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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Wednesday 26 June 2013

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

The Secretary of State was asked—

Blacklisting

1. **Jim McGovern** (Dundee West) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with Ministers in the Scottish Government on blacklisting in Scotland. [160884]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell): I regularly meet Scottish Government Ministers to discuss a wide range of issues. I commend the work of the Scottish Affairs Committee on investigating the deplorable activity of blacklisting. The Committee's final report will be given careful consideration by the Government when it is published.

Jim McGovern: I thank the Minister for his response. