeing boards. In the case of the facility that I visited, the PCC will have to liaise with nine different health and wellbeing boards, each of which has a huge number of priorities. We need to keep an eye on how well such facilities continue to be funded under those new PCCs and health and wellbeing boards.

I am also concerned about the level of co-ordination between health and wellbeing boards and the criminal justice system. I am pleased that in my home city of Hull the police have been co-opted onto the health and wellbeing board, but I do not think that is the norm. I support the Committee's recommendation that more information be collected from health and wellbeing boards on where their money is being spent and who is involved in that decision making. The Home Office should ensure that that includes information on co-ordination with criminal justice partners. Drug treatment is not sexy, but for it to keep working a huge number of local politicians will have to continue to prioritise drug treatment and the spending that it needs. I question whether, in the financing regime they have set up, the Government have put enough in place to incentivise local politicians to recognise that.

Quite rightly, much of the Committee's report addresses how we can improve treatment and increase recovery rates, and I particularly want to mention prisons. The Committee makes a number of recommendations about improving provision in prisons, and that seems sensible. Will the Minister tell us how far the Government have started to implement some of the recommendations? In particular, I echo the Committee's concerns about the importance of treatment and the availability of support at the prison gate to prevent recovering addicts from relapsing, especially because of the recent changes in the NHS. I understand that in-prison drug treatment is being commissioned not in the locality but by a national agency, but that what happens when the person leaves prison and returns to the community depends on the commissioning arrangements of the clinical commissioning group and the health and wellbeing board.

**Keith Vaz:** I thank my hon. Friend for taking part in the debate. Given the state of her voice, she probably needs a prescription, so I am grateful to her.

What is the Opposition's position on compulsory testing on entry and exit? Everyone wants to help people, but if we do not know who needs help we cannot really give that help.

**Diana Johnson:** The Chair of the Select Committee makes a powerful argument for having data that allow us to understand the number of people affected and therefore how to treat them. I am sure the Opposition would want to consider that, recognising that the issue has been raised by the Committee, which sees it as an important part of tackling some of the problems in prison.

Will the Minister also address an issue that has arisen since the report was published, which is the use of the private sector in the probation services provided to people leaving prison? What thought has been given to ensuring that appropriate drug treatment and support is available through the new providers?

At the start of this Parliament, there was a lot of political rhetoric from Government Members about what constituted recovery, to which the hon. Member for Cambridge referred. The view at first appeared to be based on ideology and not on looking at the individual needs of each person. For some people a life of abstinence would be appropriate; for others, a life supported by methadone or another drug. When people want to move to abstinence, it is important that they have the necessary support to do so, and that a range of programmes are available to support them.

The Committee's report highlights the large variations in the success of different programmes, which is of concern, because we want to ensure good value for money and that we get the right outcomes. An average success level of 41% could obviously be improved upon. Payment by results should help to improve standards, but I echo the concerns expressed by the Committee, and this afternoon by its Chair, about how that method of funding might hamper small providers. It is also important that support is given to a range of commissioning bodies to enable them to sort through the data on what is effective. Given the multitude of different commissioners, can the Minister explain what role Public Health England will play in guiding commissioners?

Of course, we all want to see fewer people taking drugs in the first place, and I will concentrate for a few moments on the need to have more effort directed at prevention. I agree with the Committee that drugs prevention and education are the strands of the drugs strategy to have had least work and least interest. In the review of the drugs strategy, the Government could identify just two areas of progress: they had relaunched the FRANK website, and they were reviewing the curriculum for schools. Since then, the curriculum review has finished, but my understanding is that there will now be even less drugs education in the science curriculum. That cannot be seen as progress. At the same time, the Government have abandoned Labour's plans to make personal, social, health and economic education a statutory requirement for schools and have closed the drugs education forum.

Figures from Mentor, the drug and alcohol charity, show that at present 60% of schools deliver drug and alcohol education once a year or less. That education is often poor, incomplete or totally irrelevant; pupils aged 16 seem to get the same lessons as pupils aged 11. An example given was of sixth-form students being required to colour in pictures of ecstasy tablets as part of their drugs education. Earlier this year, Mentor told me:

"Drug and alcohol education should not be disregarded as a trivial add-on. It should be fundamental to pupils' education. The links between early drug and alcohol use and both short and long term harms are clear, and there is compelling evidence showing longer term public health impacts of evidence based programmes. The cost benefit ratios are significant, ranging from 1:8 to 1:12."

The Committee's report is clear:

"The evidence suggests that early intervention should be an integral part of any policy which is to be effective in breaking the cycle of drug dependency. We recommend that the next version of



the Drugs Strategy contain a clear commitment to an effective drugs education and prevention programme, including behaviour-based interventions.”

I wholeheartedly support that, and I repeat Labour’s commitment to bringing in statutory PSHE to achieve it, which I tried to do recently myself by introducing a ten-minute rule Bill in the previous Session.

For the interim, the Committee recommends

“that Public Health England commit centralised funding for preventative interventions when pilots are proven to be effective.”

Again, that is something I support. The Department for Education has a set of programmes that have been approved and are listed on the Centre for the Analysis of Youth Transitions database. A wide range of programmes, they are all evidence-based and have been tested and proved to be effective. They are life-skills programmes that not only tell children no, but empower them to resist peer pressure and to make informed decisions about alcohol and drugs. Furthermore, they dispel myths such as those going around suggesting legal highs are safe. What is unfortunately lacking at the moment, however, is the political leadership to get those lessons into schools.

I mentioned earlier my attempts to see the minutes of the inter-ministerial group on drugs. I never managed to get the minutes of the meetings, but I did get the agendas, which showed that in the first 18 months of this Government drugs education and drugs prevention were never discussed. Can the Minister tell us whether he has put either drugs education or drug prevention on the agenda of the group in the nine months that he has been chair? If not, perhaps he can promise to put something on the agenda of the next meeting. Previously, when there was a problem with prioritising drug treatment within the NHS, Ministers came together to form the National Treatment Agency. There now appears to be a problem with prioritising prevention work in schools and education and in public health, so perhaps the Minister can show a similar initiative and work with his colleagues to set up a cross-departmental body to tackle the issue.

Finally, I want to discuss the problem of the new psychoactive substances. The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction is now monitoring 280 new substances throughout Europe; 73 new substances came on to the British market last year, and they are now freely available from 690 online shops. In addition, the Angelus Foundation, which has already been mentioned, reports that there might be up to 300 “head shops” selling those substances on the UK high street. The figures are truly shocking and will terrify every parent in the country, but even those figures do not quite show how readily available the drugs are through peer-to-peer selling in schools. As the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee mentioned, even Amazon was recently selling the drugs, and some online sellers are sending out free samples to children once a new compound arrives from China. Our understanding of the dangers of legal highs has been greatly enhanced by the work of the Angelus Foundation, and I pay particular tribute to Maryon Stewart who founded the foundation after tragically losing her daughter, Hester Stewart, a medical student, from the legal high GBL in 2009.

As we heard, the Government have introduced temporary banning orders to make such drugs easier to prohibit. The Home Secretary promised that they would allow

for swift and effective action. In two years, however, one temporary banning order has been used, during a period when more than 100 new legal highs have emerged on the market. I understand from the press that two more temporary banning orders are in the pipeline, which I will come on to.

The first thing we need to do to get better understanding of the harms of such drugs is, as the Select Committee said in its report, to improve data collection on drugs. Nowhere is that more pressing than with the new psychoactive substances. First, we need better information about their prevalence. I am very concerned that those drugs are not being properly recorded in the Mixmag drug survey or the British crime survey.

Secondly, we need to understand the harm they cause. I have heard from front-line practitioners in addiction services and A and E that they are encountering more and more people who have taken legal highs, but that is anecdotal and we need proper data collection. If someone presents to A and E having taken a legal high, that should be properly recorded.

Thirdly, we need the major databases to work together. For the last year, I have tried to ascertain how the EMCDDA database liaises with the Home Office’s much-touted early warning system. Last year, I asked why it was monitoring 13 substances when the EMCDDA had 47 on its list, but I have still not received a satisfactory explanation. I would also like to know how the Home Office’s system is informed by the TICTAC database of toxins, which is run by the NHS, and the National Poisons Information Service’s TOXBASE. In the past, work on collecting data was done by the Forensic Science Service, but it has been disbanded. I hope that the Minister will explain who is doing that work now.

This week, the Government announced that they will finally ban Benzo Fury. It is clear from the letter that the Home Secretary received from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs that there are real concerns that the system that has been set up is failing. The drug has been putting people in hospital since 2009, when it was first reported to TOXBASE, and since then there have been 65 more referrals. Will the Minister explain the point of a temporary banning order if it takes four years from the first hospital admissions to a ban on the sale of the drug on the high street? No deaths from this drug have been reported in the UK, but deaths have been reported in other countries. Professor Les Iversen, chair of the ACMD said:

“Sooner or later we will get unexpected and serious harm emerging with one of these compounds and then we will blame ourselves for allowing them to be sold without the usual safety data.

That’s why I think this is a serious problem, it’s not just a nice set of party drugs that we can let people get on with, it’s a set of chemicals that are potentially very dangerous.”

I hope the Minister will respond to that comment.

The Committee’s report recommends that more advice and support be given to allow trading standards to take action against sellers, and that recommendation was also made by the UK Drug Policy Commission. What has the Minister done to investigate implementation of those two recommendations? Several recent attempts to take action through the courts have failed, and trading standards are already exceptionally stretched because of the massive cuts in local government. I hope the Minister will review that, and look at who is responsible for tackling online sellers.

[*Diana Johnson*]

I have highlighted a few of the key issues in the report, but there are many others. I again congratulate the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee—

**Dr Huppert:** The hon. Lady has highlighted some issues and talked about a failing system. Will she clarify her position on the suggestion of a royal commission to examine the matter and to try to fix the whole system, and on the concept of decriminalisation? Where does she stand on those two issues?

**Diana Johnson:** Perhaps I may correct the record. When I talked about a failing system, I meant the legal highs and the temporary banning orders that have been put in place. I am not sure that they are delivering what the Government intended them to do swiftly and efficiently.

On the other point raised by the hon. Gentleman, it is certainly important to look at what happened in Portugal, which I am pleased the Minister visited. I am particularly interested in what is happening in New Zealand with legal highs, and I hope the Government will look at the New Zealand Government's experience. I think that President Santos is doing important work in Colombia. But today I wanted to concentrate on the issues in the report which the Government have an opportunity to respond to and to do something about. I am particularly concerned about the lack of action on education, and that has been my main focus.

I congratulate the Chair of the Select Committee on a well-reasoned and thoughtful report. I am pleased that we have had the opportunity to discuss it this afternoon, albeit with a small number of Members. The quality of debate has been high.

2.44 pm

**The Minister of State, Home Department (Mr Jeremy Browne):** I hope to continue the high level of debate on which the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North (*Diana Johnson*) commented. I am grateful, Mr Bayley, for this opportunity to serve under your distinguished chairmanship and to debate this important subject with hon. Members who take a particularly close interest in the topic.

Like others, I congratulate the Chairman of the Home Affairs Committee and its members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (*Dr Huppert*), on their interest in the matter and their attention to detail in compiling a lengthy and insightful report which, as the Committee's Chairman reminded us, the Government have accepted in part but not in full. He and other members of the Committee were pleased that the Government were willing to accept some recommendations, and I will touch on some of them during my deliberations. Instead of giving a completely off-the-peg Home Office Minister's speech—I may do that in part—I want to engage with some of the themes that have emerged during the debate.

Some extreme libertarians may not accept the harm premise, or they may believe that people should be entirely free to inflict harm on themselves, but the mainstream debate, by and large, starts with acceptance of that premise. I think that everyone who has participated today accepts that drugs are often harmful and may be

extremely harmful, and that it is in the interests of the Government and Parliament to try to reduce the harm caused by drugs that may sometimes lead to death, or to severe injury and disability that may last for the rest of someone's life.

Quite a few people reach for the view that there is a right answer and a wrong answer to the problem of drugs and the harm they cause, and that a royal commission or some other august body of dispassionate people could tell us what it is, or that we could go to another country that has done the work before us and it could tell us the right answer, which we could adopt and solve all our problems. My experience of this difficult area of policy making is, sadly, that it is far more difficult and complicated. Many well-meaning, expert and informed people can come to different conclusions about how best to address the problem.

There are reasons for cautious optimism about Government policy and its impact on society, and about how society is evolving in comparable countries, particularly in our part of the world. There are signs of progress. Some may be a direct result of Government intervention and some may arise from the evolution of society, which is less easy to attribute directly to Government action. However, there are reasons to be cautiously optimistic, and I will come to them shortly.

If there was a straightforward answer—for example, to decriminalise drugs—it would be a persuasive path for many people, but we have just heard from the Chairman of the Select Committee that when it went to Miami it saw the chronic problem of people addicted to decriminalised legal drugs. One issue in this debate is the growing problem of legal highs. In this country, consumption of illegal drugs has reduced, but consumption of legal drugs has increased. That presents all sorts of thorny and interesting public policy issues, but does not automatically lead to the conclusion that the more drugs we legalise, or at least decriminalise, the better the effect on public health. The effect may be better—I am not ruling that out altogether—but I caution everybody in this debate not to leap to immediate conclusions about public policy outcomes, because in my experience, the more carefully one looks at the issue, the less obvious the conclusions become.

**Keith Vaz:** I welcome the way in which the Minister is dealing with the issues raised in the debate. On legal highs, does he agree with the Committee that those who sell them need to be responsible for what they do? Would he look at the New Zealand model and try and adopt it, because it means that the responsibility is on the manufacturer? They should not be manufacturing drugs that end up killing people.

**Mr Browne:** I am very attracted by the right hon. Gentleman's suggestion. My intention at the moment is not to go to New Zealand, in part because I am mindful of the cost of doing so and I think we should spend public money cautiously. However, I will be speaking by video conference call to New Zealand officials next month—it is quite hard to get a suitable time to speak by conference call to New Zealand, because the time difference is so big, but I will do that. When suitable New Zealand officials or Ministers are here in London—they tend to pass through on a fairly routine basis—I also hope to take the opportunity to draw on their expertise.

I am attracted by the idea of whether people should be made more accountable for the drugs that they produce or sell in this space, but even that is not straightforward, because the issue often arises about who has produced the drugs, and they are often sold as not suitable for human consumption. All kinds of legal problems make what appears, on first inspection, to be a very seductive idea slightly less straightforward in practice than I would wish, but I am open-minded to what more we can do in that area, because it is worth exploring.

**Dr Huppert:** The Minister is making a very good case about there being lots of different types of harm and no single obviously right answer. He is absolutely right to say all that, and to say how complicated it is. He talked about it not being straightforward, so does he not think that he is making a very good argument for a royal commission? It is precisely because it is not straightforward and there is not one clear answer that we need that level of inquiry.

**Mr Browne:** I think that that is a good argument for elected politicians, including those who have participated in the debate this afternoon, to devote more time to thinking seriously about the subject. The point I was making about a royal commission was that we can put together an expert body of men and women who are full of integrity, knowledge and decency, and they could spend a long time thinking about the issue, but they would not produce “the right answer”, because I fear that the right answer does not exist in that form. They would produce a series of interesting observations and recommendations, which may match, to a high degree, the series of interesting observations and recommendations that the Committee made in its report. We would then have a debate along the lines of the one we are having this afternoon. As I said, although a royal commission would be a good opportunity for stimulating debate, I do not think that it would in itself necessarily reach the outcomes that we seek, because I am not sure that the outcomes are ever fully attainable.

A number of other issues have come up. The Government’s strategy has three prongs: reducing demand, restricting supply and building recovery. In addition, we have always said that we are open to learning from best practice in other countries. I have had the opportunity to travel, as recommended by the Committee, to Portugal, and last week I spent 24 hours in Denmark and 24 hours in Sweden. During the remainder of the year, my plan is to visit South Korea, Japan, the United States, Canada, the Czech Republic and Switzerland. We should be open-minded to the ideas that such other countries have come up with, because they are broadly equivalent to us in their economic and social development, and they are confronted by the same problems as us in terms of drugs policy. There is no reason to believe that every good idea in the world originates in this country, and they may well have ideas that we can learn from.

Going to Portugal was interesting—my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge dwelt particularly on that country. I will write a report when I conclude the process, so I will not do a running commentary on a weekly basis. I thought Portugal was interesting, but I was perhaps slightly less bowled over by it than I might have expected to be, because in some ways, the Portuguese

codify what, in practice, happens to a large degree in this country anyway. People might think that that is quite interesting in itself. The fact that Portugal has made that formal codification is a significant step, but, in practice, there are very few people in Britain who are in prison merely for the possession of drugs for personal consumption. People are in prison because they have stolen money to buy drugs, or because they have supplied drugs to others, but most people in Britain who present with a severe heroin addiction, for example, are treated. We try and find ways of enabling them to address their addiction and, in time, recover from it, rather than treating them straightforwardly as criminals. Therefore, the gap between what happens in Portugal and what happens in practice in the United Kingdom is perhaps not as great as some might say.

It was interesting, for example, to talk to the Portuguese about the impact of changes in their laws on infection and blood-borne illnesses caused by the injection of drugs. They had a very big rise in instances of HIV infection in intravenous drug users, and when they changed the laws, there was a dramatic fall. It is a striking graph—like a mountain, it goes up and then comes down, and there is a clear correlation. The only thing I would say is that their starting point was higher than the United Kingdom’s. They then went to a point that was dramatically higher than the United Kingdom’s, and they have now come down to a point that is just higher than ours—but they are still higher than us.

For a number of reasons, we have never had that level of infection in the intravenous drug-taking community. Because the scale of our problem is dramatically different from the scale of the problem that they were confronted with when they changed the law, we should not automatically assume that changing the law would have a similar impact on infection rates in this country. There are interesting lessons to learn from talking to people in other countries, but we should not automatically assume that changing the law in the way that other countries have will lead to the same public policy outcomes, as we are starting from a different point in this country.

The Portuguese are having conversations about how their law is working in practice. In my experience—I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge—it was virtually impossible to find anyone in Portugal who wanted to turn the clock back and change the law to what it had previously been. Last week in Denmark, which is one of the more liberal countries in the European Union in terms of drugs policy, I found that some of the liberalising measures that had been taken had become widely accepted, even among people who had initially been sceptical about the changes.

In Portugal, however, there was a debate about whether it could modify its law and in some ways potentially strengthen it. The idea of having 10 days-worth of personal drugs consumption was thought by the Minister to be a high figure. There was a lobby or case for reducing that to five, or even possibly three days. I suppose that if someone who was minded to transport drugs for sale to others had 50 days-worth of supply that they wanted to take to another house five minutes’ walk away, they would be better making that journey five times, with 10 days-worth on them each time, because they would then not be breaking the law. There

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was some thought about whether that law was perhaps too liberal and could be slightly tighter to restrict the potential for abuse.

[*MR CLIVE BETTS in the Chair*]

My point is that there were many interesting features of the experience in Portugal, as there were in Denmark and Sweden. I am genuinely open-minded on this matter. I approach open-mindedly what changes we could consider and potentially even adopt in this country to make our laws more effective.

I heard the point that was made by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull North, who speaks for the Opposition, and others about where responsibility lies for drugs policy in the United Kingdom. It is worth noting that in all the countries that I have been to so far, the lead responsibility lies with the Health Department. In this country, of course, the lead responsibility lies with the Home Office. I am not sure that in practice that is as significant as it is regarded as being by both those who believe vehemently that it should remain with the Home Office and those who believe vehemently that it should not, because we have a cross-Government approach.

There needs to be a lead Department, and of course much of drugs policy is about law enforcement, so there is a persuasive case to be made for that being with the Home Office, but we also of course involve the Department of Health, the Department for Education, the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Cabinet Office and others in a cross-Government strategy on drugs, so I would not want anyone attending this debate to think that the Home Office ploughed on without listening to other parts of the Government.

The three parts of the strategy are demand, supply and recovery. We have a range of initiatives on demand reduction. The FRANK website and programme was mentioned during our debate. That has been updated and relaunched and is widely used as a source of information—particularly, but not exclusively, by young people. Another example is the Choices programme that we have developed. That focuses on preventing substance misuse and related offending among vulnerable groups of young people aged 10 to 19. The programme received funding of £4 million in 2011-12 and engaged more than 10,000 vulnerable young people.

This issue is not just about schools. In fact, many people take drugs for the first time when they have left school—when they are adults. Schools have a part to play, but so do other methods of education. It is worth noting that the number of young people taking up drugs and particularly school pupils experimenting with drugs has fallen markedly, so there does not seem to be a shortage of information among young people about the harmful consequences of taking drugs. Indeed, increasing numbers of young people seem to be mindful of those harmful consequences and, as a result, have not taken drugs.

**Diana Johnson:** In the light of the fact that for many years, as I understand it, it has been Liberal Democrat policy to have PSHE as part of the statutory national curriculum, I wonder whether the Minister, as a Liberal

Democrat Minister in the coalition Government, is satisfied that enough is currently being done through the Department for Education to ensure that there is good drugs education in all our schools.

**Mr Browne:** This is a wider issue. I will engage seriously with the question, because I think that it is fair. It is about the degree to which we, as a Government and a country, use schools to inculcate desirable behaviour in children of school age. There is a powerful lobby in the House—I have received its representations—that says that it is crucial for part of the curriculum in schools to be about tackling drugs and the harmful effects of drugs.

I have also had representations from people saying that children should be taught in school about sexually appropriate relationships and that that should be part of the curriculum. I have also been told that children should be taught in school about responsible financial management, because children leave school without necessarily being able to make mature decisions about their personal finances. I have also been told that children should be taught in school how to cook properly, because large numbers of children are not as adept as hon. Members at this debate are at making delicious meals for themselves and that that should be part of the curriculum. I have been told that healthy eating more generally should be part of the curriculum in schools because otherwise children would eat unhealthy food through ignorance rather than because they preferred the taste of unhealthy food. I have also been told that there should be more awareness of alcohol and the dangers of cigarettes and that there should be more public health information generally.

The point that I am making is that there is a reasonable nervousness in the Department for Education that, unless we try to rationalise the activities that children are taught about in school, all of which are individually worthy—I think that everyone would accept that—teachers might get to the end of the school day and find that there is not much time left to teach children some of the core academic subjects that parents rightly expect them to be taught. There is a genuine debate about whether schools are there primarily to create good citizens or to educate children in core areas of academic knowledge. There is scope for a bit of a trade-off. Most people would want their children to be adept at maths, English literature and other typical academic subjects and to be rounded citizens at the same time, but there are only so many hours in the day and the Department for Education has to make some judgments about how to fill those hours intelligently.

On supply, we work closely with partner countries in Europe particularly. While I was in Portugal, I also took the opportunity to visit MAOC—the maritime analysis and operations centre—which is an initiative primarily involving Atlantic-facing European countries, although I think that the Dutch are also involved. They do not really face the Atlantic; it depends how far one thinks the Atlantic goes down the English channel. But the United Kingdom, the French, the Portuguese, the Spanish and others are working to try to intercept drug shipments.

Before becoming a Home Office Minister, I was a Foreign Office Minister who covered, among other places, Latin America. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has met the Presidents of Colombia and

Panama. Home Office Ministers have met the Interior Ministers of Colombia and Brazil and the Foreign Ministers of Bolivia and the Dominican Republic. But I hope that I do not sound immodest when I say that I suspect that, probably more than anyone else in government, I have an insight into the countries that we have talked about. Since this Government formed, I have been to Colombia on three occasions and Peru on two occasions. I have been to Bolivia; I have been to Ecuador; I have been to Panama on two occasions and so on.

In the countries that I am talking about, the issue is cocaine, and there is indeed a severe impact on those countries. We recognise our responsibilities to them as a consuming country. We work closely with the Governments of all those countries to varying degrees and certainly with the President and Government of Colombia, to whom many in this debate have already paid tribute.

Recovery is an area where there is quite a lot of innovative public policy making. We have the world's first payment-by-results programme to try to incentivise recovery outcomes. It is being piloted in eight areas, and I have attended an extensive meeting with people from the eight areas in the Department of Health to talk to them about the progress that they are making in Bracknell Forest, Enfield, Kent, Lincolnshire, Oxfordshire, Stockport, Wakefield and Wigan. We are optimistic that they will make good progress, but they will not all make identical progress. Part of what will be interesting about the pilot studies is how local providers, tailoring their services to their local problem, will produce outcomes that we hope will reduce harm and drug taking and enable people to recover in their areas.

There is an interesting debate, which I think my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge touched on, about how one measures recovery. We have had that debate in Government. I accept, as I think most people do, that it represents progress when we take someone whose life is chaotic, who is a drug taker and who is unable to work or to take responsibility for themselves in quite elementary ways and we stabilise their life—perhaps through some programme of replacement drug treatment—so that that they can perhaps address some of their underlying social problems and, in time, find a job. I would not want the Government to fail to recognise that, because a lot of people, including in the voluntary sector, work to try to bring about that progress, which leads to improved outcomes for the people affected and, in many cases, for their spouses, their children and others around them.

The only caveat that I would enter is that the Government are cautious about regarding that as a desirable end point. Although some people may struggle to get beyond that point, most people—if they were talking about their own children, for example—would regard it as a desirable interim point. Ideally, however, they would like the end point to be that the person was free from addiction to whatever substance has made their lives so blighted and difficult in the first place.

There is an interesting, worthwhile and entirely valid debate about the point at which progress starts to put down roots and just becomes the new normal. If someone has been moved from a chaotic life on drugs to an ordered and managed life on drugs, that is definitely progress. If, 10 or 15 years later, they are living an ordered and managed life on drugs, one could argue

that it is time for a bit more progress, and we might try to get them through to an end point where they are no longer on drugs at all.

What we do not want to do is to institutionalise the interim measure; we want to make interim progress, because that is better than making no progress at all, but we have to be careful about progress freezing before it has reached its most desirable destination. That is an insight into the conversations that we are having. Of course, if we are looking at payment by results, we then have to think about how we incentivise people not only to make progress but to complete the journey, rather than to leave it half completed.

The Ministry of Justice is doing lots of extra and innovative work on rehabilitation and on how to help offenders. The Government were not minded to accept the Committee's recommendation on drug testing in and out of prison because we remain of the view that random testing is superior and that people who know when they will be tested may take measures to avoid showing up as positive. Other people may have different views, but we had good motives for objecting to that recommendation.

A lot of work is going on in the Ministry of Justice, rather than directly in my Department, on how we can help people who leave prison with a modest amount of money—£46, I think—and few other support structures to get back on their feet and rebuild a meaningful life, with housing and employment, rather than lapsing back into criminality. There are two interesting pilot studies on payment by results and on trying to incentivise prison providers to help people with rehabilitation once they have left prison.

**Keith Vaz:** But the point is this: is it not wrong that so many of the people we send to prison get the drugs habit there? Does that not show that something is wrong with the prison regime? If people are tested, helped and rehabilitated when they are in prison, things will be much better for everybody when they come out.

**Mr Browne:** My short answer to the right hon. Gentleman's question is yes, it is wrong. It is a source of great regret and sadness that someone might go to prison, not as a drug taker or drug addict, and become one while they are there. I recognise there are practical difficulties with trying to restrict drugs in prisons, and people find ingenious ways to smuggle drugs into prisons, just as they find ingenious ways to smuggle them into other places, but the Government are doing work, as we should be, to try to reduce that threat.

What I am saying is that we could just as well do random testing throughout the period people are in prison. I have been told that if we tell somebody they will be tested on a set day, they may take steps to make it less likely that drugs will be detected in their body on that day. We are not, therefore, against the idea of testing prisoners, and we are strongly in favour of trying to ensure that people do not take drugs in prison, while those who might be minded to take drugs are dissuaded or prevented from doing so, but the proposed testing regime would not necessarily automatically have the most successful outcome.

On the Government's approach to reducing demand, it is worth putting on the record that drug use remains at around the lowest level since measurement began in

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1996. The 2011-12 crime survey in England and Wales estimated that 8.9% of adults—about 3 million people—had used an illicit drug in the previous year. In 1996, the figure was 11.1%, so there was a fall of a bit less than a quarter—about 20%, according to my rough and ready calculations. There was therefore a significant fall in the number of people who said they had taken illicit drugs in the previous year.

School pupils also tell us they are taking fewer drugs. In 2011, 12% of 11 to 15-year-olds said they had taken them in the previous year. In 2001—a decade earlier—the figure was 20%, so it fell from 20% to 12% in a decade. Some hon. Members may think that 11 to 15-year-olds are not entirely reliable when talking about their drug consumption, but there is no particular reason to believe they were any more or less reliable in 2011 than they were in 2001.

The number of heroin and crack cocaine users in England has fallen below 300,000 for the first time. We have now got to a situation where the average heroin addict is over 40. The age of heroin addicts is going up and up, as fewer young people become heroin addicts in the first place. We are trying to rehabilitate and treat addicts and to keep those figures falling. They are not falling dramatically, but they are falling consistently, year on year, for those very serious drugs, which often concern people most.

On restricting supply, we have talked a bit about the countries that some of the class A drugs come here from and about the work we are doing with European partners and others. Tribute has rightly been paid to the Serious Organised Crime Agency, and the National Crime Agency, which will succeed it later this year, will also have a focus on working with countries around the world to reduce harm in the United Kingdom.

On building recovery, the average waiting time to access treatment is down to five days. There is an impressive support structure available, and drug-related deaths in England have fallen over the past three years. Record numbers of people are recovering from dependence, with nearly 30,000 people—29,855, to be precise—successfully completing their treatment in 2011-12. That is up from 27,969 the previous year, and it is almost three times the level seven years ago, when only 11,208 people recovered.

I do not pretend that we have all the answers or that the situation is perfect, but we should not despair, because, in the light of all those statistics, there is good reason to believe that the harm resulting from many of the drugs that have caused people the most upset and alarm over many years has diminished to a degree.

The problem is evolving. For example, cannabis, which was largely imported a decade ago, is increasingly home grown by criminal organisations in the United Kingdom. The cannabis that people consume is also a lot stronger. I sometimes tell people that the active substance in cannabis is as much as seven or eight times stronger than it was, so people can be talking about quite a different drug. Sometimes, older people talk about cannabis in a bit of a summer of love, Janis Joplin, 1967 way. Now, however, we are talking about a much stronger drug, with the potential to cause greater harm.

It is a bit like going from drinking a pint of real ale to drinking a pint of neat vodka. In both cases, an alcoholic drink is being consumed, but most people would accept that the potential for harm is quite a lot greater in the latter case. That is what we are discussing. The strength of modern cannabis is seven times greater, which raises some interesting public policy questions about how we deal with cannabis and how much concern we should have about people consuming it.

**Dr Huppert:** The Minister is absolutely right to say that there are different strengths of both THC and some of the psychoprotective components of cannabis. It is of course hard to regulate and set standards for something that is fundamentally illegal. Has the Minister looked at the experience in California, for example, where medical marijuana is available? The different levels of strength are clear, so people can judge what they actually want to buy. I have no idea what will happen, but will the Minister keep an eye on the legalisation trials in Washington state and Colorado?

**Mr Browne:** As I mentioned earlier, I am going to the United States of America and I am visiting both Colorado and Washington state, which are the two states that have voted to legalise cannabis. I was in Denmark last week and the mayor of Copenhagen is keen to legalise cannabis, but the pretty liberal Danish Government are keen to remind the mayor that it is not within his power to legalise cannabis and that it is not a policy that they want to pursue.

The point is that the public policy debate around cannabis is evolving. The potential health harms caused by cannabis are greater than when it was a much less powerful drug. People sometimes talk about cannabis as being the softer end of the drugs market and say that cannabis could be legalised while everything else is kept illegal as if it were a benign drug and all others harmful. If that were once the case, it is less the case now. Cannabis does have cause to concern people.

I move finally on to psychoactive substances, which is a whole new area that is evolving a lot. It is good that we see significant reductions in people consuming heroin and crack cocaine, which are very harmful drugs, but new psychoactive substances are a fast-evolving threat to many people. In the most tragic cases, some people have died after taking such drugs. People sometimes assume—this is interesting for public policy—that because something is legal it is safe. People have quite paternalistic assumptions about the state even when they are not necessarily minded to believe the Government in other areas of public policy. Just because something is legal, that does not mean that it is safe to consume.

Some such drugs get under the barrier by claiming not to be for human consumption and serious harm has been caused to people by consuming so-called novel psychoactive substances. We have tried to adapt how we respond to such substances to take account of their fast-moving nature. As has been mentioned, we have introduced temporary class drug orders and just this week the Government laid such an order in my name that will take effect from 10 June for two groups of NPSs known as NBOMe and Benzo Fury. We are discussing families of drugs, because, as has been said, these chemical compounds can be manipulated and form whole categories of drugs. We therefore do not

just ban street names or individual drugs; we ban groupings of drugs to try to stop people breaking the spirit of the law but staying within the letter of the law. The problem, however, is constantly mutating and we want to maintain the academic rigour that enables the ACMD to consider such matters at length while also having the speed to deal with evolving threats more quickly than it otherwise could. That is why we have the temporary orders lasting 12 months and a more considered process following on from that. I do not pretend that this is an area in which any country does not have public policy challenges to consider. How such drugs are couriered and supplied is also a potential new cause for concern, because people order them on the internet and the drug smuggling does not take the familiar, conventional form.

This is a big area of public policy and there are some causes for cautious optimism. Some drug consumption trends in this country are positive. If they were going in the opposite direction, I suggest that there would be far more Members at this debate and a bigger clamour to ask the Government what they were doing about increases in heroin or crack cocaine consumption. We should momentarily reflect on the good news and progress, where it is being made.

However, this is an area of public policy that never stops evolving, and many new drugs are becoming available. The patterns of drug consumption are evolving. It is subject to fashion and trends, and we must be alive to the harms, educate people about them, try to persuade people not to take drugs, look at where we can restrict supply to benefit public health and help people to recover. All of those are part of our strategy. I welcome the contributions of hon. and right hon. Members and I remind open-minded as to how to ensure that we can work as intelligently as possible to reduce the harm to the British public.

**Mr Clive Betts (in the Chair):** I call the Chair of the Select Committee on Home Affairs briefly to wind up.

3.26 pm

**Keith Vaz:** I welcome you to the Chair, Mr Betts, even though the sign in front of you, which has not been changed, still describes you as the hon. Member for York Central (Hugh Bayley), so we shall perhaps evermore call you by the previous Chair's name.

The debate has been excellent and I thank the Minister, the shadow Minister, who is suffering greatly with her throat infection, and the hon. Member for Cambridge (Dr Huppert) for taking part. As the shadow Minister said, it is not about the numbers present, it is about the quality of the contributions, and the Minister's approach has been extremely measured and positive.

The Select Committee on Home Affairs will look again at the subject in six months, but we promise to do so every 12 months when we publish a report. At the moment, the Government have adopted five of the 10 recommendations—50%. We encourage the Minister's trips around the world. We do not usually like to see Ministers, in particular those from the Home Office, go abroad, but we understand the need to travel. Actually, I think it would be a good idea for him to take the shadow Minister with him in this era of cross-party co-operation on drugs, because there is much cross-party agreement on what we should do. Perhaps she should go with him after she has had treatment for her throat, and we could get a cross-Parliament approach.

We will continue to monitor the matter, and I am grateful to the Minister for his indications. He has shown that he is prepared to listen to the shadow Minister, which is extremely important, but also to the hon. Member for Cambridge, who originally suggested this inquiry to the Home Affairs Committee. He has done the most work and has been as assiduous as always, passing between Bill Committees and sittings of the Home Affairs Committee, and the report will be important to reflect on in future.

*Question put and agreed to.*

3.28 pm

*Sitting adjourned.*





# Written Ministerial Statements

Thursday 6 June 2013

## BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

### EU Competitiveness Council (Post-Council Statement)

**The Minister for Universities and Science (Mr David Willetts):** My noble Friend, the Minister of State for Trade and Investment (joint with Foreign and Commonwealth Office), (Lord Green) has today made the following statement:

The EU Competitiveness Council took place in Brussels on 29 and 30 May 2013. I represented the UK for internal market and industry items on 29 May, and Shan Morgan, Deputy Permanent Representative to the EU, represented the UK for research items on 30 May. A summary of those discussions follows.

The main internal market and industry issues discussed on 29 May were: auditing; Single Market Act I and II; smart regulation; industrial policy; modernisation of EU copyright law; and; state aid modernisation. Outside the chamber, there was a lunch discussion on industrial policy.

Council began with an orientation debate on Commission proposals to regulate statutory audits. In a full round table, most member states were prepared to accept the principle of mandatory rotation, with some arguing for a longer period before mandatory rotation, or for a narrower scope. I intervened on a similar vein to this. Some member states remained opposed. On non-audit services, all member states supported the principle of a blacklist only of prohibited services, but with many stressing the need for the list to be more limited, with some pushing for alignment with international standards. I agreed with the principle of a blacklist only, though expressed reservations on any cap in non-audit services. On a final point on the role of the European Securities Markets Authority (ESMA) in pan-European audit regulation, a majority of member states supported the European Board of Auditors' Oversight Bodies (EBAOB) solution already proposed by nine member states, citing cost and independence as key concerns. I argued this solution was more appropriate and less expensive.

The next substantive item concerned Single Market Act I and II, with the presidency and Commission outlining progress made over the last six months towards adaptation of the legislative proposals arising from Single Market Act I and II. This was an information point only and I did not intervene. Other substantive morning items included Council conclusions on smart regulation, which were adopted without comment.

The lunch discussion focused on industrial policy. Shan Morgan took the UK seat and represented the UK for the rest of the Competitiveness Council.

The discussion over lunch followed on from discussions at a dinner the previous evening on the same subject, which I attended. The main UK messages highlighted the importance of creating the right environment for industries to be competitive, while questioning the need to set a 20% target for industry's share of the economy. The presidency summed up the discussions in the first agenda item after lunch, reporting on the consensus of the importance of re-industrialisation as a means for employment, and that technical change had opened up various new opportunities which the EU is well placed to benefit from. There were also comments on the importance of energy costs, and the revolution caused by shale gas in the US.

The next substantive agenda item was an exchange of views on the modernisation of EU copyright law, with the Council updated on progress under the Irish presidency on collective rights management, the Commission updating the Council on their ongoing "Licenses

for Europe" dialogue, and finally a presentation by Antonio Vitorino on his recent report on private copying and reprography levels. There was a general consensus among member states that the copyright framework needed to be updated to better suit the digital age, and that this work should be based on sound evidence, guided by the principles of technological neutrality, promoting legal offers and providing the necessary protections for creators. Response to the Vitorino report was varied, with the UK's view that any work in this area should commence after the pending European Court of Justice rulings in this area. This was echoed by many member states.

The final substantive agenda item was a general approach on state aid, with the presidency presenting the current text of the two proposed regulations as a finely balanced compromise. Most member states endorsed the current text, though with some opposing the procedural regulation. Other member states intervened to seek further detailed changes, though were not met with much support. In a broader debate on modernisation, a wide-ranging discussion took place. A significant number of member states asked for further flexibility regarding the Commission's proposed ban on regional aid to large enterprises in "C" regions. The UK intervened strongly on this point, and also to welcome the regulations as a useful contribution to improving state aid procedures and that state aid was to be used only to address genuine market failure. The presidency concluded that agreement had been reached on the regulations as proposed, and noted the concern of member states concerning regional aid.

Several AOB items were discussed at the Council. The first concerned an update on the state of play of the COSME funding programme, setting out the two remaining issues of size of the budget and settling of the work programme. There was no UK intervention.

The next AOB was the LeaderSHIP item, where the Commission outlined their communication considering how to reinvigorate the European shipbuilding sector. The UK did not intervene, though some did to, for example, welcome the strategy, or to call on the Commission to implement the proposals. There were also calls from some quarters to call for flexible state aid rules in the sector.

At the request of the French delegation, the Commission introduced their proposals to modernise EU trade defence instruments. In a short discussion, there were differing views among the member states that chose to intervene. The UK intervened to welcome the revision of the rules, but also to stress the need that trade defence tools are only used to tackle unfair trade which is damaging to EU producers, and not for other reasons.

For the next AOB, the presidency updated the Council on the discussions that took place at the Informal Competitiveness Council in Dublin earlier in the month, focused on entrepreneurship. There was no discussion on this point.

An AOB was raised by a delegation on the regulations on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from cars and vans. A number of member states intervened on this point, particularly on the issue of "supercredits".

Following this item there were two further AOBs raised by delegations. The first concerning the Tobacco Products Directive, with some member states concerned on the impact of the proposals on their economies. The UK, and others, intervened to support elements of the Commission's proposals, stressing the need for a proportionate and evidence-based final text. The second AOB concerned the high-level group on innovation policy management.

The final AOB point to conclude the industry half of the Council concerned the upcoming Lithuanian presidency. The Lithuanian Minister updated the Council on the priorities during their term.

The main research and space issues covered on 30 May were: EU space industrial policy, proposed establishment of a space surveillance and tracking support programme, Horizon 2020, joint programming, high-performance computing, international co-operation in research and innovation, and advisory work for the European research area.

On the space items, the Council adopted conclusions in response to a Commission communication on "EU Space Industrial Policy: Releasing the potential for economic growth in the Space sector".

The Council took note of a proposal for a space surveillance and tracking support programme. Under AOB, the Commission briefly presented its proposals for the funding and operation of the European Earth monitoring programme (Copernicus) 2014-20 (previously known as "GMES"). Their latest proposal reflected the agreement made at February's European Council that Copernicus should be funded from within the multi-annual financial framework (MFF). It would provide a solid legal base from which to launch the next set of satellites in the "Sentinel" series and support the delivery of downstream applications that would foster economic growth. The Commission emphasised the importance of a swift negotiation on the regulation in order to ensure the programme could launch at the beginning of 2014. The space discussion closed with a short update from the Commission on work to re-evaluate the relationship between the EU and the European Space Agency (ESA). The Commission argued that reciprocal access to the respective decision-making bodies was essential for the relationship to function effectively. The UK intervened to insist that the issue of the Commission role in ESA governance was one that required careful analysis before decisions could be taken by Ministers.

On the research items, the Council adopted conclusions in response to the Commission communication "High Performance Computing: Europe's place in a Global Race". These highlighted that HPC is an important asset for the EU's innovation capacity. The Council then adopted conclusions in response to the Commission's communication on "Enhancing and focusing EU international co-operation in research and innovation". The Commission undertook to closely involve member states in the implementation of multi-annual "road maps" for co-operation with selected countries. Council subsequently adopted without discussion a resolution on the advisory work for the European research area (ERA). This resolution agreed that the advisory committee ERAC should be renamed the European Research and Innovation Committee (while keeping the existing acronym ERAC) in order to enhance its advisory role in research-led innovation.

The presidency updated Council on progress in negotiations with the European Parliament on the Horizon 2020 Regulation and associated Rules for Participation Regulation. The presidency noted that seven tripartite meetings had been held with the European Parliament, and that negotiations were now entering a critical phase if a deal was going to be delivered by the end of June. They believed that a compromise package could secure an agreement which did not alter the Council's agreed position on the reimbursement model. The Commission reiterated the importance of simplification; this was essential to make life more straightforward for participants, and widen participation by reducing barriers to entry. The Council then broke for lunch. After receiving a short presentation from the CERN Council on the European strategy for particle physics, the presidency hosted an informal discussion between heads of delegation on their strategy for the Horizon 2020 negotiations. The UK intervened to support the presidency's aim of securing political agreement by the end of June, while recognising the need to demonstrate a willingness to compromise on several issues of importance to the European Parliament. Following this discussion the Council reconvened. The presidency concluded without further discussion that a large majority of member states had subscribed to their proposal that simplification and the "flat rate" funding model should be defended and that in exchange the Council could show flexibility on other issues, such as widening participation, a fast track to innovation instrument, some earmarking in favour of renewable energy research, and stronger support for SMEs. As a result of the discussion the presidency noted that they would intensify negotiations with the European Parliament with a view to securing an informal agreement by the middle of June.

A policy debate then took place on joint programming initiatives (JPIs). The UK intervened to underline the strong UK support for JPIs. These were complex initiatives and member states had invested significant time, money and effort in them. In the UK it was for research councils to make decisions about funding. The Commission called for swifter implementation, in particular in relation to alignment of national strategies.

Under AOB, the Commission updated Council on the state of play on the proposal for a Council regulation on the Euratom research and training programme 2014-18 and on the proposal

for the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT) programme (these both form part of the Horizon 2020 package). The incoming Lithuanian presidency briefly presented its work programme. The Council also received a short overview of a recently published Communication on Energy Technologies and Innovation. This would be discussed in greater detail at June's Energy Council.

## Reducing Burdens on Small Businesses

**The Minister of State, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Michael Fallon):** I am announcing today a strengthening of this Government's commitment to bear down on unnecessary regulatory burdens on small businesses.

The Government recognise that the burden of regulation falls disproportionately on small businesses. They have therefore already taken specific and concrete steps to reduce the burden of regulation on smaller businesses, for example:

Saving SMEs £388 million by not extending the right to request time to train to businesses with fewer than 250 employees.

Exempting smaller retailers for three years from the display ban on tobacco, which applies to supermarkets and very large stores from April 2012.

Phasing implementation of pensions automatic enrolment, so that small business will not need to comply until June 2015.

This Government are also reducing the burdens of EU legislation by holding the European Commission to account on their commitment to seek exemptions and lighter regimes for SMEs in new proposals. The Commission's March SME scoreboard published recent examples, several of which are already bringing major benefits for UK businesses, such as the agreement exempting up to 1.4 million UK small businesses from certain EU accounting rules.

We are also reducing the stock of regulation through the red tape challenge. Many changes resulting from this process will help small businesses. Examples include:

Our radical package of employment tribunal reforms is expected to deliver £40 million of savings per year to employers.

We are committed to a major deregulation of entertainment licensing through 2013.

We are freeing around 1 million self-employed people from health and safety law whose work poses no harm to others.

This Government introduced a three-year moratorium on new domestic regulation for micro-businesses and start-ups from 1 April 2011, in order to support growth and establish a period of increased regulatory stability for the smallest businesses.

The moratorium is an important mark of the Government's aspirations for reducing regulatory burdens on the smallest businesses.

It reflects established evidence on the disproportionate burden that new regulation places on smaller business, as well as their importance for jobs and growth.

We are now building on these achievements by extending the moratorium in the second half of the Parliament to cover small businesses as well as micros. This will now be known as the small and micro-business assessment (SMBA). It will be supported by independent scrutiny from the Regulatory Policy Committee.

All new proposals for regulation will first undergo an initial departmental impact assessment which will be considered by the independent Regulatory Policy Committee, before facing further challenge and scrutiny by the Reducing Regulation Committee (RRC), a sub-Committee of Cabinet. If at any stage, unnecessary burdens on small businesses are identified, proposals will only be cleared if an exemption is granted to smaller businesses—or if disproportionate burdens on small businesses are fully mitigated.

The Government's default assumption will continue to be that where a large part of the intended benefits of regulation can be achieved without including smaller businesses, then a formal exemption should apply.

However, where a legislative exemption is not feasible, RRC will only clear new regulatory proposals that provide for a full mitigation of any disproportionate burdens on small businesses and micros. That might include, for example:

extra time for small businesses to comply with new regulations meaning that changes to equipment or processes can be made a time that makes sense for the business;

simplified record keeping requirements for smaller businesses, meaning that those with less staff have to spend less time filling in forms and keeping records compared to larger business;

tailored advice and guidance so that smaller businesses can quickly find out what regulatory changes mean for them in practice;

varying regulatory requirements by size of business, such as inspection frequencies or licensing requirements to ensure a proportionate regulatory approach.

We will also expect Departments to present, as part of the accompanying impact assessment, clear evidence as to the potential impact of the regulation on small businesses and micros, and the effect of their proposed mitigations—including realistic assumptions on levels of compliance.

This change applies now for significant new regulatory proposals that will come into force from 1 April 2014. I have invited the chair of the Regulatory Policy Committee to provide independent challenge to the evidence provided by Departments as part of their “fit for purpose” rating system of impact assessments.

## COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Onshore Wind (Local Planning)

**The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Mr Eric Pickles):** The coalition agreement pledged to decentralise power to local people and give local people far more ability to shape the places in which they live.

Through a series of reforms, this coalition Government are making the planning process more accessible to local communities, because planning works best when communities themselves have the opportunity to influence the decisions that affect their lives.

However, current planning decisions on onshore wind are not always reflecting a locally led planning system. Much of this stems from planning changes made by the last Administration, which is why we introduced the

national planning policy framework and abolished the last Government's top-down regional strategies through the Localism Act.

Following a wide range of representations, including the letter of January 2012 to the Prime Minister from one hundred hon. Members, and in light of the Department of Energy and Climate Change's call for evidence, it has become clear that action is needed to deliver the balance expected by the national planning policy framework on onshore wind. We need to ensure that protecting the local environment is properly considered alongside the broader issues of protecting the global environment.

#### *Greater community consultation*

We have set out clearly in the national planning policy framework the importance of early and meaningful engagement with local communities. The submissions to the call for evidence have highlighted the benefits of good-quality pre-application discussion for onshore wind development and the improved outcomes it can have for local communities.

We will amend secondary legislation to make pre-application consultation with local communities compulsory for the more significant onshore wind applications. This will ensure that community engagement takes place at an earlier stage in more cases and may assist in improving the quality of proposed onshore wind development.

This will also complement the community benefits proposals announced by the Department of Energy and Climate Change today.

#### *New planning practice guidance*

The national planning policy framework includes strong protections for the natural and historic environment. Yet, some local communities have genuine concerns that when it comes to wind farms insufficient weight is being given to environmental considerations like landscape, heritage and local amenity. We need to ensure decisions do get the environmental balance right in line with the framework and, as expected by the framework, any adverse impact from a wind farm development is addressed satisfactorily.

We have been equally clear that this means facilitating sustainable development in suitable locations. Meeting our energy goals should not be used to justify the wrong development in the wrong location.

We are looking to local councils to include in their local plans policies which ensure that adverse impacts from wind farms developments, including cumulative landscape and visual impact, are addressed satisfactorily. Where councils have identified areas suitable for onshore wind, they should not feel they have to give permission for speculative applications outside those areas when they judge the impact to be unacceptable.

To help ensure planning decisions reflect the balance in the framework, my Department will issue new planning practice guidance shortly to assist local councils, and planning inspectors in their consideration of local plans and individual planning applications. This will set out clearly that:

the need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities;

decisions should take into account the cumulative impact of wind turbines and properly reflect the increasing impact on (a) the landscape and (b) local amenity as the number of turbines in the area increases;

local topography should be a factor in assessing whether wind turbines have a damaging impact on the landscape (i.e. recognise that the impact on predominantly flat landscapes can be as great or greater than as on hilly or mountainous ones); and

great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, including the impact of proposals on views important to their setting.

I am writing to Sir Michael Pitt, chief executive of the Planning Inspectorate to ask him to draw this statement to the attention of planning inspectors in their current and future appeals. I will inform colleagues in local government to assist them in their forthcoming decision making.

## ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

### Electricity and Gas (Market Integrity and Transparency) (Enforcement etc.) Regulations 2013

**The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Mr Edward Davey):** On 13 November 2012, following allegations of market manipulation in wholesale gas markets, I promised to update the House on implementation of the EU regulation on wholesale electricity and gas market integrity and transparency (REMIT). REMIT prohibits insider dealing and market abuse in wholesale energy markets across Europe and establishes a monitoring regime for wholesale energy trading. It also requires member states to put in place an enforcement and penalty regime for breaches of the regulation.

I am today laying the Electricity and Gas (Market Integrity and Transparency) (Enforcement etc.) Regulations 2013 which will enter into force on 29 June. They give Ofgem powers to take action against market manipulation in wholesale electricity and gas market, including the power to impose unlimited fines in the case of breaches of the regulations. Similar regulations will be laid for Northern Ireland. The UK will be one of the first member states to implement REMIT.

Ofgem and the FCA are continuing their analysis of the allegations into manipulation of the gas markets raised in November 2012.

### Onshore Wind

**The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change (Mr Edward Davey):** Today we are publishing the Government's response to the onshore wind call for evidence, which ran for eight weeks between 20 September and 15 November 2012. The call for evidence was issued in two parts.

Part A covered community engagement and benefits, and looked at ways that communities can have more say over, and receive greater benefit from, hosting onshore wind farms in their area. It considered a range of issues, including how wind farm developers consult with local communities about their plans, new ways of ensuring a sense of local ownership, how local economic content can be built up, and whether there are innovative ways of benefiting local energy consumers for example through

offsetting electricity bill costs. Part B examined the latest information on the costs of onshore wind in the UK to ensure that the support levels of the technology received through the renewables obligation are no higher than necessary.

We received over 1,100 responses and substantial new evidence from a wide range of stakeholders.

Appropriately sited onshore wind, as one of the most cost effective and proven renewable energy technologies, has an important part to play in a responsible and balanced UK energy policy. It is low-carbon and brings new growth, investment and jobs to the UK economy. It reduces our reliance on imported fossil fuels and helps keep the lights on and our energy bills down. The UK has some of the best wind resources in Europe, and the Government are determined that the UK will retain its reputation as one of the best places to invest in wind energy and renewables more generally. We have also legally committed to ensure that 15% of our energy will come from renewable sources by 2020.

Over 10GWs of renewable electricity was generated from onshore wind in 2011 which is enough to meet the average electricity consumption need of almost 2.5 million households. In addition, since 2010 DECC has recorded announced investments in onshore wind energy totalling over £3.4 billion, with the potential to support around 5,400 jobs.

#### *Community engagement and benefits*

It is important that onshore wind is developed in a way that is sustainable—economically, environmentally and socially.

Although, research shows that around two-thirds of people in the UK support onshore wind, we recognise that many people have real concerns about the siting of onshore turbines in their communities and how they are involved in this process. The measures set out in the first part of the response, together with those being announced in parallel today by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, mean communities will have greater say over proposed onshore wind development in their area, and can gain increased benefits from hosting developments that do proceed.

#### *A stronger role for communities*

DCLG will introduce changes to the law in England to require onshore wind developers to consult local communities first—before they submit a planning application. This tougher regime will give local people the opportunity to influence proposals at a much earlier stage in the planning process.

DCLG will also issue new and streamlined planning practice guidance, following Lord Taylor's review, to ensure that planning decisions get the environmental balance right, in line with the national planning policy framework and, as expected by the framework, any adverse impact from a wind farm development is addressed satisfactorily.

We will issue best practice guidance to onshore wind developers, will lay down higher standards expected in relation to their engagement with communities, and a new register will monitor best practice. At the same time we will assist local communities to gain the skills they need to enable them to engage more confidently with developers.

These actions complement the policy changes that the coalition Government have already put in place through its localism agenda and the recent reforms to planning, which put communities at the heart of decision making.

*Investing in communities—benefits, ownership and improving local economic impacts*

Communities hosting renewable energy installations play a key role in meeting the national need for secure, clean energy. It is only right that local people should be recognised and rewarded for that contribution. This new package of measures on community benefits will ensure that communities receive a fairer share of benefits associated with onshore wind and are properly empowered to negotiate with developers the type of benefit package that best suits their local needs.

Although many onshore wind developers already offer community benefit packages on a voluntary basis, we challenged them to do more. In response therefore we expect the onshore wind industry to revise its community benefit protocol, including an increase in the recommended community benefit package in England from £1,000/MW of installed capacity per year, to £5,000/MW/year for the lifetime of the wind farm (usually around 25 years). To complement this we will be producing guidance and setting up a register of community benefits—so that local communities are properly empowered to discuss and negotiate the types of benefit packages that best suit their needs.

We will also be exploring ways to make it more attractive for communities to invest in wind projects themselves, through the recently issued call for evidence on community energy. A joint DECC/DEFRA £15 million rural community renewable energy fund will also provide loans and grants to rural communities for initial development and planning work.

We will be working with industry and other stakeholders to ensure that the local economic and employment potential of onshore wind projects are maximised. We will also produce supply chain guidance so that all parties—developers, local business and local people are equipped to respond to these opportunities.

The package of measures that DECC, DCLG and the onshore wind industry is announcing today provide a rigorous framework that will bring about real change and introduce more understanding, fairness, trust and mutual benefit between communities and the onshore wind sector.

We will be working across Government over the next 12 months to deliver this change.

#### *Costs*

We are committed to ensuring that support levels represent good value for money to the taxpayer and that they reflect the true costs of deploying the technologies. As the costs of deployment fall so will any support.

We have already reduced the support level for onshore wind under the renewables obligation from April 2013 by 10% (from 1 ROC/MWh to 0.9 ROC/MWh to reflect changes in costs). We carried out the second part of the call for evidence to check that this reduced support rate remained appropriate.

A large amount of new cost data have been rigorously analysed by economists and engineers within the Department.

The latest evidence shows that costs remain within the bands set out in the renewables obligation banding review. The mid-point estimates have, however, increased slightly, due to higher costs of planning, and operation and maintenance contracts. The change in the midpoint estimate of costs is less than 5% and thus within the original range.

As this evidence does not show a significant change in costs, it does not meet the legislative requirements for a further review of RO support levels.

This decision ensures ongoing value for money for the consumer and provides more certainty for developers, ensuring continuity of support as contracts for difference are introduced as part of our electricity market reforms. DECC will of course continue to monitor the costs of renewable energy technologies, in accordance with the provisions in article 33 of the Renewables Obligation Order 2009.

#### *Conclusion*

The measures that make up our response to the call for evidence will allow the deployment of onshore wind to the level necessary for our energy security and renewable energy goals, but will also ensure that communities will have a greater say over proposed onshore wind development and will receive more reward for hosting those developments that are taken forward. This is an important sector that is driving economic growth and I am determined that local communities should share in these benefits.

<sup>1</sup> Sources: quarterly renewable electricity table ET 6.1; and quarterly electricity table ET5.1.

[http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/statistics/energy\\_stats/source/renewables/renewables.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/statistics/energy_stats/source/renewables/renewables.aspx).

[http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/statistics/energy\\_stats/source/electricity/electricity.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/statistics/energy_stats/source/electricity/electricity.aspx).

Average household consumption (GB, 2011) can be found in the our regional electricity statistics here:

[http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/statistics/energy\\_stats/regional/electricity/electricity.aspx](http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/statistics/energy_stats/regional/electricity/electricity.aspx).

## **ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

### **Hazardous Waste (National Policy Statement)**

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr Owen Paterson):** Having considered consultation responses and the report of the Select Committee on Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to the draft national policy statement for hazardous waste which was laid before Parliament on 14 July 2011, I am today laying (under sections 9(8) and 5(4) of the Planning Act 2008), the proposed national policy statement for hazardous waste. The Government's response to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee report (under section 9(5) of the Planning Act 2008 was laid earlier this morning.

A written response to the consultation is also being published on the Department's website at: [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

National policy statements are critical to the new planning system, which will help developers bring forward hazardous waste projects of national significance without facing unnecessary delays. Decisions will be taken in an accountable way by elected Ministers taking social,

environmental and economic impacts into account. The process will also ensure that local people have an opportunity to have their say about how their communities develop.

The hazardous waste national policy statement sets out our need for new hazardous waste infrastructure to manage the hazardous waste. Despite measures to prevent and minimise the production of hazardous waste, arisings have remained significant despite the economic downturn. DEFRA's "Strategy For Hazardous Waste Management in England", issued in 2010 sets out the Department's policies for the management of hazardous waste, which are essentially to manage it in accordance with the waste hierarchy, so that we recycle or recover the waste where possible and reduce amounts sent for final disposal. That strategy set out the types of facility needed, some of which are nationally significant.

We look to the market to provide these facilities. The waste industry is best placed to consider the most appropriate types of technologies to use. Government's role is to provide the right framework and encouragement to the private sector to bring the necessary infrastructure forward. This national policy statement sets out the framework in which decisions for applications for development consent for hazardous waste infrastructure will be made and should provide industry with the clarity it needs to bring forward applications for development consent for new infrastructure for hazardous waste.

The proposed national policy statement for hazardous waste will be designated if a period of 21 sitting days elapses without the House of Commons resolving during that period that the statement should not be proceeded with, pursuant to section 5(4)(a) of the Planning Act 2008.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Asylum Support (Rates)

**The Minister for Immigration (Mr Mark Harper):** The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 enables the Home Office to support asylum seekers while their application to remain in the UK is determined, and some failed asylum seekers who temporarily are unable to return home. Under these arrangements we provide the claimant and any family members with free fully furnished and equipped housing with no bills to pay, as well as modest rates of financial support to meet their essential day to day living needs.

I have carefully considered whether those rates of financial support are adequate for the purpose set by Parliament, which is to meet the essential living needs of those asylum seekers and their dependants who would otherwise be destitute. I have concluded that they are, and so I am announcing today that the rates will be frozen for the current year.

## JUSTICE

### Criminal Cases Review Commission

**The Minister for Policing and Criminal Justice (Damian Green):** On Friday 19 October 2012 I made a written statement to Parliament announcing the triennial review

of the Criminal Cases Review Commission. I am pleased to announce the conclusion of the review and publication of the report today.

Established by the Criminal Appeal Act 1995 as an executive non-departmental body in 1997, the Criminal Cases Review Commission undertakes reviews of possible miscarriages of justice in England, Wales and Northern Ireland with a view to referring appropriate cases to the courts.

The review has concluded that there is a continuing role for the Criminal Cases Review Commission and that it should continue as an executive non-departmental public body. The Commission has been assessed as having a green rating overall for the standards of corporate governance and the recommendation of the report relates to two areas where it has been identified that improvements can be made in order to more closely follow good practice for public bodies.

The triennial review has been carried out with the participation of a wide range of stakeholders and users, in addition to the commission itself the review was publicised on my Department's website and stakeholders were invited to contribute through a call for evidence and through meetings. In addition to the project board which oversaw the review, a critical friends group challenged the evidence used to make conclusions. A peer reviewer also challenged the evidence for stage two of the review.

I am grateful to all who contributed to this triennial review. The final report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

## PRIME MINISTER

### Intelligence and Security Committee Report

**The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron):** I am grateful to the Intelligence and Security Committee for its valuable work and its latest report, entitled "Foreign Involvement in the Critical National Infrastructure" (Cm. 8629).

Following consultation with the Committee over matters that could not be published without prejudicing the work of the intelligence and security agencies, the report has been laid before the House.

## TRANSPORT

### EU Transport Council

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Stephen Hammond):** I will attend the final Transport Council of the Irish presidency (the presidency) taking place in Luxembourg on Monday 10 June.

There will be a progress report on the proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Connecting Europe facility. In general, I support this proposal and welcome the progress that has been made. However, on the transport side, there remain some issues relating to transport corridors which we are working to resolve.

The presidency intends to agree general approaches on four proposals.

The first is a proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the interoperability of the rail system within the European Union (Recast) (part of the fourth railway package). I fully support this proposal and the adoption of a general approach by the Council.

The second is a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the technical roadside inspection of the roadworthiness of commercial vehicles and a proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council directive 1999/37/EC on the registration documents of vehicles (roadworthiness package). There are some issues to be resolved on the technical roadside inspection of commercial vehicles aspect of the package where we are concerned about the inclusion of vans. I will express this concern at Council and I will seek to limit the impact on vans. I will be supporting the presidency proposal for a directive on the registration documents of vehicles.

The third is a proposal for a regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on occurrence reporting in civil aviation amending regulation (EU) No 996/2010

and repealing directive 2003/42/EC, Commission regulation (EC) No 1321/2007 and Commission regulation (EC) No 1330/2007. I fully support this proposal and the adoption of general approach by the Council.

The last is a proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on marine equipment and repealing directive 96/98/EC. This proposal originally contained provisions that would have imposed significant new burdens on the UK maritime industry, such as requirements for electronic tagging and the submissions of patents. During negotiation, we were able to secure the removal of these provisions, and bring the proposal back into line with the existing regime and minimise its impact on business. The UK now supports all the objectives of the proposal, and is content with the current version.

Under any other business, the Commission will present its proposals on the ports policy review and air passenger rights. The Commission will also provide information on the aviation emissions trading scheme (ETS), aviation price transparency and passenger ship safety.





# Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 6 June 2013

## TRANSPORT

### Accident and Emergency Departments: High Speed 2 Railway Line

**Mrs Gillan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect and change in response times that HS2 construction traffic will have on the accident and emergency ambulance routes along the length of the London to Birmingham route of HS2; and if he will make a statement. [158186]

**Mr Simon Burns:** As part of the Transport Assessment being prepared for the Hybrid Bill by HS2 Ltd, the effects on traffic flow during the construction of HS2 Phase One are being assessed. These effects and proposed mitigation will be reported as part of the Environmental Statement to be submitted with the Hybrid Bill.

### Aviation: Exhaust Emissions

**Kwasi Kwarteng:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the Government's plans are for the implementation of any control measures on carbon emissions proposed by the International Civil Aviation Organization. [158165]

**Mr Simon Burns:** At this stage the Government does not have any specific plans on the implementation of control measures for emissions agreed in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). The Government intends to work through ICAO to secure an ambitious global agreement to address international aviation emissions at this year's General Assembly (24 September-4 October).

It would be premature to develop plans for implementation on the CO<sub>2</sub> standard (due to be adopted at the 2016 General Assembly) and on market based measures (due to be discussed at this year's Assembly) given the uncertainty on a number of design elements. The Government is however, actively involved in the development of these measures and is taking account of the feasibility and practicality of implementation.

### Bus Services: Redditch

**Karen Lumley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the takeover of bus services by the Diamond Bus Company in Redditch; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect on bus service quality of restrictions placed by the Office of Fair Trading on that company. [157157]

**Norman Baker:** This question refers to the completed acquisition by The Diamond Bus Company Limited ('Diamond') of the bus business of FirstGroup plc ('FirstGroup') in Redditch and Kidderminster, which the Office of Fair Trading ('OFT') is reviewing using its merger powers under the Enterprise Act 2002.

The purpose of an OFT merger investigation such as this is to consider whether the merger might, for example, cause price rises or reduce quality for consumers, as a result of a reduction in competition in the affected areas. The OFT is an independent regulator, and the Department for Transport has therefore made no assessment of the OFT's actions regarding this case.

It is my understanding that there are 'Initial Undertakings' in place, which apply during the lifetime of the OFT investigation and are imposed according to usual OFT practice in cases where mergers have already taken place, for the purposes of ensuring that remedies can be implemented at the end of the investigation, should they be necessary to address any competition concerns.

Beyond that, there are no restrictions imposed on the quality of bus services in Redditch, and the OFT's investigation is not preventing any investment in local bus services or other improvements.

Moreover, the OFT has granted derogations (altering the Initial Undertakings) to allow certain changes to the Diamond and ex-FirstGroup services at the request of Diamond. The derogations, details of which are available on the OFT website, have provided the company with the flexibility it requires to ensure quality of service. In particular, the OFT has allowed Diamond to allocate dedicated buses to routes 57 and 58 (two of the most utilised bus services in Redditch) so as to ensure that the required service timetables and frequencies on such routes can be met.

### East Coast Railway Line

**Robert Blackman-Woods:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to consult passengers and other key stakeholders on the tendering of the East Coast mainline rail franchise. [158115]

**Mr Simon Burns:** The Department for Transport (DFT) is engaging with key stakeholders in developing the specification for the InterCity East Coast franchise. A public consultation in respect of the East Coast franchise was carried out by DFT from June-September 2012. A response to the 2012 consultation will be published later this summer which will set out any refinements of policy from the 2012 consultation. This may include any Brown recommendations which are to be adopted in the franchise.

**Robert Blackman-Woods:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether any new franchisee of the East Coast mainline will be required to make a contribution to the costs of the planned infrastructure upgrade to that line scheduled to take place between 2014 and 2019. [158118]

**Mr Simon Burns:** The costs of the planned infrastructure upgrade work on the East Coast mainline between 2014 and 2019 will be borne by Network Rail as part of the regulatory Control Period 5 settlement.

**Robert Blackman-Woods:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether any new franchisee of the East Coast mainline will be required to make a contribution to the costs of the rolling stock upgrade scheduled to be delivered by May 2019. [158119]

**Mr Simon Burns:** The cost of the provision of the new rolling stock will be borne by the train service provider (Agility Trains). The train operating company will in turn pay the train service provider to use the rolling stock.

**Roberta Blackman-Woods:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the cost of refranchising the East Coast mainline to date. [158120]

**Mr Simon Burns:** The Secretary of State for Transport has made an appropriate assessment of the cost of re-franchising the East Coast mainline and produced a project budget from this assessment.

The East Coast project team is currently tracking progress against the project budget.

Since the announcement of the new timetable for rail franchising on 26 March the Department has spent £236,500 (in addition to internal costs) on external advisors providing technical, legal and financial expertise to the East Coast mainline project team.

**Roberta Blackman-Woods:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to monitor the performance of the new franchisee of the East Coast mainline. [158121]

**Mr Simon Burns:** The Department is currently considering appropriate performance measures as part of its development of the specification for the new InterCity East Coast franchise.

**Roberta Blackman-Woods:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether state-owned companies will be entitled to submit a bid for the East Coast Main Line franchise. [158297]

**Mr Simon Burns:** The Department's rail franchising competitions must be run in accordance with EU and UK law, including obligations to ensure equal treatment and non discrimination. As such, all potential operators, including state owned companies, will be eligible to apply provided they meet the Department's pre-qualification criteria. However, section 25 of the Railways Act 1993 would preclude certain public sector operators (including DOR and East Coast) from bidding to become a franchisee.

### High Speed 2 Railway Line

**Lilian Greenwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he plans formally to respond to the findings of the National Audit Office report, High Speed 2: a review of early programme preparation, published on 16 May 2013. [157984]

**Mr Simon Burns:** The National Audit Office report will inform a hearing on the High Speed 2 programme by the Committee for Public Accounts. The Government will formally respond to the Committee following the hearing, outlining any agreed actions in response to the Committee's examination of the programme.

**Michael Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has to avoid the loss of areas of ancient woodland during the construction of High Speed 2; and if he will make a statement. [158298]

**Mr Simon Burns:** This Department, and HS2 Ltd, take their obligation to conserve ancient woodlands very seriously. However, a scheme of this magnitude can not be built without some impacts. By careful design of the route and strict controls during construction we are seeking to reduce, as far as practicable, impacts on ancient woodlands. For example, the provision of a tunnel at Long Itchington avoids the ancient wood here and a retained cutting minimises land take at South Cubbington Wood.

**Michael Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has had with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on measures to minimise the impact on ancient woodland of the construction of High Speed 2; and if he will make a statement. [158299]

**Mr Simon Burns:** Officials liaise on a regular basis with their counterparts at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to better understand the implications of the HS2 scheme on the environment and ways to mitigate these effects.

### Railways: Fares

**Zac Goldsmith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration his fares and ticketing review will give to the future of regulated rail fares. [157843]

**Norman Baker:** The fares and ticketing review is looking at a range of issues around fares regulation.

We expect to publish the findings of the review early this summer.

### Railways: Franchises

**Roberta Blackman-Woods:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria his Department uses to determine which contracts for passenger rail franchises are extended and which are brought forward to refranchise. [158131]

**Mr Simon Burns:** The Secretary of State for Transport announced the timetable for the future of rail franchising on 26 March. This timetable sees all rail franchises being re-tendered over the next eight years. In setting this timetable we took into consideration the capacity of the market to bid as well as the resourcing burden on the Department in managing the re-franchising processes, while ensuring that no more than 3 to 4 franchises are re-let at the same time in line with the Brown report. The granting of direct awards and contractual extensions are being used to facilitate the delivery of this staggered programme.

### Sign Language

**Sir Malcolm Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures his Department has in place to ensure that deaf people have the opportunity to communicate in British Sign Language with (a) public transport employees and (b) the agencies and non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible. [157464]

**Norman Baker:** All professional bus and coach drivers are required to hold a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) and to carry out 35 hours of periodic training every five years. Although disability awareness training is not compulsory, I have recently written to operators to encourage uptake and it is estimated that approximately 75 per cent of all bus and coach drivers have completed some form of this training.

On the railways, while the Department for Transport requires each licensed operator to have a Disabled Persons Protection Policy and all passenger facing staff and managers to attend disability awareness training which may cover British Sign Language, there is no mandatory requirement for training to do so.

The Driving Standards Agency allows theory test candidates who are deaf or hard of hearing to request the use of British Sign Language (BSL) images or a sign language interpreter at no extra cost. Deaf or hard of hearing candidates making telephone bookings are able to use text relay.

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency currently has BSL trained staff in some local offices in addition to a number of BSL videos that have been made available on You Tube for deaf customers.

### Telephone Services

**John Healey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department receives any financial or non-financial benefit from its telephone providers for telephone lines that (a) his Department and (b) the agencies for which he is responsible operate, including but not limited to (i) a share of call revenue, (ii) a reduction in the Department's telephone bill or tariff and (iii) telephony services for free or at a reduced price. [157743]

**Norman Baker:** The telephone services operated by the Department for Transport and its Executive Agencies are competitively tendered to ensure best value for money for fee payers and tax payers, which will include appropriate discounts and cost reductions. These are included within the contract price and are not separately identifiable.

### Travel

**Maria Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his Department's budget for ministerial

travel for (a) the Government Car Service, (b) private hire vehicles, (c) taxis, (d) rail, (e) aviation and (f) other is for (i) 2013-14, (ii) 2014-15 and (iii) 2015-16. [157534]

**Norman Baker:** The table below sets out the ministerial travel budget for the different modes of transport as requested, for 2013-14. The budgets for 2014-15 and 2015-16 have not yet been agreed.

Mode of Transport	Budget (£)
Government Car Service	220,000
Air Travel	17,000
Rail Travel	10,300
Taxis	2,900
Other (inc private hire)	700

**Maria Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department spent on ministerial travel by (a) Government Car Service, (b) private hire vehicles, (c) taxis, (d) rail, (e) aviation and (f) other means in each year of the current parliament. [157555]

**Norman Baker:** Information on Departmental spend on the Government Car Service is published in the annual written Ministerial Statement, details of which can be found within the libraries of both Houses.

2010/11:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201212/cmhansrd/cm120116/wmstext/120116m0001.htm#12011611000194>

2011/12:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm121220/wmstext/121220m0001.htm#12122056000216>

2012/13 will be published in due course.

The table below details expenditure by other modes of transport for each financial year of the current parliament. Prior to 2012, the Department did not record expenditure on private hire vehicles, taxis, rail, aviation and other means separately. As a result, the only figures available for those years are those for expenses incurred for travel within the UK and expenses incurred on overseas travel.

It is important to note that these figures represent spend for the Ministerial cost-centres and so include not just the travel costs of Ministers but also the costs incurred by staff accompanying Ministers, as these are not recorded separately.

Mode of Transport	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14 <sup>1</sup>	Total
Travel Expenses UK	22,759	32,363	—	—	55,122
Travel Exp Overseas	7,708	23,337	—	—	31,045
Air Travel	—	—	41,088	93	55,096
Rail Travel	—	—	33,629	1,327	34,956
Taxis	—	—	2,029	186	2,215
Other (inc Private Hire)	—	—	2,135	106	2,241
Total	30,467	55,700	78,881	1,712	180,675

<sup>1</sup> April and May.

### West Coast Railway Line

**Roberta Blackman-Woods:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much Virgin Trains has paid in

premiums to the Government in respect of the West Coast Main Line in each year since the company was awarded the franchise. [158132]

**Norman Baker:** The West Coast Main Line franchise award commenced 9th March 1997 and was awarded to Virgin Rail Group trading as West Coast Trains Ltd.

Subsidies / (Premiums) paid since inception is detailed below:

<i>Virgin West Coast:</i>	£
1996/97	£5.8m
1997/98	£76.8m
1998/99	£70.2m
1999/00	£59.1 m
2000/01	£58m
2001/02	£195.9m
2002/03	£199m
2003/04	£289.5m
2004/05	£126m
2005/06	£47.3m
2006/07	£91m
2007/08	£104.7m
2008/09	£289.8m
2009/10	£(18m)
2010/11	£ (116.4m)
2011/12	£ (155.9m)
2012/13	£ (101.4m)

Subsidies are payment by either the Strategic Rail Authority or the Department for Transport to the train operating company while (Premiums) are payments by train operating company to SRA/DfT. The amounts quoted above are inclusive of all payments and receipts.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### Fraud

**Emily Thornberry:** To ask the Attorney-General what the monetary value is of (a) fines and (b) civil recovery orders imposed on (i) individuals and (ii) companies by the courts as a result of Serious Fraud Office investigations which led to convictions in 2012-13. [158325]

**The Solicitor-General:** No fines were imposed on individuals or companies as a result of Serious Fraud Office investigations that led to convictions in 2012-13.

Two civil recovery orders were obtained by the Serious Fraud Office in 2012-13. The first was against a company in the value of £1,895,435.00 and the second was against the estate of a deceased person in the value of £64,417.22. That person had been prosecuted by the SFO and convicted.

**Emily Thornberry:** To ask the Attorney-General what the average prison sentence per conviction was of offenders receiving sentences of imprisonment following a prosecution by the Serious Fraud Office which led to a conviction by (a) 2012-13 and (b) each of the previous five years. [158326]

**The Solicitor-General:** The records held by the SFO show that the average sentence of imprisonment per conviction was (a) 78.17 months for 2012-13 and (b) 50.16 months for 2011-12; 36 months for 2010-11; 36.45 months for 2009-10; 35.87 months for 2008-9 and 40.58 months for 2007-8.

These figures above have been calculated using the year the conviction was recorded rather than the year the sentence was imposed where these are different; two

defendants convicted in 2012-13 have not yet been sentenced. Both immediate and suspended sentences of imprisonment have been included in the figures provided.

### Social Networking: Incitement

**Andrew Bridgen:** To ask the Attorney-General what recent discussions he has had with the Director of Public Prosecutions on the Government's approach to tackling abusive or libellous communications sent through social media. [157813]

**The Attorney-General:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Burton (Andrew Griffiths) on 4 June 2013, *Official Report*, columns 1378-80).

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Antisocial Behaviour Orders

**Robert Halfon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many anti-social behaviour orders were issued (a) nationally and (b) in Essex in each of the last five years; and what the rate of breaching of anti-social behaviour orders was (i) nationally and (ii) in Essex in each such year. [157712]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** The number of antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) issued by all courts in England and Wales, and by courts in the Essex police force area in each year between 2007 and 2011 (the latest year for which data are currently available) can be viewed in the table.

ASBOs can be breached more than once and in more than one year. Because of this, current ASBO breach rates are calculated by considering the total number of ASBOs issued in a particular geographical area between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2011, and the total number of such orders which have been breached at least once over the same period of time.

Between 1 January 2000 and 31 December 2011, a total of 57.3 % of the ASBOs issued at all courts in England and Wales were breached at least once during that period of time. Over the same time period, 56.9 % of the ASBOs issued at all courts in the Essex police force area were breached at least once.

ASBO data for 2012 is scheduled for publication in October 2013.

*Antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) issued at all courts<sup>1</sup> in England and Wales and the Essex police force area, as reported to the Ministry of Justice<sup>2</sup> by the Court Service, 1 January 2007 to 31 December 2011*

Area	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Essex	28	15	20	9	29
England and Wales	2,299	2,027	1,671	1,664	1,414

<sup>1</sup> Includes ASBOs issued on application by magistrates courts acting in their civil capacity and county courts, which became available on 1 April 1999 and ASBOs made following conviction for a relevant criminal offence at the Crown Court and at magistrates courts (acting in their criminal capacity), which became available on 2 December 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Prior to the creation of the Ministry of Justice on 9 May 2007, numbers of ASBOs issued were reported to Home Office by the Court Service.

#### Note:

Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

#### Source:

Prepared by Justice Statistics Analytical Services within the Ministry of Justice.

### Asylum: Self-employed

**Richard Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration she has given to allowing failed asylum seekers who are unable to return to their home country to take up work on a self-employed basis. [157702]

**Mr Harper:** Asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers are not permitted access to self-employment to avoid asylum being used as a route to circumvent controls on economic migration, and to protect the resident labour market.

**Richard Graham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration she has given to allowing asylum seekers to take on work on a self-employed basis while they are waiting for a decision on their case. [157703]

**Mr Harper:** Asylum seekers and failed asylum seekers are not permitted access to self-employment to avoid asylum being used as a route to circumvent controls on economic migration, and to protect the resident labour market.

### Asylum: Voluntary Work

**Sarah Teather:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will review her Department's guidelines to make it clear that asylum seekers are entitled to volunteer for work with public sector organisations. [158322]

**Mr Harper:** We are currently reviewing whether to extend access to volunteering for asylum seekers beyond registered charities and voluntary organisations. If any changes to guidance are necessary they will be made in due course.

### Electronic Surveillance: Admissibility of Evidence

**Mr Raab:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will publish any assessment that her Department has (a) conducted and (b) commissioned into the use of intercept evidence in criminal trials since the completion of the Privy Council review of intercept as evidence in February 2008. [157145]

**James Brokenshire** [*holding answer 3 June 2013*]: A written ministerial statement of 10 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 31WS, reported the conclusions of the work programme set in train following the Privy Council Review of 2008. A report of further scoping analysis was placed in the House Libraries in March 2010.

As announced by the Secretary of State for the Home Department on 26 January 2011 the Government is reviewing the benefits, costs and risks of enabling the use of intercept material as evidence in criminal trials under the guidance of the cross-party group of Privy Counsellors. We will report back to the House in due course.

### Fingerprints

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are in place for the procurement of the management of the national fingerprint database; and when it will take place. [157808]

**Damian Green:** The contract for the national fingerprint database for policing (IDENT1) is due to expire on 31 March 2015. A project has been commissioned by the Home Office and the police which will secure short-term continuity of service, to provide operational and maintenance support for the IDENT1 service, by March 2015. This interim arrangement will allow sufficient time to develop the new user and business requirements for a long-term successor service that serves the wider law enforcement community.

### Human Trafficking

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of the proportion of victims of human trafficking who entered the country by (a) legal means and (b) illegal means; and if she will make a statement. [156451]

**Mr Harper:** As of 16 May 2013, of the 1,186 trafficking cases referred into the National Referral Mechanism in 2012, 429 have been conclusively identified as victims. Of these 60% are UK or EEA nationals who have freedom of movement and less than 1% are nationals of countries that do not require a visa for general visitor purposes. Assessments of non-EEA entry routes are continuing; however, it is understood that 10% are thought to have entered on a UK visa and in most of the remaining cases the person is suspected of using an alias, entering clandestinely concealed in a commercial or private vehicle or entering on forged or counterfeit identity or travel document.

These data are based on Home Office and Serious Organised Crime Agency management information and as such have not been quality assured under National Statistics protocols. They are therefore provisional and subject to change.

### Legal Opinion: Treaties

**Nick de Bois:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps she is taking to ensure requests made under mutual legal assistance treaties are delivered expediently to the United States of America; when such measures were introduced; and if she will make a statement. [158146]

**Mr Harper:** The current UK-US mutual legal assistance (MLA) treaty entered into force in February 2010. Article 4 of the treaty provides for how MLA requests and related communications are transmitted between the respective central authorities. We are seeking to introduce secure e-mail links between the UK central authority in the Home Office (which is the central authority for all incoming MLA requests for England and Wales and Northern Ireland) and the Office of International Affairs (the central authority for the US) in order to expedite the sending and receiving of MLA requests between the UK and the US.

### Licensed Premises

**Jesse Norman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many alcohol licences have been issued to premises in England and Wales with a rateable value of over (a) £1,000,000 and (b) £2,000,000 in each year since 2007. [157476]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** The Home Office does not collect this information. Its alcohol licensing statistics collection covers numbers of premises licences by fee band (based on non-domestic rateable value). The highest of these fee bands includes premises with rateable values of at least £125,001.

The most recent Home Office alcohol licensing statistics are published in 'Alcohol and Late Night Refreshment Licensing, England and Wales 2011-12', which is published on-line at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alcohol-and-late-night-refreshment-licensing-england-and-wales-2011-12>

**Cathy Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many retailers have had their licences (a) suspended and (b) removed as a result of illegal sales, where the duty and VAT had not been paid, of (i) alcohol and (ii) tobacco in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [157770]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** The Home Office Alcohol, Entertainment and Late Night Refreshment Licensing Statistical Bulletin collects the number of licences revoked, but does not indicate why they were revoked. Licences may be revoked following a review by the licensing authority for a number of reasons.

The latest available information shows the number of premises licences, club premises certificates and personal licences surrendered, lapsed, revoked, forfeited, suspended or withdrawn for England and Wales licensing authorities between 1 April 2006 and 31 March 2010 and 2011-12. These figures can be seen within the tables.

The Home Office does not deal with tobacco policy. This should be referred to the Department of Health.

Table 1: Premises licences surrendered, lapsed, suspended by a court, closure notice, England and Wales, 2006-07 to 2009-10 and 2011-12

Financial year	Surrendered <sup>1</sup>	Lapsed <sup>2</sup>	Suspended by a court <sup>3</sup>	Closure notice <sup>4</sup>
2006-07	2,630	232	70	*
2007-08	3,786	423	18	44
2008-09	4,527	591	12	54
2009-10	4,902	836	2	100
2011-12 <sup>5</sup>	4,386	493	1	92

\* = Unknown (not collected in 2006-07).

<sup>1</sup> Where a Premises Licence is surrendered under Section 28 of the Licensing Act 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Where a Premises Licence has lapsed due to the death, incapacity, insolvency etc. of the licence holder, as set out under Section 27 of the Licensing Act 2003. Excludes instances where a Premises Licence was in effect for a limited period, but the period has since expired (e.g. one-off events).

<sup>3</sup> Where a Premises Licence is suspended by a court, under Section 147B(1) of the Licensing Act 2003 (as amended by the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006) for the sale or supply of alcohol, following an offence of persistently selling to underage children.

<sup>4</sup> Where a premises is prohibited from selling alcohol for 48 hours following a closure notice under S.169A.

<sup>5</sup> Based only on the 336 out of 350 licensing authorities who provided data.

Table 2: Club premises certificates surrendered, lapsed, withdrawn, England and Wales, 2006-07 to 2009-10 and 2011-12

Financial year	Surrendered <sup>1</sup>	Lapsed <sup>2</sup>	Withdrawn <sup>3</sup>
2006-07 <sup>2</sup>	210	2	13
2007-08	255	7	13
2008-09	317	8	19
2009-10	323	7	21
2011-12 <sup>4</sup>	272	26	12

<sup>1</sup> Where a Club Premises Certificate is surrendered under Section 81 (3) of the Licensing Act 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Where a Club Premises Certificate has lapsed because it had effect for a limited period, but that period has since expired.

<sup>3</sup> Where a Club Premises Certificate is withdrawn under Section 90 of the Licensing Act 2003.

<sup>4</sup> Based only on the 332 out of 350 licensing authorities who provided data.

Table 3: Personal licences surrendered, revoked, forfeited, suspended by a court, England and Wales, 2006-07 to 2009-10 and 2011-12

Financial year	Surrendered <sup>1</sup>	Revoked <sup>2</sup>	Forfeited <sup>3</sup>	Suspended by a court <sup>4</sup>
2006-07	192	11	13	13
2007-08	176	21	8	15
2008-09	317	9	6	18
2009-10	251	22	12	10
2011-12 <sup>5</sup>	258	25	8	14

<sup>1</sup> Where a Personal Licence is surrendered under Section 116 of the Licensing Act 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Where a Personal Licence is revoked under Section 124 of the Licensing Act 2003.

<sup>3</sup> Where a Personal Licence has been forfeited following a court order under Section 129 of the Licensing Act 2003 in the time period specified (and where that order has not been suspended, pending an appeal under Sections 129(4) or 130 of the Licensing Act 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Where a Personal Licence is suspended following a court order under Section 129 of the Licensing Act 2003 in the time period specified (and where that order has not been suspended, pending an appeal under Sections 129(4) or 130 of the Licensing Act 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Based only on the 336 out of 350 licensing authorities who provided data.

### Members: Correspondence

**Mr Spellar:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the hon. Member for Warley can expect to receive a reply from her Department to

his letter of 18 April regarding the case of Ms. Mangena. [158107]

**Mr Harper:** The Home Office wrote to the right hon. Member on 4 June 2013.

**Sir Gerald Kaufman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when she intends to reply to the letter to her dated 17 April 2013 from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton with regard to Mr M Shahidul Alam. [158199]

**Mr Harper:** I wrote to the right hon. Member on 4 June 2013.

#### Offences Against Children: Internet

**Helen Goodman:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent estimate she has made of the incidence of child abuse images on the internet. [158382]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** The Government takes very seriously the issue of tackling child abuse images online.

In 2012, 255 individuals were found guilty of the principal offence of possessing prohibited images of children or of possessing indecent photographs. In the same year, 1,315 individuals were found guilty of the principal offence of taking, permitting to be taken, making, distributing or publishing indecent photographs of children. We do not keep information on how many of these cases were internet-related, as the offence being committed is the creation, dissemination and possession of such images, rather than the means by which they are obtained.

#### Passports

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans the Government has for citizens to be able to complete passport applications at post offices in the future in the same way that they can at present for driving licences and biometric residence permits. [157809]

**Mr Harper:** Her Majesty's Passport Office currently have a commercial arrangement with the Post Office to offer a 'Check and Send' service. This enables applicants to have their passport application form checked for accuracy by the Post Office and submitted on their behalf. This is a paper based service using printed photographs and original supporting documents.

The Post Office currently offer an electronic application submission for driving licences and biometric residence permits, but at present this does not extend to passport applications.

Her Majesty's Passport Office, like the rest of UK Government, has embraced the digital by default strategy championed by the Cabinet Office. In order to deliver the digital service our customers require we are first launching an online application channel later this year, starting with overseas customers. This will not initially support digital submission of photographs or supporting documents however we are now in the process of agreeing our digital roadmap which will consider how this might be achieved in the near future, but it will have the potential to be developed into a fully digital service in future.

#### Police and Crime Commissioners

**Dan Jarvis:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps her Department plans to take to review the effectiveness of police and crime commissioners. [158321]

**Damian Green:** It is for the public to judge the effectiveness of their directly elected police and crime commissioner (PCC). The next elections for PCCs will be held in May 2016.

#### Proceeds of Crime

**Keith Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration the Government has given to implementing a central bank register to facilitate the seizing of proceeds of crime. [158383]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** The UK is committed to tackling illicit financial activity, which is a key priority for the UK's G8 presidency. Through this, and the EU, the UK is working to ensure full implementation of the Financial Action Task Force Standards, including ensuring access to information in order to effectively seize the proceeds of crime. The Government is not convinced that a central bank register is necessary in order to achieve this.

#### Raves

**Andy Sawford:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what her policy is on whether police forces should routinely breathalyse people departing from illegal raves on farms. [158043]

**Damian Green:** The police have an unrestricted power to stop vehicles and can carry out a breath test on any driver they reasonably suspect of having alcohol in their body or having committed a moving traffic offence or who has been involved in a road traffic collision. If a person gives a positive breath test, that person is arrested on suspicion of drink driving.

Enforcement of the law is an operational matter for the police in each case. Any general policy adopted by an individual police force is a matter for that force's chief officer.

#### Sexual Offences

**Keith Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on the establishment of a European sexual offenders register. [158219]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** The EU has no current plans for a European Sexual Offenders Register. However, public protection is a priority for this Government and the notification requirements for registered sex offenders in our domestic legislation form an invaluable tool in the management of offenders within the community and the assessing of risk of such individuals travelling outside the UK.

The UK is actively involved in a number of areas of work aimed at enhancing the monitoring of serious sexual and violent offenders travelling within the EU. We are leading an EU funded project known as SOMECS—serious offending by mobile European criminals. This two year research based project is evaluating current procedures for law enforcement and offender management, and will publish a concluding report making recommendations for improvements. The project has international partners from the Netherlands, Latvia and Catalonia in Spain.

The UK is also actively supporting Project Haven, Europol's initiative against travelling sex offenders, launched in November 2010, which aims to disrupt sexual offences against children perpetrated by EU citizens abroad (intra or extra EU).

The UK has one of the most robust systems of managing sexual offenders in the world. We will continue to work with international policing and law enforcement agencies to ensure that the right powers are available for the authorities to tackle serious sexual crimes and to bring perpetrators to justice.

**Stella Creasy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will publish in full the data on which table 3.2, Number of sexual offences recorded by the police, 2005-06 to 2011-12 in An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales, published on 10 January 2013, was based. [158393]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** The data were an extract from Table A4 in the ONS Bulletin Crime in England and Wales—Quarterly First Release, March 2012. It is not possible to break down the offence codes any further.

The police recorded crime open data published at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/police-recorded-crime-open-data-tables>

provide a breakdown of the number of crimes by detailed offence codes (including sexual offences) recorded by the police by police force area and by community safety partnership by quarter.

#### Social Networking: Incitement

**Caroline Lucas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions she has held with (a) Twitter, (b) Facebook and (c) other social media providers on measures to remove hate speech from their platforms; and what steps (i) her Department and (ii) social media providers have taken as a consequence of those discussions. [157836]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** Tackling hate crime is an issue that the Government takes very seriously and we already have in place one of the strongest legislative frameworks in the world to protect communities from hostility, violence and bigotry. These laws apply equally to online material.

If a website publishes illegal content the relevant internet service provider will remove it. If content which is not illegal but which is offensive is published, it may infringe the service provider's "acceptable use policy" and can be removed.

The Government is working with leading social media providers and other industry representatives to improve the response to offensive and criminal online material.

#### Theft: Agricultural Machinery

**Andy Sawford:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps she is taking to reduce cross-border crime consisting of the theft of agricultural vehicles and equipment. [158051]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** Tackling the theft of construction and agricultural equipment is primarily a matter for police forces, working with the Plant and Agricultural

National Intelligence Unit (PANIU). PANIU is a specialist police unit whose primary aim is to reduce plant and agricultural theft across the United Kingdom. It monitors machinery theft from both the construction and farming industries, researches trends and threats, and helps individual police forces to identify stolen equipment and tackle the criminals responsible.

The National Crime Agency will also ensure that partners across the law enforcement community with a role in countering cross-border theft of agricultural vehicles and equipment benefit from its coordination, tasking and intelligence arrangements, in particular where this links to serious and organised crime, as well as being able to access its specialist capabilities where appropriate.

#### Violence against Women and Girls Ministerial Group

**Stella Creasy:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department with reference to the answer of 15 April 2013, *Official Report*, column 154W, on Violence Against Women and Girls Ministerial Group, what the ministerial level or civil service grade is of each attendee from each Department at each of that Group's last five meetings. [158384]

**Mr Jeremy Browne:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 3 June 2013, *Official Report*, columns 920-21W.

## TREASURY

### Air Passenger Duty

**Mr MacNeil:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what dates he met representatives of (a) Flybe and (b) EasyJet in each of the last 12 months at which the issue of air passenger duty was discussed. [158436]

**Sajid Javid:** Treasury Ministers and officials have meetings and discussions with a wide variety of organisations as part of the process of policy development and delivery.

The Treasury publishes a list of ministerial meetings with external organisations, available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-treasury/series/hmt-ministers-meetings-hospitality-gifts-and-overseas-travel>

### Business: Finance

**Mr Umunna:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what grants and investments have been made under the Business Finance Partnership to date; and of these what funds have been (a) allocated and (b) drawn down to date. [158440]

**Sajid Javid:** Budget 2013 confirmed that the Business Finance Partnership has invested £700 million and raised another £1 billion from the private sector to create five new funds that will lend to mid-sized companies. These funds are now making their first loans to businesses and further aggregate data on these investments will be published in the coming months.



Additionally, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is investing £87 million through non-traditional channels including peer-to-peer platforms and supply chain finance.

### Capital Allowances

**Cathy Jamieson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to (a) consult and (b) report on proposals to align the treatment of assets eligible for mineral extraction allowances with that for assets eligible for plant and machinery allowance where profits are not taxed in the UK. [157784]

**Mr Gauke:** At Budget 2013, the Government announced its plans to consult informally on proposals to align the treatment of assets eligible for mineral extraction allowances with that for assets eligible for plant and machinery allowances, where profits are not taxed in the UK.

The Government will report on its proposals once that consultation, which will begin before the summer recess, is complete.

### Capital Allowances: Company Cars

**Cathy Jamieson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to consult on proposals to amend first year allowances for businesses purchasing the lowest emissions vehicles. [157786]

**Sajid Javid:** Budget 2012 announced a number of changes to the first-year allowance (FYA) for low emissions vehicles to ensure that it remains a targeted, robust and fiscally sustainable incentive.

These changes were set out in draft legislation, which was published alongside the Government's autumn statement in December 2012. This was open for technical consultation.

At Budget 2013, the Government announced a further extension of the FYA to 31 March 2018. This extension will be legislated in Finance Bill 2015, following a period of technical consultation on the draft legislation.

The case for extending the FYA beyond 2018, and the appropriate carbon dioxide emissions threshold, will be reviewed at Budget 2016.

### Coinage: Forgery

**Tom Blenkinsop:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of counterfeit £1 coins currently in circulation. [157875]

**Sajid Javid:** The Royal Mint regularly conducts surveys to estimate the level of counterfeit £1 coins in the UK. A survey undertaken in November 2012 estimated there to be around £40 million counterfeit £1 coins in circulation.

Provisions for various offences connected with the counterfeiting of coins are included in the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981. Enforcement of these provisions is a matter for law enforcement agencies, such as the police, Serious and Organised Crime Agency and the Crown Prosecution Service.

### Excise Duties: Beer

**Cathy Jamieson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what quantity of beer was seized by HM Revenue and Customs due to excise duty not having been paid in each of the last five years. [157767]

**Sajid Javid:** The total quantity (in litres) of beer seized by HM Revenue and Customs and Border Force over the last five years is tabulated here:

	Total (litres)
2008-09	5,780,117
2009-10	4,128,660
2010-11	6,530,178
2011-12	8,825,821
2012-13	9,369,728

### Financial Services

**Cathy Jamieson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will (a) consult and (b) report on loan relationships and on derivative contracts legislation. [157783]

**Mr Gauke:** Consultation on modernizing the rules governing the taxation of loan relationships and derivative contracts was announced at Budget 2013, with legislation to be included in Finance Bills in 2014 and 2015. A consultation document will be published shortly, and a summary of responses and draft legislation for those measures to be included in Finance Bill 2014 will be published in the autumn. Further formal consultation is expected in 2014.

### Gift Aid

**Cathy Jamieson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will report on the consultation undertaken to make it easier to claim Gift Aid; and if he will make a statement. [157788]

**Sajid Javid:** The Government wants to see a high rate of Gift Aid claims across all the ways people give to charity. Budget 2013 announced that we would consult on proposals to make it easier to claim Gift Aid on a wide range of digital giving channels. A consultation document will be published shortly setting out the proposals.

### Income Tax: Scotland

**Cathy Jamieson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to consult on legislation to require the National Audit Office to report annually to the Scottish Parliament on HM Revenue and Customs' administration of the Scottish rate of income tax. [157796]

**Mr Gauke:** Legislation will be introduced in Finance Bill 2014 to require the National Audit Office to report direct to the Scottish Parliament annually on HMRC's administration of the Scottish rate of income tax. This legislation will be published for comment as part of the usual process for wider consultation on draft Finance Bill clauses in autumn 2013.

**Gregg McClymont:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions (a) he and (b) officials in his Department have had with the Scottish Government regarding support to individuals affected by relief at source tax arrangements to ensure they receive the correct amount of tax relief following the introduction of different tax rates under the Scotland Act 2012. [158180]

**Mr Gauke:** The Government has made clear that Scottish taxpayers who contribute directly to pension schemes will continue to receive relief for their contributions at their marginal income tax rate. HMRC have consulted industry representatives on changes to the relief at source process that will be required as a result of the new Scottish rate of income tax in the Scotland Act Pensions Technical Group, on which the Scottish Government is represented.

**Gregg McClymont:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent steps he has taken to ensure that taxpayers in Scotland who are members of pension schemes which operate the relief at source process are not adversely affected by differing rates of income tax in Scotland provided for by the Scotland Act 2012. [158189]

**Mr Gauke:** HMRC published a Technical Note entitled 'Clarifying the Scope of the Scottish Rate of Income Tax' in May 2012, which set out the Government's intention to continue to give tax relief on pensions at individuals' marginal rates to all taxpayers after the Scottish rate of income tax is introduced. Since then, HMRC has continued to discuss this issue with the industry via its Scotland Act Pensions Technical Group to find a method of giving relief which ensures that contributors receive the right amount of relief while minimising costs to HMRC and the industry. The most recent meeting of the group took place in April 2013.

**Margaret Curran:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many pensioners in Scotland currently pay (a) no income tax, (b) the basic rate of income tax, (c) the higher rate of income tax and (d) the additional rate of income tax. [158441]

**Mr Gauke:** Estimates of the number of taxpayers in Scotland above state pension age are shown in the following table:

	<i>Thousand</i>
<i>Taxpayers<sup>1</sup></i>	
Non-Higher Rate <sup>2</sup>	511
Higher Rate	20
Additional Rate	1
All	532
<i>Population estimate<sup>3</sup></i>	11,035

<sup>1</sup> These estimates are based on the Survey of Personal Incomes (SPI) for 2010-11 which provides the latest outturn data available.

<sup>2</sup> The "non-higher rate" category covers all liabilities that arise on income taxable up to the basic rate limit.

<sup>3</sup> Office for National Statistics, 2010 mid year based population projections, adjusted to financial year estimates.

ONS population estimates are mid year point in time whereas taxpayer estimates represent numbers of individuals with tax liabilities arising during the financial year.

## Inheritance Tax

**Cathy Jamieson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will report on the consultation on simplifying of inheritance tax charges to which trusts are subjected at 10 yearly intervals and when property is transferred out of the trust. [157789]

**Mr Gauke:** The initial consultation on the simplification of IHT Trust charges was published on 13 July 2012. A response to this consultation was published as 'Inheritance Tax: Simplifying Charges on Trusts consultation response document' on 28 March 2013. These documents can be found by following the links at:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/consultations/index.htm>

A second, more detailed consultation, setting out options on how periodic and exit charges can be simplified as well as proposals for aligning the payment and filing dates of these charges and the treatment of accumulated income was published on 31 May 2013. The closing date for this consultation is 23 August 2013. This document can be found using the same link above.

The responses will be considered and a response document will be published in due course.

## Minimum Wage

**Dan Jarvis:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many prosecutions there were for offences of failure to pay the national minimum wage in (a) 2010, (b) 2011 and (c) 2012. [158316]

**Mr Gauke:** I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 18 April 2013, *Official Report*, column 521W.

## Revenue and Customs: Telephone Services

**Richard Burden:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the average waiting time for customers telephoning HM Revenue and Customs' Self Assessment Helpline was in May 2013. [158173]

**Mr Gauke:** The average queue time for HM Revenue and Customs Self Assessment Helpline in May 2013 was 8 minutes, 42 seconds.

## Self-employed Contributions

**Cathy Jamieson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made on consultation regarding simplifying the administrative process for the self-employed by using self assessment to collect class 2 national insurance contributions alongside income tax and class 4 national insurance contributions. [157795]

**Mr Gauke:** HMRC is preparing a consultation document and plans to publish it later this year.

## Tax Allowances: Business

**Mr Meacher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what types of tax relief were claimed by each FTSE-100 company in the last financial year; and how much each such company received under each such tax relief. [158185]

**Mr Gauke:** Taxpayer confidentiality prevents HMRC from disclosing such details.

#### Tax Allowances: Pensions

**Cathy Jamieson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will report on the consultation on the detail of an individual protection regime for individuals with pension rights above £1.25 million when the standard lifetime allowance is reduced from £1.5 million to £1.25 million. [157791]

**Sajid Javid:** As announced at Budget 2013, the consultation document on individual protection will be published this spring.

#### Tax Avoidance

**Tom Blenkinsop:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has had with his G8 counterparts on securing an agreement on tax transparency with a public registry of beneficial ownership and automatic exchange of tax information. [158020]

**Mr Gauke:** As the Prime Minister wrote in his letter to G8 leaders, the G8 is a unique opportunity to galvanise collective international action on tax transparency. In particular, the UK is committed to using its presidency of the G8 to secure agreement on the development of a new international standard in the automatic exchange of tax information to step up the fight against tax evasion.

The UK is also committed to using its presidency of the G8 to shine a light on company ownership, and we are working through the G8 and the EU to ensure full implementation of the FATF standards on beneficial ownership.

**Mr Meacher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will introduce penalties against legal, accountancy or other companies or advisers who are found to have promoted arrangements the primary purpose of which is to avoid tax rather than to conduct any substantive economic transaction. [158391]

**Mr Gauke:** The Government announced in the Budget that it will consult on new powers to take tougher action against high risk promoters of tax avoidance schemes, including new information and penalty powers, and the possible use of 'naming and shaming'. The consultation is expected to begin shortly.

#### Taxation: Internet

**Mr Meacher:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will require HM Revenue and Customs to define publicly the limits of what an internet company can do in the UK before it is deemed to have a taxable presence. [158390]

**Mr Gauke:** In order to have a taxable presence in the UK an internet company would need to be either resident in the UK or, if it is not UK resident, it needs to be trading in the UK through a permanent establishment. HMRC already publishes guidance in its International Manual that explains when a non-resident company is taxable in the UK.

If a business sells to UK customers from overseas rather than through a UK company or branch, it does not have to pay UK corporation tax on the profits arising from those sales.

A permanent establishment will exist where there is a fixed place of business in the UK or where there is an agent in the UK which is not independent from the non-resident company and which habitually binds the company to contracts.

#### Taxation: Partnerships

**Cathy Jamieson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will publish the outcome of the review by the Office of Tax Simplification into ways of simplifying partnerships. [157785]

**Mr Gauke:** At Budget, the Chancellor announced that the independent Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) would carry out a review of ways to simplify the taxation of partnerships. This review will include an initial scoping exercise to identify which areas are most complex for taxpayers and the OTS aims to publish its initial findings in the autumn.

#### Taxation: Profit Sharing

**Cathy Jamieson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he will report on consultation on the recommendation of the Office of Tax Simplification's review of non-tax advantaged share schemes. [157793]

**Mr Gauke:** The Government's consultation on recommendations made by the Office of Tax Simplification in its review of unapproved share schemes was published on 24 May, and can be found at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/200910/Unapproved\\_share\\_schemes.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/200910/Unapproved_share_schemes.pdf)

This consultation runs until 16 August. The Government's response will be published in autumn 2013 and any changes arising from this consultation are expected to be implemented in 2014.

## COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Change of Use

**Hilary Benn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) if he will place in the Library maps of the areas granted exemptions from permitted development rights for change of use from office to residential; [158387]

(2) if he will place in the Library copies of the letters sent to all of the local authorities that applied for exemptions from permitted development rights for change of use from office to residential informing them of the outcome of their application; and if he will tabulate for each application the assessment scores across each criterion. [158389]

**Nick Boles:** The maps of areas exempt from office to residential change of use permitted development right are available for inspection at the office of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. They are also available to view on the Gov.uk website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

We do not routinely publish the results of local authorities who have made unsuccessful applications to ensure that they are not deterred from participating in similar exercises in the future.

### Clothing

**Priti Patel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many officials in (a) his Department and (b) the non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible have made a claim for evening dress allowance in each of the last five years; and what the total cost of such claims has been. [155443]

**Brandon Lewis:** The Department's accounting system has no centrally held records of expenditure of this kind.

### Enterprise Zones

**Mr Umunna:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) what targets have been set for job creation for each enterprise zone; and how many jobs have been created by each enterprise zone to date; [158437]

(2) what targets have been set for the number of firms located at each enterprise zone; and how many firms are currently located at each enterprise zone; [158438]

(3) what recent discussions he and officials of his Department have had with (a) colleagues in other Departments and (b) local authorities on the delivery of enterprise zones. [158444]

**Mr Prisk:** DCLG has not set any specific targets for the number of jobs created or firms locating in each enterprise zone. However, since April 2012 nearly 3,000 new jobs have been created since going live, as well as attracting some £229 million in private sector investment.

DCLG is also working closely with other Government Departments and local authorities on the delivery of all enterprise zones to ensure they realise their full potential in the short and long-term.

### Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013

**Hilary Benn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he plans to issue guidance relating to Clause 1 of the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013. [158388]

**Nick Boles:** We published our response to the consultation on implementing section 1 of the Growth and Infrastructure Act on 4 June, alongside the criteria that we propose to use for designating or de-designating any local planning authorities whose performance has dropped below an acceptable level. Secondary legislation and guidance on the process for submitting applications directly to the Secretary of State, where applicants in designated areas choose this route, will be published in the autumn.

### Housing: North West

**Jonathan Reynolds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many new housing starts began in (a) Tameside Metropolitan

borough and (b) Stalybridge and Hyde constituency in 2012-13. [158704]

**Mr Prisk:** Data for Stalybridge and Hyde constituency are not collected centrally. The constituency falls within the metropolitan borough of Tameside.

Statistics on house building starts by tenure in each local authority are published in the Department's live tables 253 (annual) and 253a (quarterly), which are available at the following link:

<http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building>

### Landlords: Immigration Controls

**Hilary Benn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what criteria he proposes to use to identify high-risk areas where landlords will be required to check on the immigration status of prospective tenants; and whether the proportion of ethnic minorities living in an area will form part of those criteria. [158386]

**Mr Prisk:** The Government is taking action to stop rogue landlords who cash in from housing illegal immigrants. These measures will send out a strong signal and help reduce unsustainable immigration.

We will avoid burdening the private rented sector with unnecessary red tape and any changes will not adversely affect UK nationals looking to rent.

More information on the proposals will be published for consultation in due course, and the reforms will be subject to scrutiny by Parliament.

### Parish Councils

**Jesse Norman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he expects to respond to the consultation on making it easier to set up new town and parish councils; and if he will make a statement. [157477]

**Mr Foster:** The Department is currently finalising its response to the consultation on making it easier to set up new town and parish councils and expects to publish the response in due course.

### Right to Buy Scheme: Birmingham

**Mr Godsiff:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many local authority-owned properties have been purchased through the Government's Right-to-Buy scheme in Birmingham, Hall Green constituency in each of the last three years. [157681]

**Mr Prisk:** Data on the sales of local authority properties through the Right to Buy scheme are not available at constituency level. Figures are available at local authority level and can be found in Tables 691 (quarterly data) and 685 (annual data) at these places:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/199104/Table\\_691.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/199104/Table_691.xls)

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/200525/Table\\_685\\_\\_version\\_2\\_.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/200525/Table_685__version_2_.xls)

The figures show that there were 626 sales through the Right to Buy scheme in Birmingham, the local authority that covers the Hall Green constituency, in the three years between 2010-11 and 2012-13. It should be noted that these are sales from local authorities and do not include sales of social housing stock through Preserved Right to Buy made by registered providers (such as housing associations).

Right to Buy sales have doubled in Birmingham since the new discounts were introduced, but there is more to do to inform tenants of their new rights and help them up the ladder of home ownership.

#### Temporary Accommodation

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what the average length of time people spend in temporary accommodation after being made homeless is. [157076]

**Mr Prisk:** The Department does not collect precise information on the average length of time spent by homeless households in temporary accommodation, but estimates suggest that the average length of time has fallen, from an average across England of 19 months in 2009-10 to 13 months in 2012-13.

We are investing £470 million in homelessness prevention over four years (2011-12 to 2014-15) to help local authorities and voluntary sector partners prevent and tackle homelessness, rough sleeping and repossessions. We have also invested an additional £1.7 million over two years (2012-13 to 2013-14) in a new scheme to support local authorities deliver a 'Gold Standard' homelessness prevention service to stem future increases in statutory homelessness and rough sleeping. Homelessness is around half the average level it was under the last Administration. Homelessness acceptances remain lower than in 27 of the last 30 years.

#### Wind Power: Planning Permission

**Julian Sturdy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will put measures in place to allow local communities to object to onshore wind farms. [156965]

**Mr Prisk:** I refer my hon. Friend to the written ministerial statement made today.

### ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

#### Biofuels

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what assessment he has made of the use of the biomass gasifier technology using pyrolysis, combustion and reduction to enable the combustion of biomass from areas contaminated by radioactive fallout to be used safely. [158016]

**Michael Fallon:** Emissions from biomass power stations in England are regulated by the Environment Agency. The agency has not received any requests to use radioactively contaminated biomass, and has not, therefore, made any such estimates.

#### Energy

**Simon Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change whether the Government plans to review the threshold at which energy suppliers are required to participate in social and environmental programmes. [157865]

**Gregory Barker:** The Government is keen to ensure a regulatory framework that facilitates competition among current participants, encourages new entrants and allows small suppliers to grow.

The exemptions for small suppliers from certain environmental and social programmes are a key element of the framework which we continue to consider as we look at removing barriers to entry and growth.

**Dr Whitehead:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what steps he is taking to reduce demand for energy. [158083]

**Mr Davey:** This Government's November Energy Efficiency Strategy clearly sets out the importance of reducing our energy demand and how the UK has an opportunity to lead the world in improving its energy efficiency. Game changing initiatives such as the Green Deal, Electricity Demand Reduction and the roll-out of smart meters are central to realising this opportunity.

#### Fracking

**Henry Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what progress the Government has made on facilitating exploration of UK shale gas reserves. [158088]

**Michael Fallon:** We have strengthened the regulatory framework to protect the environment and to ensure that hydraulic fracturing is done properly and safely, but we do want to encourage shale exploration. We have announced fiscal incentives for developers and are working on community benefits for example discounts on residents bills in drilling areas.

**Dan Byles:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the answer of 16 May 2013, *Official Report*, column 358W, on fracking, what plans he has to commission further studies on the volume of shale gas in place to determine a total UK shale gas resource. [158553]

**Michael Fallon:** DECC has already commissioned further work by the British Geological Survey to assess the potential shale gas resource in the Weald area in the South of England. Once that study has been carried out, DECC will consider whether further analysis will be needed to assess the potential shale gas resource in other parts of Great Britain.

#### Nuclear Power Stations

**Mr Ellwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change when the UK's new fleet of nuclear power stations will come on line; and if he will make a statement. [158451]

**Michael Fallon:** The Government is firmly committed to ensure that the conditions are right for investment in new nuclear power in the UK. It is for energy companies to construct, operate and decommission nuclear power stations. Industry has set out plans to develop around 16GW of new nuclear power stations in the UK, the first of which is expected to come on line in the early 2020s.

### Renewable Energy

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what recent discussions he has had with community energy co-operatives and other community energy groups on developing such local initiatives; what assessment he has made of the success of such groups in Germany; and if he has given consideration to the ways in which British communities could twin with German towns and cities where community energy schemes have demonstrated success. [158042]

**Michael Fallon:** In April, the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, the right hon. Member for Kingston and Surbiton (Mr Davey), met the Community Energy Coalition and the Community Energy Contact Group. DECC officials continue to meet regularly with the Community Energy Contact Group and other key stakeholders.

The Community Energy Strategy, which will be published later in the year, will look at how community projects or initiatives, including co-operatives, focused on energy generation, energy saving and management, collective purchasing and collective switching can realise their potential. In order to inform that strategy, we have launched a Call for Evidence on community energy.

The Call for Evidence is seeking information from both the UK and overseas, including Germany. On the basis of the evidence received, we will consider ways in which our communities may be able to learn from good practice in other countries.

### Wind Power

**Andrea Leadsom:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what recent assessment he has made of the level of public support for offshore and onshore wind. [158092]

**Michael Fallon:** We recognise that many people have real concerns about the siting of onshore wind turbines in their communities and how they are involved in this process: The government has today announced reforms to change the balance and give local people a stronger say of the siting of onshore wind farms. Where new turbines are agreed we will ensure that they are developed in a way that benefits the local community, such as cheaper bills.

DECC publishes a regular tracker which includes public attitudes to renewable energy. The most recent survey is available at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/198722/Summary\\_of\\_Wave\\_5\\_findings\\_of\\_Public\\_Attitudes\\_Tracker.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/198722/Summary_of_Wave_5_findings_of_Public_Attitudes_Tracker.pdf)

### Wind Power: Planning Permission

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what onshore wind energy generation capacity (a) had been installed, (b) had gained planning consent and (c) was seeking planning permission on 1 June 2013. [R] [158541]

**Michael Fallon:** This information is publicly available within the monthly extract of the Department's Renewable Energy Planning Database (REPD), which tracks all renewable projects through the planning system:

<https://restats.decc.gov.uk/app/reporting/decc/monthlyextract>

As of the end of April 2013, the date of the latest REPD update, the figures for installed capacity for onshore wind in the UK were:

	MW
Operational	6,345.74
Awaiting and under construction	6,738.91
Submitted for planning consent	5,769.53

### WORK AND PENSIONS

#### Absenteeism

**Charlotte Leslie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the annual cost to companies in England of workplace absenteeism. [158307]

**Esther McVey:** DWP does not routinely collect data on the cost of sickness absence or workplace absenteeism, but the 2011 report "Health at Work" by Dame Carol Black and David Frost estimated that sickness absence costs employers in Great Britain £8.9 billion per year.

The Government is currently working on a range of measures that will support people to remain in and return to work, including a new health and work assessment and advisory service which will make occupational health expertise more widely available to those employees and employers who need it most.

#### Children: Poverty

**Alison McGovern:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many children were living in poverty in (a) Wirral, (b) Merseyside and (c) England in the last three years for which information is available. [157350]

**Esther McVey:** This information is not available for all the areas requested. The Child Poverty Act 2010 sets four income-based UK-wide targets to be met by 2020. The targets are based on the proportion of children living in households with relative low income, combined low income and material deprivation, absolute low income and persistent poverty (all before housing costs have been taken into account). Estimates of these are published in the National Statistics Households Below Average Income (HBAI) series. HBAI uses household income adjusted (or 'equivalised') for household size and composition, to provide a proxy for standard of living. The most recent figures showed that 300,000 children

moved out of relative income poverty. In fact, this was caused by a fall in the median income. For such children, life remained the same: disadvantage continued to limit aspiration and they were no better off.

Information for Wirral and Merseyside is not available as the sample size of this survey is not sufficient to provide robust estimates.

Three-year averages are used to report statistics by region and country, as single-year estimates are subject to volatility. The latest figures for relative and absolute low income for England and for the north-west region covering the last three years (up until 2008-09 to 2010-11) and latest figures for combined low income and material deprivation can be found in the latest HBAI publication, available at the following link:

<http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai2011/index.php?page=contents>

(ISBN 978-1-78153-046-7).

Relevant figures can be found in Table 4.6db (on page 115) for the latest relative low income and combined low income and material deprivation proportions, Table 4.17ts (on page 136) for relative low income for the last three years and Table 4.23ts (on page 142) for absolute low income for the last three years.

Income matters but considering this in isolation fails to properly reflect the reality of child poverty in the UK today (as shown in the reduction of children in poverty as median income drops). We want to develop better measures of child poverty which include income but provide a more accurate picture of the reality of child poverty. Our consultation on how best to measure child poverty closed on 15 February. A large volume of responses was received and all of these are being read and analysed to ensure that all important points are captured and used to help Ministers decide on the next steps.

### Disability Living Allowance

**Katy Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of applications for disability living allowance were rejected in each of the last (a) six months and (b) five years for which figures are available. [157699]

**Esther McVey:** The proportion of disability living allowance (DLA) new claim applications that have been rejected are shown in the following tables:

Table (a): DLA new claims rejected

	Percentage rejected
November 2012	54.3
December 2012	51.9
January 2013	53.4
February 2013	52.4
March 2013	53.8
April 2013	51.9
Total	53.0

Table (b): DLA new claims rejected

	Percentage rejected
2008-09	54.1
2009-10	55.5
2010-11	56.7
2011-12	56.1

Table (b): DLA new claims rejected

	Percentage rejected
2012-13	53.7

Source:

Department for Work and Pensions—RDA60209 and RDA60205 reports—Disability Living Allowance Management Information Statistics

### Disability Living Allowance: Children

**Naomi Long:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will extend eligibility for the mobility component of the disability living allowance to disabled and life-limited children under the age of three. [157756]

**Esther McVey:** There are no plans to extend eligibility for the mobility component of disability living allowance to disabled and life-limited children under the age of three.

**Naomi Long:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will include specialist car seats in the list of essential equipment for disabled children under the age of 12. [157757]

**Esther McVey:** The social security benefits system does not use a list of essential equipment for disabled people in determining entitlement to benefits.

### Disability Living Allowance: Young People

**Katy Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of applications for disability living allowance for people aged under 18 were rejected in each of the last (a) six months and (b) five years for which figures are available. [157698]

**Esther McVey:** The information is not available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Employment Schemes: Young People

**Mr Byrne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many wage incentives have been taken up under the Youth Contract since April 2012. [158208]

**Mr Hoban:** I refer the right hon. Member to the reply I previously gave to him, question numbers 155473 and 155478 on 16 May 2013, *Official Report*, column 349W.

### Jobseeker's Allowance

**Mr Byrne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of people flowing on to jobseeker's allowance (JSA) were in receipt of (a) income-based JSA and (b) contribution-based JSA in the latest period for which figures are available. [158209]

**Mr Hoban:** In the year to November 2012, DWP generalised matching service (GMS) data suggests that around two thirds of JSA inflows were income-based and around a quarter contribution-based. In a small number of cases people receive both contributory and income-based JSA, and some people receive national insurance credits.

**Jobseeker's Allowance: Scotland**

**Margaret Curran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many claimants of jobseeker's allowance in Scotland have received a sanction on (a)

one, (b) two, (c) three, (d) four, (e) five and (f) more than five occasions in each year since 2010. [158442]

**Mr Hoban:** The information requested is given in the following table:

*Number<sup>1</sup> of jobseeker's allowance (JSA) sanctions applied<sup>2</sup> by year of decision<sup>3</sup> and the number of times the claimant has been sanctioned in that year in Scotland Jobcentre Plus Group<sup>7</sup>: 1 January 2010 to 21 October 2012*

Number of times the claimant has been sanctioned in this year	Year of decision <sup>3</sup>		
	2010	2011	2012
One	32,790	31,880	32,080
Two	6,600	6,170	7,020
Three	1,840	1,650	2,190
Four	570	550	850
Five	240	190	330
More than five	180	180	240

**Notes:**

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest 10. '—' denotes nil or negligible.

2. Sanctions applied: The number of sanctions applied is the number of Varied<sup>4</sup>, Fixed Length<sup>5</sup> and Entitlement Decision<sup>6</sup> referrals where the decision was found against the claimant.

3. Year of decision: The year in which the decision to apply a sanction was made. The year 2012 only includes data up to and including 21 October, where these are the latest data available.

4. Varied Length sanctions: A sanction of between one week and 26 weeks is imposed for leaving employment voluntarily without just cause, refusing employment without good cause, or losing employment through misconduct. The actual period in each case is at the discretion of the Adjudication Officer who makes the decision.

5. Fixed Length sanctions: A sanction of between one week and 26 weeks is imposed for refusal, without good cause, to attend an employment programme or carry out a Jobseeker's Direction. Payment of benefit continues in full pending the Adjudication Officer's decision on a sanction question.

6. Entitlement Decisions: These are questions on which entitlement to JSA depends. For example, if there is doubt around whether the Jobseeker's agreement (JSAg) is suitable, whether they are actively looking for work or making themselves available for work. In most cases payment of JSA will be suspended by benefit processing until the doubt is resolved.

7. Jobcentre Plus Group: Formerly known as Jobcentre Plus Regions. Jobcentre Plus Groups were updated to reflect changes to the hierarchical structure of Jobcentre Plus implemented on 5 April 2011 from 11 regions to seven groups.

**Source:**

DWP Information, Governance and Security Directorate: JSA Sanctions and Disallowance Decisions Statistics Database.

**Mortgages: Government Assistance**

**Mr Byrne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the income level is beyond which individuals are no longer eligible for support for mortgage interest; and what the age profile is of recipients of support for mortgage interest. [158210]

**Steve Webb:** Support with mortgage interest (SMI) is not a stand alone benefit but is a component of income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance, and income-related employment and support allowance and state pension credit. The level of these benefits depends upon the circumstances of the individual case. For example,

whether the claimant is single or has a partner, whether they have children, whether someone has a disability. It also depends upon the amount of the SMI to which they are entitled.

It is not possible therefore to provide a figure for the level of income beyond which individuals are no longer eligible for support for mortgage interest.

In universal credit, an owner-occupier who is in receipt of earned income will not qualify for SMI. However, owner occupiers in universal credit who are not receiving SMI will qualify, where applicable, for the higher earnings disregards that apply to those claimants who have no housing costs.

The SMI caseload by age group is as follows:

	Rounded								
	Under 18	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-59	60-64	65 and Over	Total
JSA	1—	—	2,500	7,300	9,700	3,400	900	1—	23,900
IS	1—	2100	3,600	10,600	16,100	9,000	2,000	1—	41,500
PC	1—	1—	1—	1—	1—	1—	20,500	74,700	95,200
All (ex. ESA)	1—	2200	6,200	17,900	25,800	12,500	23,400	74,700	160,600

<sup>1</sup> Nil or Negligible.

<sup>2</sup> Figures are subject to a high degree of sampling error and should only be used as a guide.

**Notes:**

1. Equivalent data for employment and support allowance (ESA) is not available.

2. JSA = jobseeker's allowance; IS = income support; PC = pension credit; ESA = employment and support allowance.

3. Sample data has been weighted to 100% data.

4. Caseload figures are rounded to the nearest hundred.

**Source:**

DWP Quarterly Statistical Enquiry (sample data), November 2012.

**Universal Credit**

**Mr Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) whether his Department plans to carry out

an impact assessment on the introduction of housing costs contributions under universal credit; [157629]

(2) what assessment he has made of the potential effects on youth (a) unemployment and (b) homelessness



of the introduction of housing costs contributions under universal credit. [157630]

**Steve Webb:** It has long been a feature of the benefits system that someone living in a claimant's home should be expected to contribute towards the rent.

It is not possible to isolate the impact of the housing cost contribution from the other constituent parts of universal credit. This means that no assessment is available on the potential impacts of the housing cost contribution in universal credit in respect of homelessness or youth unemployment. However, individuals aged under 21 will not be expected to make a housing cost contribution, and so we do not anticipate this change to have a detrimental effect of homelessness on this group.

While it is not possible to isolate the effects of the housing cost contribution, the impact of universal credit will be reviewed and monitored as roll out takes place, and a comprehensive evaluation programme is under development. The published impact assessment for universal credit can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-impact-assessment>

**Mr Byrne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people have successfully claimed universal credit in the pathfinder to date. [158212]

**Mr Hoban:** I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply I provided him with on 21 May 2013, *Official Report*, column 675W, on how many people have claimed universal credit in the pathfinder to date. 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. We intend to publish Official Statistics on pathfinder areas in autumn 2013.

We expect around 7,000 claims to be processed in pathfinders.

### Work Capability Assessment

**Stephen Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps a person undergoing a work capability assessment has to take in order to obtain an audio recording of their assessment. [158174]

**Mr Hoban:** All requests for audio recorded assessments should be made to Atos Healthcare as part of the appointment booking process. This is to ensure adequate notice to make recording equipment available and ready for use.

In the case of a claimant using their own equipment this will ensure that the Atos health care professional (HCP) conducting the assessment is aware and to make sure that the proposed recording equipment is compliant with the DWP/Atos Healthcare requirements.

If Atos Healthcare has been unable to contact a claimant by phone and an appointment letter is issued, the claimant will need to telephone Atos Healthcare as soon as possible to notify them of their request for a recorded assessment.

If a claimant makes a request for the recording service to a DWP Benefit Centre they will be advised to make their request to Atos Healthcare.

**Stephen Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what items of equipment are available for the audio recording of the work capability assessments. [158187]

**Mr Hoban:** Currently Atos Healthcare has 31 audio recording machines, three of which are in for repair. They also have access to 21 cassette machines on loan from DWP.

Claimants who have requested to record their own assessment must use appropriate equipment that can provide two copies of the recording in such a way to ensure that the recording has not been tampered with and is a reliable and accurate record of the assessment.

For this reason certain devices which are capable of real-time editing or live-streaming are not approved; such as computing devices, these include but are not limited to; PCs and laptops, tablets, smart phones, MP3 players or devices which cannot provide a media copy that can be easily verified during the assessment. Media types that are acceptable at this time are standard CD and audio tapes only.

**Stephen Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many requests for an audio recording of the work capability assessment have been turned down to date; and for what reasons. [158188]

**Mr Hoban:** Presently only nine requests for an audio recording have been turned down, this occurred in July 2012. This was because they could not be accommodated within the four week timeframe for arranging assessments.

DWP had previously asked Atos Healthcare to accommodate requests for recorded assessments within four weeks and where this was not possible the assessment should go ahead without a recording.

However, to help ensure claimant expectations can be met, the four week timeframe has currently been removed to enable us to gather a fuller picture of demand and capacity in order to inform a full and robust evaluation of the interim audio recording policy.

### Work Programme

**Stephen Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of whether the Work Programme budget will be underspent in 2013-14; and if he will make a statement. [158176]

**Mr Hoban:** We are unable to comment on the 2013-14 forecast expenditure against the Work programme budget as it is subject to change as the programme is payment by results.

**Mr Byrne:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps he has taken to support people leaving the Work Programme after two years without a successful job sustainment. [158211]

**Mr Hoban:** Jobseeker's allowance and employment and support allowance claimants returning from the Work programme will have a thorough assessment interview with Jobcentre Plus to understand how best to build on their time on the Work programme, and continue to move them closer to the labour market and towards

long-term sustainable employment. At their first appointment they will have to agree a back-to-work plan laying out what they are required to do.

All claimants will receive flexible support tailored to their individual needs. This is underpinned by a core regime of face to face meetings and a tough sanctions regime for those who do not take necessary steps to prepare for work.

Jobseeker's allowance claimants who need it will be subject to a more intensive regime. Jobcentre Plus will be able to provide this intensive support, which will involve more frequent meetings with advisers and increased use of mandation, to the vast majority of jobseeker's allowance claimants returning from the Work programme.

## SCOTLAND

### Devolution

**Margaret Curran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will place in the Library the minutes of all meetings of the High Level Implementation Group on the Scotland Bill. [156789]

**Michael Moore:** The High Level Implementation Group established by the UK Government met four times between July 2010 and October 2011. It was set up to advise the Government on the practical implications of the implementation of the Commission on Scottish Devolution's taxation proposals. The minutes of these meetings will be placed in the House Library.

### Sign Language

**Simon Kirby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department is taking to ensure the services it offers are accessible to British Sign Language users. [157938]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 in its interactions with the public.

### Travel

**Maria Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what his Department's budget for ministerial travel for (a) the Government Car Service, (b) private hire vehicles, (c) taxis, (d) rail, (e) aviation and (f) other is for (i) 2013-14, (ii) 2014-15 and (iii) 2015-16. [157533]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office does not set specific budgets for individual modes of ministerial travel. All ministerial travel is undertaken by the most efficient and cost effective way, in accordance with the Ministerial Code, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

**Maria Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department spent on ministerial travel by (a) Government Car Service, (b) private hire vehicles, (c) taxis, (d) rail, (e) aviation and (f) other means in each year of the current parliament. [157554]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office spend on ministerial travel in each year of the current Parliament is shown in the following table:

	<i>Government car service and private hire vehicles</i>	<i>Taxis</i>	<i>Rail</i>	<i>Aviation</i>	<i>Ferry</i>	£
2007-08	57,913	7,518	1,358	1,075	0	
2008-09	98,603	23,313	1,381	1,142	0	
2009-10	145,509	14,560	2,250	63	118	
2010-11	87,781	3,273	1,028	7,749	158	
2011-12	29,090	8,418	1,070	24,822	0	
2012-13	70,118	6,580	1,917	35,618	40	

The figure for the Government Car Service and private hire vehicles for 2012-13 includes £10,230 of costs for 2011-12 only charged for in 2012-13.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### Burma

**Mr Burrowes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received of allegations that British-made bombs have been used by the Burmese Army in Kachin State. [158028]

**Mr Swire:** Burma Campaign UK and Kachin National Council recently wrote to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office alleging that British-made world war two era 20 pound fragmentation bombs may have been used during Burmese Army offensives in Kachin State in December 2012. I have since replied confirming that the

Ministry of Defence has investigated the origin of the munitions, and based on the evidence provided, can confirm that the munitions are not of British origin.

**Fiona O'Donnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British ambassador to Burma has attempted to meet (a) Myint Soe and (b) other political prisoners imprisoned in that country. [158323]

**Mr Swire:** We remain in regular contact with released political prisoners and their representatives, but British officials have not visited political prisoners while they are detained. However, we consider one political prisoner one too many and continue to raise this matter with senior members of the Burmese Government at every opportunity.

We also follow closely the work of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in Burma, Tomas Ojea Quintana, and have had regular discussions

with him covering the full range of issues highlighted by Mr Quintana in his reporting, including the issue of political prisoners.

We welcome the creation by the Burmese Government of a committee on political prisoners and note the range of independent civil society organisations taking part. This committee builds on earlier steps by the Burmese Government to grant access to prisoners and prisons to the International Committee for the Red Cross, something for which we consistently lobbied. It will be important that all cases are reviewed promptly, impartially and transparently and we will be watching developments closely.

**Fiona O'Donnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of grants provided by the British embassy in Rangoon were allocated to projects which promote human rights in the latest period for which figures are available. [158324]

**Mr Swire:** I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 5 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 1121W.

#### Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

**Nicholas Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made on negotiations on the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty. [158403]

**Alistair Burt:** The comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT) was adopted by the UN General Assembly in September 1996 but has not yet entered into force.

159 states have ratified the CTBT. However, the CTBT requires all 44 states named in Annex II of the treaty to ratify it for it to enter into force. At present eight of the Annex II states have not ratified the CTBT (USA, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Iran and Egypt).

The UK has long been a supporter of the CTBT, being the first country, along with France, to sign and ratify the treaty in 1996 and 1998 respectively. We continue to push for the eight remaining Annex II states to ratify the treaty through bilateral discussions, discussions in multilateral forums, and our support to build the monitoring capacity and verification regime of the CTBT organisation in Vienna.

#### European Gendarmerie Force

**Mr Hollobone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs under what circumstances the European Gendarmerie Force would be used in the UK. [158399]

**Mr Lidington:** I cannot foresee any circumstances under which the European Gendarmerie Force (EGF) would be used in the UK.

#### Nuclear Disarmament

**Nicholas Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made on negotiations on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty. [158406]

**Alistair Burt:** The Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) and New START are bilateral treaties between the USA and Russia.

Both countries' delegations made statements at the recent Non-Proliferation Preparatory Committee meeting in Geneva in April 2013. These can be found on the UN website:

<http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT2015/PrepCom2013/>

#### Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

**Nicholas Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made on negotiations on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. [158405]

**Alistair Burt:** The Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was opened for signature in July 1968, and entered into force in 1970. Review Conferences are held every five years, to review the operation of the Treaty, with Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meetings also held in the three years preceding the Review Conference.

In April - May 2013, the second PrepCom for this review cycle was held among state parties, under the Chairmanship of Coronel Ferruta of Romania. The main issues for debate were around disarmament, the proliferation challenges of Iran and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and the conference planned on the establishment of a Middle East Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone. The UK statements are available on the UN website:

<http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NPT2015/PrepCom2013/>

#### Nuclear Weapons

**Nicholas Soames:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent progress has been made on negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. [158404]

**Alistair Burt:** The Government wants negotiations to start in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT). We continue to work with partners in the CD to press Pakistan to end its block on the start of negotiations.

We supported the resolution at last year's UN General Assembly (UNGA) First Committee to create a group of government experts (GGE) to discuss the issues surrounding a FMCT. We hope that this will prove to be a useful mechanism to kick-start negotiations within the CD.

The UN Office for Disarmament Affairs sent a request to member states in January asking for views on a FMCT to inform preparations for the GGE. A copy of the UK's note to the UN has been placed in the Library of the House.

#### Taiwan: Philippines

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the incident on 9 May 2013 involving a Taiwanese vessel and a Filipino vessel, resulting in the death of Mr Hon Shi-cheng, a Taiwanese fisherman; and if he will make a statement. [158358]

**Mr Swire:** I have received regular updates from our posts in Taipei and Manila on the 9 May incident, and the subsequent investigations by the Filipino and Taiwanese authorities.

## WALES

### Sign Language

**Simon Kirby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps his Department is taking to ensure the services it offers are accessible to British Sign Language users. [157941]

**Stephen Crabb:** The Wales Office does not provide services directly to the public. When required, we access the services of British Sign Language interpreters through the Ministry of Justice.

## NORTHERN IRELAND

### G8: County Fermanagh

**Mr Dodds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions she has had with Tourism Ireland on the potential use of publicity from the forthcoming G8 summit in Fermanagh to attract more overseas visitors to Northern Ireland. [156957]

**Mrs Villiers:** Northern Ireland Officials continue to work closely with colleagues from the NI Executive on a range of issues relating to the summit. The G8 summit represents an excellent opportunity to promote Northern Ireland as a first class destination for tourism and we are working together to maximise every opportunity.

### Olympic Games 2012

**Mr Dodds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent assessment she has made of the contribution to the Northern Ireland economy of the London 2012 Olympic Games. [156959]

**Mrs Villiers:** The London 2012 Games provided an important platform for Northern Ireland in the cultural, tourism and business fields. The Prime Minister was keen to demonstrate this when he visited the Giants Causeway and the Coleraine Rowing Club while the Olympics were under way. Over £40 million worth of London 2012 related contracts were won by some 45 companies from Northern Ireland. The Games gave many local firms the opportunity to showcase their business talent to the world which will be built upon for future events. Overall, the 2012 Games will generate £13 billion over four years for the economy of the UK as a whole.

The 2012 Games also provided Northern Ireland with many social benefits. Local projects created almost 1 million opportunities for young people and communities here to get involved with the Games, and Northern Ireland athletes returned with their most successful haul of medals ever.

## INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Developing Countries: Health Services

**Dr Huppert:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment she has made of the benefits of the product development partnerships model for the development of new technologies for (a) HIV, (b) tuberculosis and (c) malaria. [158395]

**Lynne Featherstone:** The UK Government has supported Product Development Partnerships (PDPs) since their inception and to date they have been successful in developing a wide range of new health technologies for use in developing countries. These have included six new diagnostic tests for TB, six new drug combinations for malaria and a number of drug, microbicide and vaccine candidates in different stages of development.

### Developing Countries: Natural Disasters

**Sir Tony Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what the UK's role is in the development of the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action; [157377]

(2) with reference to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) peer review report 2013, what the relationship is between the Cabinet Office's leadership on the process and her Department's role on HFA2. [157579]

**Mr Duncan:** The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) is the UN plan for 2005-15 for reducing disaster impacts. The Cabinet Office leads on disaster risk reduction domestically and DFID leads on this internationally.

Along with other member states, the UK will have a role in shaping and negotiating the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). In the coming months DFID will work closely with the Cabinet Office in a national level consultation on a successor to the framework, which will feed into the process.

The UK is playing a leading role internationally in promoting and investing in disaster risk reduction and was the first country to volunteer to undergo a peer review to assess progress in domestic implementation of the HFA. As a result, we are well placed to engage in the development of a successor framework.

### Palestinians

**Bob Blackman:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what discussions her Department has had with the Israeli Government about social assistance payments to Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. [156799]

**Mr Duncan:** The social assistance payments to families of prisoners should not be confused with payments to meet the living expenses of prisoners in Israeli jails. The latter are made at the request of the Israeli authorities and managed by an Israeli company.

UK officials have discussed these payments with the Israeli authorities and will follow up with further discussions when appropriate.

### Travel

**Maria Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what her Department's budget for ministerial travel for (a) the Government Car Service, (b) private hire vehicles, (c) taxis, (d) rail, (e) aviation and (f) other is for (i) 2013-14, (ii) 2014-15 and (iii) 2015-16. [157529]

**Mr Duncan:** The total budget allocation for all ministerial and private office travel is set out as follows.

(i) 2013-14: £479,000

(ii) 2014-15: £465,000

(iii) 2015-16: Budget allocation for this period has yet to be agreed.

Exact figures for only ministerial travel cannot be provided without incurring disproportionate cost.

**Maria Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much her Department spent on ministerial travel by (a) Government Car Service, (b) private hire vehicles, (c) taxis, (d) rail, (e) aviation and (f) other means in each year of the current Parliament. [157550]

**Mr Duncan:** DFID entered into a new official car contract with the London Car Service in May 2013 to ensure greater value for money than the previous arrangement. The contract will be reviewed after 12 months. For information on previous years expenditure I refer the hon. Member to the Department for Transport's written ministerial statements of 28 October 2010, *Official Report*, column 23WS, 16 January 2012, *Official Report*, column 30WS, and 20 December 2012, *Official Report*, column 126WS. Details for 2012-13 will be published in due course.

Details of overseas travel by Ministers are published quarterly and are available on the Department for International Development's website.

DFID is unable to provide details of ministerial spend on private hire vehicles, taxis and rail without incurring disproportionate cost.

## EDUCATION

### Children: Protection

**Stephen Gilbert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment has been made of the likely effects of the provisions of the Children and Families Bill to seek child protection outcomes within a 26-week window. [158179]

**Mr Timpson:** The 26 week time limit for the completion of care and supervision cases was recommended by the Family Justice Review, which found clear evidence that lengthy care cases can have harmful long-term effects on a child's development, expose children to more risk, and cause already damaged children further distress and anxiety.

The 26 week time limit clause in the Children and Families Bill does not change the fact that the child's welfare remains the court's paramount consideration when deciding whether to grant a care or supervision

order. The court will have the power to extend the-26 week time limit where it is necessary to resolve proceedings justly.

Prior to the introduction of the Bill, we conducted a full assessment of the impact of the proposed measures. This assessment found that children in care proceedings are expected to benefit from quicker decisions, with more timely decision making on their futures and, therefore, reduced periods of uncertainty. We expect permanent placements to be found more swiftly for children, meaning stability for the child will be achieved earlier. The full assessment of impact for the Family Justice clauses in the Bill can be found on the DFE website<sup>1</sup>.

We are already starting to see progress in the system. Average case durations have come down from 56 weeks at the time of the Family Justice Review to just over 45 weeks in the last reporting period.

We are also using a piloting provision within the court rules to make interim adjustments to the Public Law Outline (PLO) for judicial case management. The new PLO has been significantly reduced in length and incorporates several key changes to underpin a move towards a system which routinely concludes care cases within 26 weeks.

Areas will be able to implement the new approach in a phased way from 1 July 2013, depending on local readiness. There is an expectation that all areas will implement the new PLO by 7 October 2013, although there will be some flexibility for those agencies/local authorities which may still not be able to comply with all the new provisions within this time scale.

<sup>1</sup><http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/departmentalinformation/childrenandfamiliesbill/a00221161/children-families-bill>

### Commercialisation and Sexualisation of Children Review

**Helen Goodman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to implement the recommendations of the Bailey Review on the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood, published in June 2011. [158381]

**Mr Timpson:** All of the recommendations in the Bailey Review were to be taken forward by industry and regulators except for the stocktake of progress, which was for the Government. The stocktake has been completed and a progress report was published on 24 May. The stocktake found that good progress has been made on a voluntary basis and parents should now find that: it is easier to block adult and age-restricted material on the internet and individual devices; there is less highly sexualised imagery in advertising in public places; pre-watershed television programming is more suitable for family viewing; children's clothes are more likely to be age-appropriate; and it is easier to make complaints, using the ParentPort website, about unsuitable advertising, television programmes and video games seen by children.

The Government will now take action to: make sure that online music videos carry labels that show their age suitability, in order to protect children from harmful material; and make it even easier for parents to keep their children safe online, wherever they are and in whatever way they might access the internet.

### Free Schools

**Mr Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many complaints his Department received from people or organisations applying to open free schools about (a) personal attacks, (b) threats and (c) intimidation related to their applications in each of the last two years; and what steps his Department took in response to each of those complaints. [157878]

**Mr Timpson:** Through verbal communications between officials and free school groups, the Department has been alerted to several incidents including a death threat, persistent and intimidating behaviour towards a free school group and teachers associated with free school applications losing their jobs. The Department has also been informed in writing of a personal attack, a threat and an incidence of racist graffiti found on a free school site.

A recent article in *The Sunday Times* included some figures involved with free schools speaking about their experiences dealing with instances of intimidation and threats. This article is here:

<http://www.thesundaytimes.co.uk/sto/newsreview/education/article1227033.ece>

There was a further article in the *Telegraph* written by the Chair of Governors of a free school in which they detailed their experience of dealing with hostile attention. The article is here:

<http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/tobyyoung/100203533/michael-gove-writes-open-letter-to-the-information-commissioner-about-free-schools/>

Where we have concerns that incidents involved potentially illegal activity, we have checked whether the group has contacted the police.

**Helen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what monitoring is undertaken by his Department to ensure that free schools do not discriminate against applicants with disabilities. [158380]

**Mr Timpson:** Free schools are public authorities. As such, they are subject to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 and must have due regard to the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Free schools are required by their funding agreement to abide by the School Admissions Code 2012 and the law relating to admissions. Paragraph 3 of the Annex to the Admissions Code states that:

“An admission authority must not discriminate on the grounds of disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex or sexual orientation, against a person in the arrangements and decisions it makes as to who is offered admission as a pupil.”

The Department’s guidance to groups considering applying to open a free school makes clear that free schools must adopt fair admissions practices and arrangements, in accordance with the Admissions Code and the School Admissions Appeals Code.

**Helen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will issue guidance to free schools to ensure that interviews for places do not take place during the school day. [158397]

**Mr Timpson:** Free schools are required by their funding agreement to abide by the School Admissions Code 2012 and the law relating to admissions. Paragraph 1.9 (m) of the Admissions Code prohibits schools from interviewing children or parents.

The Department’s guidance to groups considering applying to open a free school makes clear that free schools must adopt fair admissions practices and arrangements, in accordance with the Admissions Code and the School Admissions Appeals Code.

**Helen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what monitoring his Department undertakes to ensure that free schools do not select pupils on the basis of SATs results. [158398]

**Mr Timpson:** Free schools are required by their funding agreement to abide by the School Admissions Code 2012 and the law relating to admissions. Paragraph 1.9 (d) of the Admissions Code prohibits the introduction of selection by ability. Paragraph 1.9 (g) prohibits schools from taking account of

‘reports from previous schools about children’s past behaviour, attendance, attitude or achievement’.

The Department’s guidance to groups considering applying to open a free school makes clear that free schools must adopt fair admissions practices and arrangements, in accordance with the Admissions Code and the School Admissions Appeals Code.

### Private Education

**Andrew Rosindell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of changes in the level of government regulation of independent schools during the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [158348]

**Mr Timpson:** The level of government regulation of independent schools has remained broadly constant over the last five years. In 2010 new standards regulations were made, but these were based very closely on the previous standards.

From 1 January 2013, additional requirements relating to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils were introduced but at the same time the standard for premises was simplified, and information requirements were relaxed to allow cheaper, electronic communication with parents.

Our aim is to keep regulation of independent schools at the lowest level consistent with ensuring that pupils are safe and properly educated.

### Schools: Sports

**Charlotte Leslie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance his Department issues to primary schools on the teaching of swimming. [158305]

**Mr Timpson:** The Government is committed to ensuring that swimming takes place in schools. Swimming is an important part of the national curriculum, which requires that all pupils must be taught to swim at least 25 metres unaided, and be able to use recognised swimming strokes by the end of key stage 2 (age 11). It also requires that a child can demonstrate an understanding of water safety.

The Secretary of State for Education has said that following the current review swimming will remain compulsory in the national curriculum.

We do not prescribe how teachers should teach swimming, or any other subject, as we believe that individual schools and teachers are best placed to decide how to address the particular needs of their pupils.

**Charlotte Leslie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what guidance his Department issues to primary schools in relation to the spending of ring-fenced funds for physical education and sport. [158306]

**Mr Timpson:** Advice about the nature, purpose and extent of the additional ring-fenced funding to support physical education (PE) and sport in primary schools was placed on the Department's website immediately following the announcement by the Prime Minister on 16 March. This advice includes lists of possible activities to support the provision of PE and sport, and can be found at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/financialmanagement/b00222858/primary-school-sport-funding>

We will also publish a range of best practice examples from schools with a proven track record of delivering high quality PE and sport. Further advice will be included with information about the conditions of grant that will accompany the payment to schools.

Schools can also draw on support from County Sports Partnerships to help them improve the range and quantity of their offer of PE and sport.

### Sign Language

**Simon Kirby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps his Department is taking to ensure the services it offers are accessible to British Sign Language users. [157928]

**Mr Timpson:** All public bodies, including schools, early years providers, post-16 institutions and local authorities, have duties towards disabled people, including those who are deaf and use British Sign Language (BSL), under the Equality Act 2010. The Department publishes guidance for schools on these duties<sup>1</sup>.

Schools and local authorities have crucial responsibilities to ensure support, including sign language support, is available to deaf children.

The Children and Families Bill will encourage a more joined-up approach to supporting deaf children and the provision of clearer information on the support that families can expect locally. The Bill will introduce the option of a personal budget for some parents and young people, which will give them more control over the support they receive.

The Department does not use British Sign Language for direct service provision but provides a Typetalk service for the deaf and hearing impaired and also offers translation services.

<sup>1</sup><http://education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00215460/equality-act-2010-departmental-advice>

### Third Sector

**Mr Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much direct funding his Department provided to each civil society organisation it funded in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12 and (c) 2012-13; how much he expects to provide to each such organisation in (i) 2013-14 and (ii) 2014-15; and if he will make a statement. [158315]

**Mr Timpson:** The Department's central register of grants does not identify recipients as civil society organisations but does identify them as members of the voluntary and community sector (VCS). Details of funding for VCS organisations for 2011-13 is available online at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/earlylearningandchildcare/delivery/funding/a0077703/grant-funded-projects-early-years-and-childcare>

Details for funding for 2013-15 is available at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/a00216108/vcs-funding>

The VCS also receives money indirectly from the Department through a number of routes, including through Executive Agencies (and previously arm's length bodies), through the money the Department gives to local authorities, and through services commissioned by schools.

### PRIME MINISTER

#### Food Banks

**Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Prime Minister if the Government will record and publish the number of referrals to food banks made by government agencies bi-annually in (a) Greater London and (b) the UK. [157746]

**Esther McVey:** I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

Civil society has always played a role in helping the worst off.

To better enable this the Government reversed the decision of the previous Government not to signpost claimants to food banks through Jobcentre Plus. Statistics are not currently collected on the number of referrals to food banks. As with all policy this is kept under review.

#### Tax Avoidance

**Catherine McKinnell:** To ask the Prime Minister with reference to his letter to the leaders of the UK's Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories of 20 May 2013 on tax information exchange and beneficial ownership, whether he has received any replies to that letter; and if he will publish any replies received in full. [158182]

**The Prime Minister:** I have placed a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

We expect the UK's Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories to make their policies clear publicly.

I also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr Campbell) on 3 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 1251.

## HEALTH

## Abortion

**Fiona Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what recent steps he has taken to reduce the number of repeat abortions; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of these measures; [158183]

(2) what recent steps he has taken to reduce the number of abortions carried out on girls under the age of 16; and what assessment he has made of the effectiveness of such measures. [158184]

**Anna Soubry:** The Government's 'Framework for Sexual Health Improvement', published in March this year, contained an ambition to reduce unwanted pregnancy in women of all ages. The document highlights that there is evidence that provision of contraception, particularly long acting methods of contraception, supplied or fitted by the abortion provider can reduce repeat abortions. It also highlights the evidence base for reducing teenage conceptions and why it is vital to continue to make progress in this area. The Department will review progress on all the ambitions in the Framework and a wider set of indicators, including repeat abortions and teenage conceptions, on an annual basis.

In the past five years, 2007-11, there has been a 21.3% decrease in the under 16 abortion rate in England. Continuing to reduce the rate of under 18 conceptions is an indicator in the Public Health Outcomes Framework.

**Fiona Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health with reference to the answer of 5 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 938W, on abortion, what progress has been made in (a) cases referred to the Crown Prosecution Service, (b) prosecutions commenced, (c) random inspections of licensed abortion centres and (d) other follow-up steps following the chief medical officer's

letter to abortion providers sent in February 2012. [158309]

**Anna Soubry:** The Crown Prosecution Service has reviewed the evidence and decided not to take further action against some individuals investigated for sex selection abortions. Other investigations continue and we will consider if any further action is required once investigations are fully concluded.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is exploring how it can strengthen the registration process alongside regular inspection activity. The CQC has put in place procedures to identify if pre-signing or other instances of non-compliance are taking place and will review these as part of their inspection activity.

The CQC and the Department will continue to act on information received in relation to any allegations of non-compliance with aspects of the Abortion Act 1967 and related regulations. This may include random inspections.

All allegations of abortions failing to comply with the Abortion Act 1967 are taken very seriously; an allegation of an illegal abortion should be reported to the police, who should conduct a full investigation.

## Accident and Emergency Departments

**Mr Jamie Reed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health which accident and emergency units each Minister in his Department has visited since their date of appointment; and what the date of each such visit was. [158313]

**Dr Poulter:** The following table provides details of the visits undertaken by the Secretary of State for Health, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt) and his ministerial team to accident and emergency units in an official capacity since their respective dates of appointment.

	<i>Date</i>	<i>A&amp;E units</i>
Secretary of State (Mr Hunt)	3 April 2013	St Thomas Hospital, London
	11 April 2013	Watford General Hospital, Watford
	18 April 2013	George Elliot Hospital, Nuneaton
	9 May 2013	Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London
	23 May 2013	University College Hospital, London
Minister of State (Norman Lamb)	13 November 2012	Birmingham Heartlands Hospital, Birmingham
	25 January 2013	James Paget University Hospital Norfolk
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Dr Poulter)	25 October 2012	The Royal Manchester Children's Hospital, Manchester
	6 November 2012	Birmingham Children's Hospital, Birmingham
	20 December 2012	The Homerton Hospital, London
	21 March 2013	Grantham and District Hospital, Grantham
	17 January 2013	Sheffield Children's Hospital, Sheffield
	16 May 2013	Kidderminster Hospital, Kidderminster
		In addition to a number of visits to urgent assessment centres
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Earl Howe)	12 April 2011	Royal United Hospital, Bath
	20 April 2011	Darlington Memorial Hospital, Darlington
	9 January 2012	St Mary's Hospital, Isle of Wight
	17 April 2013	William Harvey Hospital, Kent



### Clinical Commissioning Groups

**Dr Offord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether members of the boards of clinical commissioning groups have to declare membership of political parties. [158221]

**Anna Soubry:** The National Health Service Act 2006, as amended by the Health and Social Care Act 2012, sets out the clear requirements on clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) in relation to registers of interests and managing conflicts of interest.

Under section 140 CCGs are responsible for maintaining registers of interests of the members of its boards. However, it does not specify that membership of a political party should be declared on these registers. CCGs should also make arrangements for managing conflicts of interest and potential conflicts of interest/to ensure they do not affect or appear to affect the integrity of their decision-making process.

NHS England is responsible for supporting CCGs to manage conflicts of interest, and has produced guidance setting out the statutory requirements and principles for managing conflicts of interest. The guidance is available at:

[www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ccg-conflict-int-guide.pdf](http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/ccg-conflict-int-guide.pdf)

### Dementia

**Debbie Abrahams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will list the new dementia diagnosis targets for each Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) showing the (a) CCG name and code, (b) CCG current diagnosis rate, (c) CCG diagnosis rate ambition for 2013-14 and (d) CCG diagnosis rate ambition for 2014-15. [157631]

**Norman Lamb:** Data on clinical commissioning group (CCG) ambitions for improving diagnosis rates through to 2014-15, has been provided by NHS England and, has been placed in the Library.

The current CCG diagnosis rates, derived from primary care trust 2011-12 data, are available at:

[www.dementiaprevalencecalculator.org.uk](http://www.dementiaprevalencecalculator.org.uk)

The diagnosis rates are illustrated at CCG level; the data are not available as a list of CCGs in spreadsheet format.

NHS England will support CCGs to learn from each other and to support professional insight into the benefits of timely diagnosis for dementia sufferers.

NHS England has an ambition to ensure that two-thirds of people with dementia are identified and given appropriate support by 2015. Further details are available at:

<http://www.england.nhs.uk/2013/05/15/dementia-targets/>

**Debbie Abrahams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health when he intends to review the National Dementia Strategy for England. [157632]

**Norman Lamb:** The National Dementia Strategy runs until 2014, and the Prime Minister's Challenge on Dementia, which builds on progress made on the strategy, runs until 2015.

On 15 May 2013, a report on progress in delivering improvements in dementia care and research was published. A further report is planned for 2014.

### Health Education

**Dan Jarvis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his Department's policy is on providing advice on diet and lifestyle with the objective of reducing the number of hospital admissions. [158319]

**Anna Soubry:** Government advice on a healthy balanced diet is encapsulated in the United Kingdom's national food guide, 'the eatwell plate', which is based on long term epidemiological studies, which show that this type of diet can help prevent diet related chronic disease.

The Government supports a number of healthy eating initiatives, which help and encourage people to improve their health and well being. This includes the Change4life campaign, 5 a day scheme, Public Health Responsibility Deal, Healthy Start scheme and through the NHS Choices consumer based information website.

### Hospitals: Waiting Lists

**Mr Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what the longest waiting time in days for patients in (a) England and (b) London was for (i) fiberoptic endoscopic examination of upper gastrointestinal tract and biopsy of lesion of upper gastrointestinal tract, (ii) computed tomography of head, (iii) insertion of prosthetic replacement for lens NEC, (iv) unspecified diagnostic endoscopic examination of bladder, (v) computerised tomography NEC, (vi) continuous intravenous infusion of therapeutic substance NEC, (vii) unspecified diagnostic fiberoptic endoscopic examination of upper gastrointestinal tract, (viii) unspecified diagnostic endoscopic examination of colon, (ix) diagnostic fiberoptic endoscopic examination of colon and biopsy of lesion of colon and (x) unspecified diagnostic endoscopic examination of lower bowel using fiberoptic sigmoidoscope in (A) 2010-11, (B) 2011-12 and (C) 2012-13; [158401]

(2) what the (a) number of total finished consultant episodes, (b) mean waiting time and (c) median waiting time was for (i) fiberoptic endoscopic examination of upper gastrointestinal tract and biopsy of lesion of upper gastrointestinal tract, (ii) computed tomography of head, (iii) insertion of prosthetic replacement for lens NEC, (iv) unspecified diagnostic endoscopic examination of bladder, (v) computerised tomography NEC, (vi) continuous intravenous infusion of therapeutic substance NEC, (vii) unspecified diagnostic fiberoptic endoscopic examination of upper gastrointestinal tract, (viii) unspecified diagnostic endoscopic examination of colon, (ix) diagnostic fiberoptic endoscopic examination of colon and biopsy of lesion of colon and (x) unspecified diagnostic endoscopic examination of lower bowel using fiberoptic sigmoidoscope in London in (A) 2010-11, (B) 2011-12 and (C) 2012-13. [158402]

**Anna Soubry:** The Department does not collect these data for individual procedures. The information available for these procedures from the Health and Social Care Information Centre has been placed in the Library.

### Human Trafficking

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospital bed spaces for persons who have undergone human trafficking have been available in each of the last 10 years; and what the projected number of such beds is in each of the next three years. [156947]

**Anna Soubry:** The Department recognises that the impact of human trafficking on victims is significant for both mental health and physical health.

Information on the number of hospital bed spaces available for individuals under criteria such as 'for persons who have undergone human trafficking' is not collected in the national health service.

### Lyxumia

**Keith Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the diabetes drug Lyxumia. [156934]

**Norman Lamb:** Lyxumia contains the active ingredient lixisenatide and was authorised as a medicine by the European Commission in February 2013.

The data supporting the quality, safety and efficacy of Lyxumia have been fully assessed and the benefit/risk profile is considered positive in the treatment of adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus when used in combination with other glucose lowering medicines and/or insulin.

The supporting data were assessed by the Committee on Human Medicinal Products (of the European Medicines Agency) and in which the United Kingdom is represented.

### Mental Health Services

**Mike Weatherley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if he will assess the potential effects on NHS waiting times for mindfulness-based cognitive therapy courses of opening up the market to those who provide the course to clients who pay; [158168]

(2) what assessment he has made of the (a) NHS and (b) private provider waiting time for patients with depression in Sussex for the mindfulness based cognitive therapy course; [158169]

(3) if he will make an assessment of the potential effects on accident and emergency departments of the prescription of the NICE-recommended mindfulness-based cognitive therapy courses for patients with anxiety and depression; [158170]

(4) what assessment he has made of trends in the number of prescriptions written for antidepressants since the launch of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies programme. [158171]

**Norman Lamb:** No assessment is currently planned to assess the impact, if any, of the potential effects of opening up the market to private providers on national health service waiting times for mindfulness-based cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) courses. No assessments are currently planned to evaluate the potential effects on accident and emergency departments, of the prescription

of mindfulness-based CBT for patients with anxiety and depression; or trends in the number of prescriptions written for antidepressants since the launch of the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme.

The number of people waiting 28 days or more for IAPT treatment across the three primary care trusts in Sussex has been reducing steadily from 6,792 (as of 30 June 2012) to 5,296 (as of 31 December 2012), the most recent date for which figures are available. These figures are for IAPT treatment and not confined to people waiting for mindfulness-based approaches and include people with depression and people with anxiety disorders.

We do not keep figures centrally for private provider waiting times for patients with depression in Sussex.

### Midwives

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his Department's recommended ratio of mothers to midwives is; and what information his Department holds on which health authorities have not employed sufficient midwives to meet that recommended level. [157845]

**Dr Poulter:** Under the current Government, midwife numbers have increased by over 1,300, and there are record numbers of midwives in training.

The Department does not recommend a midwife to births ratio. The midwife to births ratio is an indication of throughput only, and does not indicate the safety, quality or outcome of the service provided.

It is the responsibility of national health service organisations to ensure high quality care and choice for women in pregnancy and during childbirth. However, the Government is committed to giving mothers the support and care they need throughout their pregnancy, birth and after birth. Safety and high quality care for mothers are at the heart of maternity services.

Health Education England will ensure that overall the work force has the right skills, behaviours and training, and is available in the right numbers, to support the delivery of excellent health care and drive health improvement. Local Education and Training Boards have reported that their service provider partners are actively engaged in reviewing the level and mix of nursing and related health care staffing, including midwives, in response to a range of factors including higher activity than forecast. In parallel organisations will be considering issues associated with productivity to ensure staffing levels are both safe and affordable.

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many student midwives there have been in each year for which data is available since 1983. [157849]

**Dr Poulter:** The following table contains the earliest data available for training places commissioned for student midwives each year. Record numbers of midwives are currently in training.

NHS midwifery training places commissioned since 2000

	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Degree	494	621	709	753	895	891	983	1,307	1,944	1,977	2,034	2,052	2,160
Diploma	604	525	724	716	744	397	540	412	0	0	0	0	0
18 months	789	732	677	757	735	531	467	352	328	505	424	432	418
Total	1,887	1,878	2,110	2,226	2,374	1,819	1,990	2,071	2,272	2,482	2,488	2,484	2,527

Note:

Midwifery training became degree only from 2008-09. The 18 month training is a conversion course.

Source:

Quarterly Monitoring Return

## NHS 111

**Mr Jamie Reed:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many calls NHS 111 received in each week since 1 April 2013; how many of these calls were answered; and how long, on average, it took for such calls to be answered in each such week. [158312]

**Anna Soubry:** This information is not held in the format requested. However, NHS England will publish April's monthly NHS 111 Minimum Data Set on 7 June. This will show data for the whole of the month.

It is for clinical commissioning groups, with their local clinicians, and supported by NHS England, to continue to work with all parts of their urgent care system to improve responsiveness and quality of the services locally.

### Quality of Care and Treatment Provided by 14 Hospital Trusts in England Review

**Sir Bob Russell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements have been made for the Keogh Review team to meet hon. Members whose constituencies are served by hospitals being investigated by that Review; and if he will make a statement. [158218]

**Dr Poulter:** Professor Sir Bruce Keogh met with hon. Members on 23 April 2013 regarding his review into the quality of care and treatment provided by 14 hospital trusts in England. This meeting was hosted by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Steve Baker).

Following the meeting, Professor Keogh wrote to all hon. Members whose constituencies were predominantly served by one of the 14 trusts involved in the review, including those who were unable to attend the meeting in April. The letter provided hon. Members with contact details through which they could raise further queries about the review.

We understand that Professor Keogh is working to ensure that all hon. Members whose constituencies are affected by the review are offered a briefing on its findings in advance of the final reports being published.

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

### Employment Tribunals Service

**Alison Seabeck:** To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what recent assessment she has made of the effects on (a) all women and (b) women bringing pregnancy-related cases of the introduction of fees for employment tribunals. [154669]

**Mrs Grant:** There is no evidence to suggest that introducing fees into the employment tribunals will

disadvantage or deter women from bringing claims, including discrimination or pregnancy-related claims. The aim of introducing fees is to transfer some of the cost of administering the tribunals from the taxpayer to the users of the service.

For those who cannot afford fees, a fee remission scheme will operate to ensure access to the tribunal is not affected. Women are more likely to fall into the lower income brackets so they are more likely to qualify for partial or full fee remissions. As a consequence they are unlikely to be detrimentally impacted by the introduction of fees.

Further detail is available in the equality impact assessment completed by the Government relating to the introduction of fees in employment tribunals that can be found here:

<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/et-fee-charging-regime-cp22-2011>

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Public Lending Right

**Sir Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport whether she is considering extending the public lending right to (a) ebooks whether borrowed remotely or on library premises, (b) audio books borrowed remotely or on library premises and (c) all volunteer libraries; and if she will make a statement. [158109]

**Mr Vaizey:** The Government response to William Sieghart's review of e-lending in public libraries in England was published on 27 March 2013 and sets out the Government's position in terms of extending public lending right (PLR) to audiobooks and e-books:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-independent-review-of-e-lending-in-public-libraries-in-england>

Any proposal for the potential extension of PLR will be communicated in due course, following full consideration of this matter.

A statement relating to how PLR applies to community-supported libraries is available on the Government's website on the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/public-lending-right-how-it-applies>

### Written Questions: Government Responses

**Mr Rob Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she plans to answer Question 156335, tabled by the hon. Member for Reading East on 15 May 2013 for answer on 20 May 2013. [158396]

**Hugh Robertson:** The question was answered on 3 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 802W.

## DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

### Lord Heseltine Review

**Mr Ward:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what progress he has made on the implementation of the Heseltine Review. [158435]

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ian Swales), and the Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Eric Ollerenshaw), at oral questions on 4 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 1097W.

## CABINET OFFICE

### Government Departments: Procurement

**Mr Umunna:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to the answer of 25 April 2013, *Official Report*, column 1096W, on Government Departments: procurement, what proportion of Government contracts were awarded to small and medium-sized businesses (a) directly and (b) through supply chains in 2012-13. [156999]

**Miss Chloe Smith:** Departments publish details of their spend with SMEs on a quarterly basis.

### Legal Costs

**Sadiq Khan:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) what the 20 highest amounts paid for external legal advice by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office were in (a) 2010, (b) 2011 and (c) 2012; to whom such sums were paid; and for what reasons the legal advice was sought; [158629]

(2) how much the Deputy Prime Minister's Office spent on external legal advice from Queen's Counsel (a) between 7 May 2010 and 4 September 2012 and (b) since 4 September 2012; [158636]

(3) how much the Deputy Prime Minister's Office spent on external legal advice (a) between 7 May 2010 and 4 September 2012 and (b) since 4 September 2012; [158654]

(4) what the highest day rate paid for external legal advice by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office since 7 May 2010 was; [158671]

(5) what the 20 highest amounts paid for external legal advice by No. 10 Downing Street were in (a) 2010, (b) 2011 and (c) 2012; to whom such payments were paid; and for what reasons the legal advice was sought; [158624]

(6) how much No. 10 Downing Street spent on external legal advice from Queen's Counsel (a) between 7 May 2010 and 4 September 2012 and (b) since 4 September 2012; [158648]

(7) how much No. 10 Downing Street spent on external legal advice (a) between 7 May 2010 and 4 September 2012 and (b) since 4 September 2012; [158666]

(8) what the highest day rate paid for external legal advice by No. 10 Downing Street since 7 May 2010 was. [158683]

**Mr Maude:** The Prime Minister's Office and the Deputy Prime Minister's Office are an integral part of the Cabinet Office. I refer the right hon. Member to the answers I gave on 3 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 960W, and 20 May 2013, *Official Report*, column 474W.

### National Identity

**Margaret Curran:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people in England and Wales described their national identity in their 2011 Census return as (a) Scottish, (b) British and (c) Scottish and British. [158320]

**Mr Hurd:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

*Letter from Glen Watson, dated June 2013:*

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question on how many people in England and Wales described their national identity in their 2011 Census return as (a) Scottish, (b) British and (c) Scottish and British. 158320

The figures below have been extracted from 2011 Census table KS202EW

<i>National identity</i>	<i>Number of people</i>
All usual residents	56,075,912
Scottish only	434,951
British only	10,690,999
Scottish and British only	83,412

### Roads: Accidents

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will consider counting in crime statistics road traffic accident victims, including victims of law breaking drivers. [157715]

**Mr Hurd:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

*Letter from Glen Watson, dated June 2013:*

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics (ONS), I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question about whether road traffic accident victims, including victims of law breaking drivers, will be counted in crime statistics. 157715

Responsibility for the publication of the National Statistics on crime for England and Wales transferred from the Home Office to the ONS on 1 April 2012 and so it is now for ONS to decide on the coverage of such statistics.

Victims of law breaking drivers who are involved in road traffic accidents should already be covered by the main recorded crime collection if the incident comes to the attention of the police, but the number of offences is not separately identifiable.

The basis of crime statistics is to record incidents which are criminal on an offence type basis according to criminal law. Thus the police will record what offence has been committed rather than by the means by which it was committed. As such, there is no way of identifying all road traffic accident victims of law breaking drivers as they will be included in a range of offence types.

The recorded crime collection has the specific following offences:

Causing death by dangerous driving

Causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs

Causing death by careless or inconsiderate driving.

In addition, the police recorded crime collection also includes the offence of 'dangerous driving'. Within that category it is not possible to separately identify those incidents involving a victim of a road accident from those where there was no accident (for example reckless driving that did not result in an accident or injury to a specific victim).

It is also possible that a small number of victims of road traffic accidents will be included within other categories of recorded crime, such as 'assault with injury' where the police decide that the intent of a driver was to inflict injury on a victim. However, it is not possible to separately identify such incidents as these are aggregated with other assaults.

It would not be possible to count separately the number of victims of law breaking drivers who are involved in road traffic accidents without fundamentally changing the basis of crime statistics. Our users place great value on having a consistent time series and so we have no plans to change the basis upon which crime statistics are collected.

The Department of Transport publishes a regular set of statistics on the full range of road traffic accidents including, for example, where an injury results as well as data on traffic incidents involving alcohol and breath tests.

### Sexual Offences

**Stella Creasy:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will publish in full the data on which table 2.7, Prevalence of being a victim of a sexual offence in the last 12 months among females aged 16 to 59 in An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales, published on 10 January 2013, was based. [158392]

**Mr Hurd:** The information requested falls within the responsibility of the UK Statistics Authority. I have asked the authority to reply.

*Letter from Glen Watson, dated June 2013:*

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics (ONS), I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for the Home Department asking whether the data upon which Table 2.7 in the publication 'An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales', is based, will be published in full. (158392)

The Table in question is based on analysis of the Crime Survey for England and Wales, a sample survey of the population resident in households. The level of detail at which results are published depends on a range of factors including demand from users and sample size. For example, the survey is not designed to provide estimates at sub-national level and so the sample is not large enough to produce reliable estimates at police force area or lower geographical levels.

In line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics, ONS releases anonymised record level data to the UK Data Archive, so that others can undertake their own analyses.

ONS also provide an ad hoc tabulation service where we are able to respond to requests for additional breakdowns of data where the costs in responding are proportionate and respondent confidentiality can be preserved.

### Social Action Fund

**Mr Thomas:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what discussions (a) he and (b) officials in his Department had with the Social Investment Business Group about the funding of the Big Society Network via the Social Action Fund; and if he will make a statement. [158314]

**Mr Hurd:** Details of ministerial meetings with external organisations are published on a quarterly basis on the Cabinet Office website at:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/ministers-transparency-publications>

Cabinet Office officials have held various discussions with the Social Investment Business Group.

In line with the practice of previous Administrations, details of discussions are not normally disclosed.

## DEFENCE

### Afghanistan

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what detention facilities exist under United Kingdom control at Camp Bastion in Afghanistan; how many non-UK national detainees are held at that facility; and what the longest period any single individual has been detained without charge is at that facility. [157814]

**Mr Philip Hammond:** The precise number of detainees held at these facilities fluctuates. However, I can confirm there are approximately 90 individuals currently being held pending transfer to the Afghan authorities. We do not comment on the details of individual cases. However, since November 2012 transfers to the Afghan authorities have been suspended due to concerns about potential treatment of detainees. The suspension has led to a significant increase in the number of detainees held at the Temporary Holding Facilities at Camp Bastion.

I can inform the hon. Member that the Ministry of Defence has now established a safe route of transfer to the Afghan National Detention Facility at Parwan and accordingly these concerns have been resolved with a new pathway for transfer now in place.

I have agreed to restart the transfer of detainees captured by British forces into the Afghan judicial system at that facility and have notified interested parties of the intention to resume transfers after 21 days. Provided no judicial intervention prevents the resumption of transfers, I would expect the number of detainees held at the Temporary Holding Facilities at Camp Bastion to fall rapidly over the next few weeks.

### Air Force: Officers

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) air commodores, (b) air vice marshals, (c) air marshals and (d) air chief marshals are posted in (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales, (iii) Northern Ireland and (iv) England. [156871]

**Dr Murrison:** Senior military personnel are distributed across the UK according to military capability requirements, not on a proportional basis.

The numbers of UK regular Royal Air Force officers at the rank of air commodore, air vice marshal, air marshal and air chief marshal, by location as at 1 April 2013 are provided in the following table. There are no RAF officers in the rank of air commodore or above permanently based in Wales or Northern Ireland.

<i>RAF Officers</i>	<i>Number</i>
<i>UK</i>	94
OF-6 Air Commodore	63
OF-7 Air Vice Marshal	22
OF-8 Air Marshal	7
OF-9 Air Chief Marshal	2
<i>Scotland</i>	2
OF-6 Air Commodore	1
OF-7 Air Vice Marshal	0
OF-8 Air Marshal	1
OF-9 Air Chief Marshal	0
<i>England</i>	92
OF-6 Air Commodore	62
OF-7 Air Vice Marshal	22
OF-8 Air Marshal	6
OF-9 Air Chief Marshal	2

*Notes:*

1. Figures are for UK regular forces.
2. UK regular forces data are sourced from the joint personnel administration (JPA) system. Location data are based on the stationed location of the individual as recorded in the 'assignment location' field of the JPA system. The figures are based on service personnel's stationed location and not their location of residence—where personnel work is not necessarily where they live. Personnel deployed on operations to an area away from their stationed location are shown against their most recent stationed location.

**Aircraft Carriers**

**Margaret Curran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which companies have been awarded sub-contracts for construction of HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales; at which sites he expects work under each such contract to be carried out; and what the monetary value is of each such contract. [158311]

**Mr Dunne:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 28 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 349W, to the hon. Member for Dunfermline and West Fife (Thomas Docherty). An updated list of sub-contracts will be placed in the Library of the House.

**Armed Forces: Public Transport**

**Ian Austin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the 10 most frequently undertaken journeys on domestic public transport by military personnel were in 2012. [157987]

**Dr Murrison:** The most frequent journeys in 2012 were:

- Andover—London
- Catterick Garrison—Darlington
- Bristol—London
- High Wycombe—London
- Chippenham—London
- London—Swindon
- Portsmouth Harbour—London
- Salisbury—London
- London—Princes Risborough
- London—Newark

The list only provides details of travel booked through the Hogg Robinson Group contract with the Ministry of Defence; any travel booked and paid for outside the contract is not included. The travel will include duty journeys, meetings, courses, postings, resettlement, medicals etc.

**Army: Officers**

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) brigadiers, (b) major generals, (c) lieutenant generals and (d) generals are posted in (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales, (iii) Northern Ireland and (iv) England. [156870]

**Dr Murrison:** Senior military personnel are distributed across the UK according to military capability requirements, not on a proportional basis.

The number of UK Regular Army Brigadiers, Major Generals, Lieutenant Generals and Generals posted in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England as at 1 April 2013 are provided in the following table:

	<i>Number</i>
<i>UK</i>	173
OF-6 Brigadier	124
OF-7 Major General	36
OF-8 Lieutenant General	10
OF-9 General	3
<i>Scotland</i>	4
OF-6 Brigadier	2
OF-7 Major General	2
OF-8 Lieutenant General	0
OF-9 General	0
<i>Wales</i>	1
OF-6 Brigadier	1
OF-7 Major General	0
OF-8 Lieutenant General	0
OF-9 General	0
<i>Northern Ireland</i>	2
OF-6 Brigadier	2
OF-7 Major General	0
OF-8 Lieutenant General	0
OF-9 General	0
<i>England</i>	166
OF-6 Brigadier	119
OF-7 Major General	34
OF-8 Lieutenant General	10
OF-9 General	3

*Notes:*

1. Figures are for UK regular forces.
2. UK regular forces data are sourced from joint personnel administration (JPA) system. Location data is based on the station location of the individual as recorded in the 'Assignment Location field' of the JPA system. The figures are based on service personnel's station location and not the location of residence—where personnel work is not necessarily where they live. Personnel deployed on operations to an area away from their stationed location are shown against their most recent stationed location.

*Source:*

Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

### East Asia

**Mr Jim Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many defence attaché posts in East Asia have been closed since May 2010. [158214]

**Dr Murrison:** The Ministry of Defence has not closed any Defence Attaché posts in East Asia since May 2010.

**Mr Jim Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence in which East Asian countries the UK has a defence attaché. [158215]

**Dr Murrison:** Within east Asia the Ministry of Defence has defence attachés located in China, Japan and Korea. The defence attaché for China has non residential accreditation responsibility for Mongolia.

**Mr Jim Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what UK capabilities are deployed in East Asia to protect shipping lanes. [158216]

**Dr Murrison:** No UK capabilities are routinely deployed to East Asia to protect shipping lanes.

As part of our commitment to the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA), the UK may on occasion deploy military capabilities to the East Asia region. When deployed, these assets will exercise and operate with our partners in the region, thereby contributing to better maritime security in the area.

In addition, the Ministry of Defence also funds the training of our regional partners, both on a bilateral basis and by holding regional forums, in the responsibilities and obligations associated with the declaration of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), as well as the wider application of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. The next regional course will be held in the Philippines in September 2013 and will be attended by delegates from a number of countries in the region.

### Joint Strike Fighter Aircraft

**Alison Seabeck:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether a second batch of F-35B Lightning II aircraft are included in the Single Integrated Capability Priority list. [157886]

**Mr Dunne:** Joint Strike Fighter (F-35) is a core funded programme and is not included in the Single Integrated Capability Priority list. A decision on F-35 aircraft numbers will not be made until after the next Strategic Defence and Security Review in 2015.

### Military Alliances

**Mr Jim Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what military agreements the UK has with countries in East Asia; [158213]

(2) what military agreements the UK has with (a) China, (b) Japan, (c) Australia, (d) New Zealand, (e) South Korea and (f) Vietnam. [158217]

**Dr Murrison:** The UK has the following principal military agreements and arrangements with countries in East Asia and the Pacific region:

Japan: A Defence Co-operation MOU, an Agreement on Defence Exchanges and an Agreement on the Protection of Classified Information.

Korea: A Mutual Logistics Support Agreement and an Agreement on the Protection of Classified Information. Additionally, although not a military bilateral agreement as such, the UK is one of the 16 signatories to the United Nations Declaration of 27 July 1953 that ended conflict on the Korean peninsula.

Mongolia: Defence Co-operation MOU.

Indonesia: Defence Co-operation MOU.

Malaysia: Defence Co-operation MOU, an Arrangement on the Protection of Classified Information and a Status of Forces Agreement.

Singapore: Research collaboration MOU, an Arrangement on the Protection of Classified Information, and a Status of Forces Agreement.

Brunei: Garrison Agreement and a MOU on the Provision of Personnel of the United Kingdom Armed Forces to the Royal Brunei Armed Forces.

Tonga: MOU concerning Command and Control, Training and related support for the Tonga Defence Services contingents in Afghanistan.

Vietnam: Defence related co-operation MOU.

New Zealand: Defence Capability and Equipment co-operation MOU; Exchange Programme LONGLOOK.

Australia: Defence Co-operation Treaty; Australia-UK MOU on Military Capability Harmonisation and Equipment Cooperation (AUMICE); Anglo-Australia MOU on Science and Technology (AAMOST); Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement (MLSA); Military Geospatial Information and Services MOU (MGIS); Strategic Policy Partnership, Government Quality Assurance MOU; American, British, Canadian, Australian Armies Programme (ABCA), Air and Space Interoperability Council (ASIC); Exchange Programme LONGLOOK.

In addition, we have a number of multilateral MOUs on information sharing with Australia and New Zealand.

Along with Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore, the UK is a signatory to the Five Powers Defence Arrangements, signed in 1971.

Along with the US, Australia, France, New Zealand, Thailand and the Philippines, the UK is a signatory to the Manila Pact.

We have no military agreements with China.

### Navy: Officers

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Royal Navy officers holding the rank of (a) commodore, (b) rear admiral, (c) vice admiral and (d) admiral are posted in (i) Scotland, (ii) Wales, (iii) Northern Ireland and (iv) England. [156776]

**Dr Murrison:** Senior military personnel are distributed across the UK according to military capability requirements, not on a proportional basis.

The following table sets out the numbers of UK Regular Royal Navy Officers at the rank of Commodore, Rear Admiral, Vice Admiral and Admiral, by location as at 1 April 2013. There are no Naval Service officers in the rank of Commodore or above permanently based in Wales or Northern Ireland.

	<i>Naval Service</i>	<i>Royal Marines</i>	<i>Royal Navy</i>
UK	102	14	88
OF6 Commodore/ Brigadier	67	9	58
OF7 Rear Admiral/Major General	26	4	22
OF8 Vice Admiral/ Lieutenant General	7	1	6
OF9 Admiral <sup>1</sup>	2	0	2
Scotland	3	0	3
OF6 Commodore/ Brigadier	2	0	2
OF7 Rear Admiral/Major General	1	0	1
OF8 Vice Admiral/ Lieutenant General	0	0	0
OF9 Admiral	0	0	0
England	99	14	85
OF6 Commodore/ Brigadier	65	9	56
OF7 Rear Admiral/Major General	25	4	21
OF8 Vice Admiral/ Lieutenant General	7	1	6
OF9 Admiral <sup>1</sup>	2	0	2

<sup>1</sup> There were two OF9 Admirals on 1 April 2013. This was reduced to one when Admiral Zambellas relieved Admiral Stanhope as First Sea Lord/Chief of Naval Staff in mid April.

*Notes:*

1. Figures are for UK Regular Forces.

2. UK Regular Forces data are sourced from Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system. Location data is based on the station location of the individual as recorded in the 'Assignment Location field' of the JPA system. The figures are based on service personnel's station location and not the location of residence—where personnel work is not necessarily where they live. Personnel deployed on operations to an area away from their stationed location are shown against their most recent stationed location.

*Source:*

Defence Statistics (Tri-Service)

### Veterans: Suicide

**Katy Clark:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will commission research into the level of suicides and attempted suicides among armed forces veterans; [157998]

(2) how many armed forces veterans have committed suicide in the last 10 years. [158000]

**Dr Murrison:** Defence Statistics publish information on numbers and mortality rates for suicide and open verdict deaths among first Gulf war and Falkland veterans, compared to the mortality rates for suicide and open verdict deaths in the general UK population. For both

first Gulf war and Falkland veterans, the risk of suicide and open verdict deaths is statistically significantly lower compared to the UK population.

In 2006, the Ministry of Defence commissioned research from Manchester university to investigate the level of suicide among those leaving the UK armed forces over the period 1996 to 2005, and to compare matched personnel remaining in-service and the general population. This work was published in March 2009. The study found that, taking all age groups together, the risk of suicide was no higher than in the general community.

## ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

### Cattle: Accidents

**Bill Wiggin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what representations he has made to supermarkets on encouraging them not to stock meat from breeds of cattle known to be more dangerous to walkers; [157670]

(2) what advice he publishes to assist farmers in choosing cattle breeds with regard to the safety of members of the public. [157673]

**Mr Heath:** DEFRA has discussed with the Health and Safety Executive, the National Farmers Union and breed societies the need to promote and strengthen guidance and advice for farmers, landowners and other livestock keepers on cattle and public access.

The Health and Safety Executive has published guidance about the precautions to be taken with grazing cattle including ways to minimise the risk to the public, for example by the way of clear information and signage.

The National Farmers Union's own guidance suggests that its members should make an assessment about the risks posed by livestock being kept in a field with a public right of way including such matters as whether the livestock are well-handled and used to people; whether the livestock have ever been known to react aggressively to people or dogs; whether cattle have very young calves at foot; and the route of the right of way through the field and the field conditions.

The Countryside Code, issued by Natural England, includes guidance on walkers' rights and responsibilities when out in the countryside and in particular advice and information about the best approach to take if a walker with a dog finds themselves being threatened by cattle.

DEFRA has not made representations to supermarkets to discourage them from stocking meat from breeds of cattle known to be more dangerous to walkers.

**Bill Wiggin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for what reasons his Department has not published a list of dangerous cattle breeds. [157672]

**Mr Heath:** There is a list of seven breeds of dairy bull that are prohibited from land crossed by public rights of way in section 59 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Bulls of all other breeds, if aged over 10 months, are also banned from such fields unless accompanied by



cows or heifers. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs may by order add or remove any breed from the list.

There are no prohibitions on other specific breeds of cattle, as records kept by the Health and Safety Executive indicate that there is no evidence that certain cattle breeds are more dangerous to the public than others.

Section 3 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 requires farmers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, they do not put members of the public at risk by their work activities. This section applies to keeping any cattle that could be a known risk where there is public access.

### Floods: Greater London

**Mr Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate he has made of the number of homes in London at risk of (a) flash flooding and (b) other forms of flooding; and if he will make a statement. [158434]

**Richard Benyon:** Flash flooding is caused by an intense rainfall event, and in London this would be experienced as surface water flooding. Drain London (the Greater London Authority group) has estimated that up to 1.3 million properties are in areas at risk of surface water flooding from a rainfall event with 0.5% probability of flooding.

The Environment Agency's National Assessment of Flood Risk, states that in London 534,804 properties are at risk from tidal and/or fluvial (river) flooding.

### Food: Procurement

**Zac Goldsmith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of food purchased by central Government Departments was procured from UK food producers in the latest period for which figures are available. [156804]

**Richard Benyon:** DEFRA does not hold figures relating to the source of food purchased by central Government directly or indirectly through its contractors. Figures relating to the Department's own contract show that between July and December last year 100% of fresh beef, fresh lamb and fresh pork (apart from gammon) was UK sourced or produced. Gammon was EU sourced. We do not at present have information relating to other produce.

### Raves

**Andy Sawford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what system his Department has put in place to monitor the number of illegal raves taking place on farms; and what advice his Department gives to farmers and local police forces on the prevention of illegal raves. [158052]

**Richard Benyon:** DEFRA does not have a system in place to monitor the number of illegal raves taking place on farms; there are sufficient legislative controls in place at a local level to deal with these illegal events. We do not give advice to farmers or local police on the

prevention of illegal raves; dealing with them is an operational matter for the police and relevant local authorities.

### Recycling

**Mrs Main:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what procedures are in place to allow the Environment Agency to inspect sites with recycling permits. [153915]

**Richard Benyon** [*holding answer 13 May 2013*]: The Environment Agency has a duty to carry out appropriate periodic inspections of waste recycling facilities. It adopts a risk-based approach to inspection and other forms of compliance assessment and does so based on an assessment of the nature, scale and location of the activity and any previous compliance history. The Environment Agency has powers of entry to the sites it regulates.

Copies of all inspection records are provided to the site operator and also placed on a public register held by the Environment Agency.

### Regulation

**Priti Patel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what processes his Department has put in place to (a) monitor, (b) collate cost information on, (c) review and (d) respond to requests to amend or revoke regulations introduced by his Department; [155794]

(2) what the title was of each set of regulations introduced by his Department in each month since May 2010; and which of those regulations have been (a) subject to the (i) one in one out and (ii) one in two out procedure and (b) (i) revoked and (ii) amended; [155816]

(3) if he will provide the estimated cost of each regulation introduced by his Department since May 2010; and what the estimated benefits of each regulation (a) amended and (b) revoked were. [155960]

**Richard Benyon:** DEFRA introduced 192 statutory instruments between May 2010 and 30 April 2013 but no primary legislation. In addition, 211 regulations were revoked either in whole or in part. A list of these has been placed in the Library of the House.

Details of the costs to business are set out in the individual Impact Assessments which can be found on:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk>

where they are linked to the legislation.

Not all regulations require an Impact Assessment and therefore no costs are available for these regulations. Those regulations annotated with \* denote those which did not require an Impact Assessment.

Regulations that have a direct cost to business and are in scope of one-in, one-out (OIOO) and one-in, two-out (OITO) are published in Departments' six monthly statements of new regulation (SNR). These are available from BIS here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/reducing-the-impact-of-regulation-on-business/supporting-pages/operating-a-one-in-two-out-rule-for-business-regulation>

DEFRA carries out regular reviews of its regulations as specified in individual pieces of legislation. Typically, these are between five to seven years after implementation depending on whether the legislation is domestic or EU in origin.

Under the Red Tape Challenge initiative DEFRA has reviewed approximately 600 regulations, the majority under two themes, “environment” and “water and marine”. The outcomes of these reviews to date, including DEFRA’s implementation plan for environment, are available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/series/better-regulation-red-tape-challenge>

The water and marine implementation plan is to be published shortly.

### Scotland

**Margaret Curran:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs when he last met (a) the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment and (b) any other Scottish Government Minister; and what was discussed at any such meeting. [155675]

**Richard Benyon:** The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson), last met with (a) the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, Richard Lochhead, at the devolved Administration meeting on 20 May 2013 to discuss a range of issues.

He also met (b) the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Peter Wheelhouse, at the same meeting.

### Wood: Recycling

**Mrs Main:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the market for recycled wood. [153914]

**Richard Benyon [holding answer 13 May 2013]:** According to WRAP’S 2011 market situation report, wood recycling in the UK increased by 8% in 2008, 4% in 2009 and 7% in 2010 but shows a 5% reduction in 2011. This reduction in wood recycling could be a result of an increase in wood waste exports, which accounted for 194,000 tonnes in 2010 and 654,000 tonnes in 2011.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Total recycled/recovered in UK (thousand tonnes)	1,886	2,031	2,111	2,250	2,148
Percentage change	—	8	4	7	-5

Research carried out by WRAP shows that the total amount of wood waste produced in the UK each year is in the region of 4.1 million tonnes. Wood waste going to landfill in the UK accounts for 1 million to 1.2 million tonnes. Our most recent analysis in the call for evidence shows approximately 0.6 million tonnes of wood waste going to landfill in England.

## JUSTICE

### Contracts

**Sadiq Khan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) what amount was spent in total on the prisoner transit contract in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12 and (c) 2012-13; [155175]

(2) what total amount was paid to (a) G4S, (b) Serco, (c) Sodexo, (d) GEOAmev and (e) Capita for all services undertaken on behalf of his Department in (i) 2010-11, (ii) 2011-12 and (iii) 2012-13. [155179]

**Jeremy Wright:** The Ministry of Justice has spent the following on the Prisoner Transit contract:

Financial year	Contract spend (£)
2012-13	131,765,033.71
2011-12	140,566,638.44
2010-11	163,467,961.09

The MOJ has paid the following amounts for services provided by the following suppliers; G4S, Serco, Sodexo, GeoAmev and Capita.

Supplier	2012-13	2011-12	Net amount (£) 2010-11
The Capita Group plc	33,929,923.25	27,752,045.79	4,714,301.31
G4S plc	282,564,373.61	231,609,740.91	277,169,500.20
Sodexo	99,651,600.15	96,637,591.09	94,994,764.73
Serco Group plc	229,434,045.80	210,435,183.12	201,895,382.93
GEOAmev PECS Ltd	91,277,154.45	47,494,140.77	—

All reported figures are for contractual spend only.

### Hillsborough Stadium

**Steve Rotheram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what discussions he had had with the Director of Public Prosecutions about the possible effect his resignation will have on the pending inquiries into individuals and organisations involved in the investigations into the Hillsborough disaster. [153920]

**Mrs Grant:** I have not had any discussions with the Director of Public

Prosecutions on this matter. The Home Office is responsible for the pending police investigations into the Hillsborough disaster.

### Human Rights

**Graeme Morrice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the EU’s accession to the European Convention on Human Rights on the enforcement of human rights in the UK. [157225]

**Damian Green:** EU accession to the European convention on human rights will enable human rights obligations to be enforced against the EU and its institutions. As a result, they will be liable to legal action in the European Court of Human Rights for breach of convention rights. Protocol 8 to the European treaties provides that the

accession agreement will not affect the situation of member states in relation to the convention. It does not change the competences of the EU or the powers of its institutions.

### Legal Aid Scheme

**Mr Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the proposals outlined in his Department's consultation on transforming legal aid on the quality of legal advice provided under legal aid. [156963]

**Jeremy Wright:** The Government has consulted on a number of proposals to reform legal aid via the 'Transforming Legal Aid: delivering a more credible and efficient system' consultation which closed on 4 June 2013. This included proposed model of competitive tendering for criminal legal aid services. We have been clear we must continue to bear down on the cost of legal aid, including the £1 billion of taxpayers' money spent on criminal legal aid a year, to ensure we are getting the best deal for the taxpayer.

We are clear we will continue to uphold everyone's right to a fair trial—but that does not mean we should not look again at how the system which provides this is operated. Quality assured duty solicitors and lawyers will still be available—just as they are now. The Legal Aid Agency would ensure, as part of the tendering process, that all providers are capable of delivering the full range of criminal legal aid services under contract across their procurement areas. Our proposals envisage a quality review which is more extensive than that in the current system.

The issue of quality is addressed further in the Criminal litigation price competition impact assessment which can be downloaded from the consultation web page:

<https://consult.justice.gov.uk/digital-communications/transforming-legal-aid>

In that impact assessment we comment on the potential impact of quality by the removal of client choice.

We will consider the views we have received on the proposed model of competition, including the impact of those proposals on clients, provider and the wider justice system.

**Mr Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice if he will make an assessment of the compatibility of the removal of client choice for criminal legal aid in the criminal justice system with the United Nations' Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid. [157274]

**Jeremy Wright:** The Government has recently consulted on a number of proposals to reform legal aid via the "Transforming Legal Aid: delivering a more credible and efficient system" consultation which closed on 4 June 2013. This includes a proposed model of competitive tendering for criminal legal aid services. As confirmed in that consultation paper, against a background of continuing pressure on public finances, we need to continue to bear down on the cost of legal aid, including the £1 billion of taxpayers' money spent on criminal legal aid a year.

We are clear we will continue to uphold everyone's right to a fair trial. Quality assured lawyers will still be available—just as they are now. The Legal Aid Agency

would ensure as part of the tendering process that all providers are capable of delivering the full range of criminal legal aid services under contract across their procurement areas.

The Government considers that the proposals are compatible with the United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems.

**Mr Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice whether he plans to cap the number of cases receiving access to legal aid in each of the 42 procurement areas set out in the Transforming Legal Aid review. [157325]

**Jeremy Wright:** The Government has consulted on a number of proposals to reform legal aid via the 'Transforming Legal Aid: delivering a more credible and efficient system' consultation which closed on 4 June 2013. This included proposed model of competitive tendering for criminal legal aid services. We have been clear we must continue to bear down on the cost of legal aid, including the £1 billion of taxpayers' money spent on criminal legal aid a year, to ensure we are getting the best deal for the taxpayer.

The proposals, if implemented, would not see an introduction of a cap for Criminal Legal Aid and, as such, Criminal Legal Aid will continue to be available for all eligible persons should they require it in all 42 procurement areas.

**Mr Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what steps he plans to take to mitigate any risks to the quality of service received by legal aid recipients through the proposed removal of client choice. [157450]

**Jeremy Wright:** The Government has consulted on a number of proposals to reform legal aid via the 'Transforming Legal Aid: delivering a more credible and efficient system' consultation which closed on 4 June 2013. This included proposed model of competitive tendering for criminal legal aid services. We have been clear we must continue to bear down on the cost of legal aid, including the £1 billion of taxpayers' money spent on criminal legal aid a year, to ensure we are getting the best deal for the taxpayer.

Quality assured duty solicitors and lawyers will still be available—just as they are now. The Legal Aid Agency would ensure as part of the tendering process that all providers are capable of delivering the full range of criminal legal aid services under contract across their procurement areas. Our proposals envisage a quality review which is more extensive than that in the current system.

### Offenders: Rehabilitation

**Paul Maynard:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice on what dates the provisions in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 relating to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 were initially scheduled to enter into force; whether this date has subsequently been changed; and for what reason any such change has been made. [157027]

**Jeremy Wright:** The essential prerequisite for the commencement of the reforms to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 is to put in place a system for producing basic disclosure certificates, which show unspent convictions, which reflects the new rehabilitation periods for England and Wales. Until we do that there would be no way for an individual to obtain an official statement of their unspent convictions under the new rules.

Currently, basic disclosures reflecting the existing rehabilitation periods are only available from Disclosure Scotland and this service is provided to residents of England and Wales as well as Scotland. However, the reforms to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act only revise rehabilitation periods for England and Wales, leaving the position in Scotland unchanged under its legislation. This complicates matters and creates two different rehabilitation regimes within the UK, which means that there are significant business and technical issues to work through.

The Government is considering the best option for implementing these important changes with Disclosure Scotland and the Disclosure and Barring Service and aim to have the reforms in place at the earliest possible point.

### Prisoners

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what steps the National Offender Management Service is taking to improve opportunities for imprisonment for public protection prisoners to progress towards release. [155194]

**Jeremy Wright:** The primary concern of the Government with regard to prisoners serving indeterminate sentences is that of protecting the public.

The Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 introduced a new sentencing framework for dangerous offenders. The Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection (IPP) was abolished for offenders convicted before 3 December 2012 and was replaced by the new Extended Determinate sentence (EDS) and supporting regime. However, the abolition of the IPP sentence has not been applied retrospectively. Therefore, prisoners serving an IPP sentence will remain in custody after they have completed their tariff until the Parole Board directs their release. In making its decisions, the Parole Board will continue to apply the terms of the existing statutory release test.

The population of IPP prisoners has now begun to decrease. This can be explained by the abolition of the sentence which means that no new IPP sentences are given for those convicted on or after 3 December 2012, and the increasing number of releases.

The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) continues to help IPP prisoners to address successfully the risks evident in their offending, so that, where they do, the Parole Board may decide that those offenders may now be effectively managed in the community. No longer do just accredited courses enable offenders to move on, Offender Managers and Offender Supervisors must provide the Parole Board with a comprehensive assessment of the work undertaken to address offenders' risks—and of offenders' engagement with that work.

### Prisons

**Sadiq Khan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the direct resource outturn expenditure was for each public sector prison in each financial year from 2009-10 to 2012-13. [154063]

**Jeremy Wright:** As part of the Government's Transparency Agenda, the Department routinely publishes full details of direct resource outturn expenditure for each private and public sector prison in England and Wales after the end of the financial year. The information for financial year 2009-10 to 2010-11 is published as an Addendum to the NOMS Annual Report and Accounts and available on the Department's website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-performance-statistics-2009-2011>

For financial year 2011-12 figures are published on the following website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/prison-and-probation-trusts-performance-statistics-2011-12>

Copies of these are also placed in the House library.

Figures for outturn expenditure for financial year 2012-13 have not yet been finalised or audited and therefore not yet available.

The overall cost per prison place has fallen under this Government from £42,914 in 2007-08 to £37,648 in 2011-12. The Government intends to continue to drive down these costs through its strategy of replacing old, uneconomic prisons with new, cost-effective ones.

**Sadiq Khan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many hours on average each prisoner spent per week (a) in a cell and (b) on purposeful activity in (i) the entire prison, (ii) each category of prison and (iii) the entire prison estate in each of the last five years. [155181]

**Jeremy Wright:** Information on purposeful activity in each prison, category of prison and for the entire estate is published annually in the Prison Performance Digest. The latest data cover the period to 2011-12 and can be found at the following location:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/163299/prison-performance-digest-2011-12.xls.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/163299/prison-performance-digest-2011-12.xls.xls)

Average time in cell is measured per week day and this information is provided in Tables 1 and 2 as follows by individual prison establishment and by prison category.

The figures for time in cell are derived from information collected on the average hours per weekday that prisoners are unlocked. By subtracting the average hours unlocked from the 24 hours in a day it is possible to estimate hours spent locked in cell. It should be noted that time in cell includes hours when prisoners are asleep. Time unlocked includes time where a prisoner is either out of their cell or where the cell door is unlocked allowing them to move freely in and out of the cell.

Purposeful activity and time unlocked were two of the NOMS performance indicators of safety and decency in prisons up to 2011-12. The indicators were discontinued at the start of 2012-13.

Figures have been drawn from administrative IT systems, which, as with any large scale recording system, are subject to possible errors with data entry and processing.

Table 1: Time in cell by prison establishment: average hours per prisoner per week day

Establishment name	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Acklington	13.4	16.1	15.7	15.5	—
Albany	14.1	13.9	14.8	—	—
Altcourse	10.9	11.1	11.9	11.1	12.6
Ashfield	13.9	14.4	13.9	14.0	14.1
Ashwell	8.5	8.9	14.0	14.5	—
Askham Grange	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
Aylesbury	15.8	17.0	16.8	16.8	16.6
Bedford	15.4	15.3	14.7	14.3	14.4
Belmarsh	15.6	16.3	16.2	15.9	24.0
Birmingham	14.7	17.3	17.2	16.2	16.1
Blantyre House	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Blundeston	13.9	13.5	12.3	14.0	12.4
Brinsford	15.4	15.5	15.5	14.1	24.0
Bristol	15.6	16.0	15.1	15.1	15.7
Brixton	16.9	17.3	17.7	17.4	17.4
Bronzefield	12.5	13.5	14.4	14.1	14.1
Buckley Hall	11.2	14.9	15.5	15.2	15.4
Bullingdon	16.1	15.6	15.8	16.1	15.6
Bullwood Hall	10.9	10.6	10.2	10.3	10.1
Camp Hill	14.4	14.7	14.7	—	—
Canterbury	14.8	12.8	13.8	13.7	13.3
Cardiff	15.9	15.9	15.9	15.9	16.7
Castington	15.4	15.4	16.0	16.6	—
Channings Wood	14.8	14.6	15.1	15.3	15.4
Chelmsford	15.9	16.4	15.8	14.7	14.4
Coldingley	13.5	14.3	14.9	14.4	14.6
Cookham Wood	15.8	13.6	13.2	15.2	14.3
Dartmoor	13.9	10.7	12.9	13.6	13.4
Deerbolt	17.1	17.0	17.5	17.5	17.2
Doncaster	12.9	13.7	14.5	13.4	11.6
Dorchester	17.0	16.4	18.4	18.2	18.5
Dovegate	13.1	14.0	14.5	14.8	14.3
Dover	11.7	11.9	11.5	11.4	11.4
Downview	12.9	15.4	14.7	13.8	14.2
Drake Hall	7.6	6.3	5.4	5.3	6.5
Durham	15.5	16.4	16.8	16.1	16.2
East Sutton Park	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0
Eastwood Park	12.4	11.4	11.6	13.1	15.0
Edmunds Hill	10.6	10.4	10.8	10.2	—
Elmley	16.6	15.4	16.1	—	—
Erlestoke	12.9	14.6	14.6	14.3	14.4
Everthorpe	15.1	16.0	16.1	16.7	16.7
Exeter	16.0	14.8	14.7	16.2	15.9
Featherstone	13.7	13.3	13.1	13.1	14.5
Feltham	14.0	14.7	15.3	16.3	17.1
Ford	11.4	11.7	11.7	11.5	11.5
Forest Bank	13.5	13.5	13.5	13.7	13.7
Foston Hall	13.7	12.6	13.2	12.5	14.5
Frankland	14.7	15.9	15.1	15.1	14.9
Full Sutton	14.5	15.1	15.2	15.1	15.0
Garth	14.0	14.9	15.3	15.1	15.3
Gartree	14.0	15.6	15.4	15.2	15.5
Glen Parva	13.7	15.7	16.6	16.4	17.0
Gloucester	15.4	15.6	15.5	15.6	16.1
Grendon	10.5	9.9	10.2	10.3	10.3
Guys Marsh	13.8	13.1	13.6	13.6	13.7
Haslar	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0	12.0
Haverigg	12.8	13.4	9.6	9.2	9.7
Hewell	24.0	12.7	13.2	13.3	13.0
High Down	17.6	16.3	16.5	16.2	16.5
Highpoint	13.5	13.5	14.0	14.5	13.3
Hindley	14.5	14.8	14.8	13.9	13.7
Hollesley Bay	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0

Table 1: Time in cell by prison establishment: average hours per prisoner per week day

Establishment name	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Holloway	14.5	13.8	14.6	15.0	15.0
Holme House	16.6	16.8	16.8	16.1	15.4
Hull	14.7	15.0	15.4	16.0	16.1
Huntercombe	15.4	15.6	14.1	13.5	14.1
Isis	—	—	—	—	17.4
Isle of Wight	—	—	—	14.8	14.5
Kennet	14.2	15.4	14.1	13.8	13.7
Kingston	13.2	14.0	14.3	14.0	14.3
Kirkham	10.2	9.8	9.3	9.2	9.2
Kirkclevington	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Lancaster	13.9	15.6	15.0	14.9	—
Lancaster Farms	13.8	17.8	16.6	16.3	16.4
Latchmere House	4.5	4.8	5.0	0.0	1.9
Leeds	14.9	16.6	16.9	16.2	13.8
Leicester	14.0	17.5	17.4	16.5	16.1
Lewes	17.0	17.2	16.3	15.3	15.0
Leyhill	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0
Lincoln	14.3	17.0	16.7	17.0	16.2
Lindholme	13.5	15.0	15.2	15.7	15.9
Littlehey	13.8	15.5	15.3	16.3	15.1
Liverpool	16.4	16.4	16.3	15.7	15.8
Long Lartin	14.8	15.8	13.9	14.7	15.7
Low Newton	13.4	14.7	13.9	13.4	13.5
Lowdham Grange	11.4	12.0	12.6	13.2	12.9
Maidstone	14.7	14.5	14.9	15.2	15.0
Manchester	14.0	13.7	14.0	13.8	13.4
Moorland	11.2	12.8	13.4	12.7	11.8
Morton Hall	9.0	10.2	10.5	10.4	24.0
Mount	13.2	13.2	13.2	13.1	13.0
New Hall	13.8	14.1	14.5	14.8	15.7
North Sea Camp	8.5	8.5	7.2	6.5	6.5
Northallerton	15.0	16.2	16.5	15.7	15.0
Northumberland	—	—	—	—	15.6
Norwich	13.9	15.8	16.4	15.2	15.8
Nottingham	15.9	17.0	16.9	16.2	16.2
Onley	15.4	15.3	15.5	14.8	14.4
Parc	14.1	14.7	14.8	14.6	14.9
Parkhurst	16.0	15.8	16.4	—	—
Pentonville	17.7	17.2	16.7	16.3	16.6
Peterborough	—	—	14.0	14.7	14.8
Portland	15.4	16.0	15.4	15.1	15.4
Preston	14.2	17.4	16.1	15.7	15.7
Ranby	13.1	15.1	14.4	14.3	14.6
Reading	15.8	15.4	16.5	15.1	14.4
Risley	13.5	14.9	15.5	15.0	15.0
Rochester	15.0	15.4	15.1	14.3	14.0
Rye Hill	12.6	12.9	13.4	14.8	14.3
Send	11.3	12.7	12.8	12.1	12.1
Sheppey Cluster	—	—	—	15.0	15.2
Shepton Mallet	13.8	14.6	14.6	14.6	14.5
Shrewsbury	14.4	16.8	15.7	15.4	15.4
Stafford	13.4	16.3	16.6	16.6	16.4
Standford Hill	7.5	10.5	10.5	—	—
Stocken	13.2	16.3	16.3	16.1	16.5
Stoke Heath	15.6	15.4	15.8	16.2	15.5
Styal	8.2	11.7	12.4	10.5	11.5
Sudbury	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
Swaleside	16.2	15.9	15.7	—	—
Swansea	15.0	14.5	15.7	15.5	15.4
Swinfen Hall	13.6	16.2	16.1	16.2	17.8
Thorn Cross	11.5	11.5	9.9	9.0	10.2
Usk\Prescoed	10.1	12.3	12.1	11.6	11.4
Verne	8.0	9.0	9.0	9.0	9.1

Table 1: Time in cell by prison establishment: average hours per prisoner per week day

Establishment name	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Wakefield	14.9	15.1	15.0	14.9	14.8
Wandsworth	16.5	15.9	16.7	17.4	16.7
Warren Hill	13.4	14.0	13.7	14.6	15.2
Wayland	12.7	13.0	12.5	12.6	11.7
Wealstun	12.5	15.8	15.7	16.5	15.7
Wellingborough	14.0	15.1	15.4	14.2	15.0
Werrington	13.7	13.7	13.5	14.3	14.8
Wetherby	13.6	13.2	13.6	14.2	14.4
Whetton	13.6	14.0	14.1	14.2	13.6
Whitemoor	15.7	16.2	16.1	15.5	15.2
Winchester	14.9	15.3	14.6	15.0	16.5
Wolds	11.7	12.5	14.6	12.1	12.0
Woodhill	15.0	13.4	14.7	15.0	14.5
Wormwood Scrubs	15.1	15.8	16.1	16.8	16.9
Wymott	13.4	15.2	15.4	15.5	15.5
National Total	13.8	14.4	14.6	14.5	14.5

Table 2: Time in cell by prison category: average hours per prisoner per week day

Category	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
Category B	13.6	14	14.4	14.1	13.9
Category C	13.1	14	14.2	14.2	14.1
Dispersal	14.9	15.5	15	15	15.1
Female closed	12.7	13.8	13.7	12.8	13.6
Female local	12.4	13.2	13.6	13.5	14.1
Female open	7.5	7.5	7.6	7.6	7.6
Male closed	14.9	15.8	16	15.8	16.2
young offender					
Male juvenile	14.2	14.2	13.7	14.3	14.4
Male local	15.2	15.6	15.7	15.5	15.4
Male open	7.9	8.8	8.6	8.1	8.1
Male open young offender	11.5	11.5	9.9	9	10.2
Semi open	8.2	8.3	8.1	6	6.2
Cluster	—	12.7	13.2	14.5	14.5
National Total	13.8	14.4	14.6	14.5	14.5

*Note:*

In the above table prisons are categorised according to their predominant function, though some establishments will have more than one function.

### Prisons: Employment

**Priti Patel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many jobs are available for prisoners in each prison in the UK; [156654]

(2) what the participation rate is of prisoners in prison work schemes. [156754]

**Jeremy Wright:** The number of prisoners working in industrial activity in public sector prisons increased from around 8,600 in 2010-11 to around 9,000 in 2011-12.

These figures do not include the substantial numbers of prisoners who work within prisons on tasks such as cooking, serving meals, maintenance and cleaning.

Figures are published in the NOMS Annual Report Management Information Addendum:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/163292/noms-annual-report-2011-12-addendum.pdf.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/163292/noms-annual-report-2011-12-addendum.pdf.pdf)

Data have been drawn from administrative IT systems. Although care is taken when processing and analysing the data, the level of detail collected is subject to the inaccuracies inherent in any large-scale recording system.

**Priti Patel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) with reference to the answer of 25 April 2013, *Official Report*, column 1314W, on prisoners: pay, if he will estimate the (a) cost and (b) benefit to the public purse of employing prisoners instead of procuring services privately; [156780]

(2) how many unskilled jobs in prisons are contracted out to private companies; and what the annual cost to the public purse is of procuring unskilled labour in prisons. [156862]

**Jeremy Wright:** Substantial numbers of prisoners work on essential support tasks in prisons such as cooking, serving meals; grounds maintenance and cleaning. This provides significant work for prisoners and creates economic benefits to the public purse.

Data are not held on the value of prisoner input to the delivery of particular services or the number of prisoners specifically involved in work that could otherwise be outsourced. The Department does not hold data concerning unskilled jobs in prisons.

Where contracting out services is considered, maintaining prisoner input is an important factor to be taken into account—this could include prisoners working on behalf of a contractor.

### Probation

**Priti Patel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice with reference to the answer of 25 March 2013, *Official Report*, columns 952-4W, on probation, how many offenders who failed to complete an accredited programme were subsequently (a) placed on an alternative programme, (b) ordered to retake the programme and (c) did not have to undertake any further accredited programmes. [156877]

**Jeremy Wright:** It is not possible to answer this question in relation to the information provided in the answer of 25 March 2013. This is because the figures provided in the earlier answer based on completions of the overall programme requirement and not instances of course attendance.

The information provided earlier was based on aggregated completion rates for sex offender treatment programmes, domestic violence programmes and other offending behaviour programmes for each reporting year. These completion rates are calculated using a cohort method which tracks the outcome of individuals at either 12, 18, 30 or 36 months after commencement, depending on programme type, and measures the proportion that completed. Failure to complete in this measure is defined as termination of the programme requirement either during or at the end of the order or licence. Both completers and non-completers included within the original answer may have dropped out of one or more courses and gone on to complete on another course, been placed on an alternative programme or failed to complete a further course. This level of information cannot be derived from the completion rate data.

### Training

**Priti Patel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many officials in (a) his Department and (b) the non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible

enrolled in publicly-funded training courses in each of the last five years; what the total cost has been of such courses; and what the monetary value was of the 10 highest training course fees in each such year. [155433]

**Mrs Grant:** Budgets for training and education are devolved and are managed locally by the Ministry's different business groups, agencies and non-departmental public bodies. The Ministry does not record this information centrally. Therefore to establish the numbers of staff who have enrolled in publicly-funded training courses and any costs would require a Ministry-wide survey of all its local business areas and non-departmental public bodies. This would incur a disproportionate cost.

## BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

### Absenteeism

**Charlotte Leslie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what the policy of his Department is on promoting physical activity as a strategy for reducing workplace absenteeism. [158308]

**Jo Swinson:** The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my right hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), has no locus to promote physical activity in employees in general.

The Government recognises the important role of well-being in the workplace in creating an environment where businesses and individuals can thrive and grow.

Health, Work and Well-being is an important cross-Government agenda, in which BIS is involved and works closely with a number of other Departments.

The Government supports a number of initiatives which impact on well-being such as the Every Business Commits framework, which was launched by the Prime Minister in December 2010 that has a specific strand focusing on improving quality of life and wellbeing for employees.

In addition Government also commissioned the independent review of sickness absence undertaken by Dame Carol Black and David Frost CBE. Their report "Health at Work" was published in November 2011.

Officials in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills are now working closely with colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and others to implement measures aimed at reducing sickness absence in the workplace as set out in the Government's response to the Review ("Fitness for Work") as published in January 2013.

### Apprentices: Kent

**Rehman Chishti:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many apprenticeships commenced in each sector in (a) Gillingham and Rainham constituency and (b) Medway in each of the last three years. [158701]

**Matthew Hancock:** Information on the number of apprenticeship starts by parliamentary constituency, local education authority and sector subject area are published in a supplementary table to a quarterly Statistical First Release (SFR).

[http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/65659B53-3E92-4E0E-AB62-E106C41B5277/0/Mar2012\\_Apprenticeships\\_SSA\\_Geography\\_Starts.xls](http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/65659B53-3E92-4E0E-AB62-E106C41B5277/0/Mar2012_Apprenticeships_SSA_Geography_Starts.xls)  
[http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/Statistics/fe\\_data\\_library/Apprenticeships/](http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/Statistics/fe_data_library/Apprenticeships/)

### Copyright: EU Law

**Mike Weatherley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what his policy is on the reopening of Directive 2001/29/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of May 2001 on the harmonisation of certain aspects of copyright and related rights in the information society. [158172]

**Jo Swinson:** Any decision to review the directive is a matter for the European Commission who have already outlined several areas of work on copyright, including a review of directive 2001/29/EC as provided for in the directive itself. The Government believes that the time is right for such a review to take place, in order to consider the copyright issues that have stemmed from technological change.

The Government wants to engage with interested parties on this issue and the Intellectual Property Office will be approaching stakeholders to help flesh out Government thinking so that the UK can develop a clear position and respond if any proposals are tabled.

### Departmental Responsibilities

**Mr Umunna:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills for how many days each week the Minister of State for Business and Enterprise is based at (a) his Department and (b) the Department of Energy and Climate Change; and how many members of staff are employed in the Minister's office at each department. [158443]

**Michael Fallon:** Most days I work in both Departments. Across the two I have a number of portfolio areas, but common to them all are removing barriers to growth, encouraging investment, and accelerating enterprise.

There are 4.0 FTE in my office in the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and 3.5 FTE employed in my office at the Department of Energy and Climate Change.

### Exports: South East Asia

**Mr Umunna:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills with reference to the answer of 6 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 594W, on exports: South East Asia, if he will publish an evaluation of the Headstart initiative six month pilot; and if he will place a copy of this evaluation in the Library. [157044]

**Michael Fallon:** The Headstart pilot, intended for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) new to the market, provides access to office space and locally-established UK expertise in three South East Asian markets: Indonesia; Singapore; and Thailand. The scheme is offered by the local British Chambers of Commerce in association with UK Trade & Investment and the UK-ASEAN Business Council.

Following completion of the pilot, UK Trade & Investment has evaluated the outcome, identifying action for development of the initiative. This work will be taken forward as part of the wider Overseas Business Networks initiative announced by the Prime Minister on 12 November 2012, which aims radically to enhance the business-to-business support to UK SMEs in 20 pilot markets over the next 3-5 years.

A copy of this evaluation of the pilot will be placed in the Library.

### Gangmasters

**Stephen Barclay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the answer of 16 May 2013, *Official Report*, column 381W, on gangmasters, and with reference to the written statement by the Minister of State for Business and Enterprise of 8 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 43WS, on Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008, whether any orders have been made under that Act which are exceptions to the general rule, as set out in that statement, that powers to impose fixed monetary penalties, variable monetary penalties and restoration notices will only be granted where their use is restricted to undertakings with more than 250 employees. [158379]

**Michael Fallon:** No orders have been made under Part 3 of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 since the written ministerial statement was made on 8 November 2012.

In 2010, one such order gave the Environment Agency and Natural England powers to impose sanctions in England—The Environmental Civil Sanctions (England) Order 2010 (2010/NO.1157) was made on 26 March 2010 and came into force on 6 April 2010.

Welsh Ministers made an order that gave the Environment Agency similar powers in Wales. The Environmental Civil Sanctions (Wales) Order 2010 (2010/No.1821) was made on 14 July 2010 and came into force on 15 July 2010. These powers have now been transferred to the new Natural Resources Body for Wales, which has taken over the Welsh devolved responsibilities of the Environment Agency.

### Green Investment Bank

**Mr Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what contribution he expects the Green Investment Bank to make to green growth. [158078]

**Michael Fallon:** The role of the Green Investment Bank (GIB) is to help overcome limits to the availability of finance to UK green infrastructure projects, demonstrating that such investment can deliver strong commercial returns and helping to mobilise the additional private sector capital required for the transition to a more green economy. To date it has contractually committed £635 million of its £3 billion funding, bringing alongside £1.8 billion of private sector investment that would not have been invested at all, or as quickly, without GIB's involvement.

**Chris White:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what contribution he expects the Green Investment Bank to make to green growth. [158096]

**Michael Fallon:** The role of the Green Investment Bank (GIB) is to help overcome limits to the availability of finance to UK green infrastructure projects, demonstrating that such investment can deliver strong commercial returns and helping to mobilise the additional private sector capital required for the transition to a more green economy. To date it has contractually committed £635 million of its £3 billion funding, bringing alongside £1.8 billion of private sector investment that would not have been invested at all, or as quickly, without GIB's involvement.

### Higher Education: Staffordshire

**Mr Burley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) how many people in (a) Cannock Chase constituency and (b) Staffordshire applied to study at (i) the universities of Oxford or Cambridge and (ii) all Russell Group universities in each of the last 10 admission cycles; [158205]

(2) how many people in Cannock Chase constituency (a) applied for and (b) were accepted for a university place in each of the last five years. [158207]

**Mr Willetts:** The information for these time periods and for this level of detail is not available centrally. Data on applications and acceptances are collected by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) but they do not routinely publish figures at this level of detail. UCAS is an organisation independent from Government.

### Minimum Wage

**Mr Umunna:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he is taking to reduce non-compliance with the national minimum wage. [157045]

**Jo Swinson:** The Government is committed to national minimum wage and its effective enforcement. We are absolutely clear that anyone entitled to be paid the minimum wage should receive it and we are working hard to ensure that we reduce non-compliance across the piece.

In 2010, we agreed a five year compliance strategy with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). We are taking a multi-faceted approach that includes targeted communications to raise awareness and help employers to comply, as well as targeted enforcement action with civil and criminal proceedings reserved for the most serious cases.

A key aspect of our strategy is that HMRC investigates every complaint made through the free and confidential Pay and Work Rights Helpline. In addition, HMRC conducts risk-based enforcement in sectors or areas, such as apprenticeships, where there is a higher risk of workers not getting paid the legal minimum wage.

This work is producing results: in 2012/13 HMRC identified £3.9 million in arrears of wages for 26,519 workers—this represents a 33% increase in the number of workers that HMRC were able to help in 2012/13 and a 26% increase in arrears identified compared to 2009/10.



### Sign Language

**Simon Kirby:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps his Department is taking to ensure the services it offers are accessible to British Sign Language users. [157922]

**Matthew Hancock:** I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I provided to the right hon. Member for Gordon (Sir Malcolm Bruce) on 13 May 2013, *Official Report*, column 85W.

### Students: Part-time Education

**Mr Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will publish the full-time equivalent of HEFCE-fundable part-time students, by parliamentary constituency in which those students have their home address, in (a) 2011-12 and (b) 2012-13; and if he will make a statement. [158439]

**Mr Willetts:** Information on the number of UK domiciled HEFCE-fundable part-time students, by parliamentary constituency at English HEIs for the academic year 2011/12 will be placed in the Libraries of the House. The data has been broken down by level of study.

Information for the 2012/13 academic year will become available from the Higher Education Statistics Agency in January 2014.

Please note that these figures do not include HEFCE-fundable part-time students who were registered at FECs as finalised 2011-12 data are not yet available to robustly identify this population at an individual level. We estimate that there were in excess of 10,000 part-time full-time equivalent students at FECs in 2011/12.

### UK Trade and Investment

**Daniel Kawczynski:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) how the new education advisory group of UK Trade and Investment plans to interact with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to ensure that embassies understand the value of UK education exports in emerging markets; [157906]

(2) how the education advisory group of UK Trade and Investment works with education-focused private sector and charitable organisations to promote UK education exports abroad; [157907]

(3) what steps he is taking to ensure that UK Trade and Investment's new education advisory group will take a comprehensive view of UK education exports that goes wider than solely increasing the number of international students in UK-based universities; [157902]

(4) how UK Trade and Investment's new education advisory group is being recruited; [157903]

(5) what the remit will be of UK Trade and Investment's new education advisory group; [157904]

(6) what the timetable is for the recruitment of the new UK Trade and Investment education advisory group. [157905]

**Mr Willetts:** BIS and UKTI have jointly established an Education UK Unit that will identify high-value export opportunities and support UK providers to respond effectively, fostering the development of UK consortia and helping them to prepare and promote bids. It will act as a 'one-stop-shop' for overseas Governments or large companies wanting to engage UK partners in their large-scale education projects.

The new unit forms part of the Government's industrial strategy for the education sector. We have long recognised the value of international education partnerships to the UK and already provide considerable in-country support to British companies and educational institutions working alone or in small groups through UKTI, DFID, FCO and the British Council. But there is a clear trend towards countries requiring support with large-scale education projects that require a co-ordinated effort from multiple providers.

The remit of the new unit will be to identify suitable opportunities and support UK organisations to win large-scale commercial contracts across a wide range of education-related products and services, from schools, colleges, universities and private providers, to teaching, equipment, architecture—though higher education and vocational and technical skills. The unit will co-ordinate a joined-up UK response to make the most of these opportunities and the UK. The work of the unit will be driven by the opportunities that emerge and our response will be tailored to the needs of each project. The new unit will be staffed by a combination of existing civil servants and secondments from external organisations with an interest in education exports such as the British Council. Staff are currently being recruited to expand the small team that have piloted the approach since July 2012. The managing director of the unit is being recruited through open external competition. The new team will build to full capacity by autumn 2013.

The Education UK Unit already works closely with relevant staff in embassies overseas, including those in emerging markets, many of whom have already been engaged in supporting UK firms in the education sector to export to and operate in their markets.

The unit engages, often through representative and membership organisations, with a wide range of public, private and charitable organisations that have the potential to export their educational expertise or products. Although the unit will facilitate the formation of consortia, the organisations involved will determine membership and contractual arrangements.



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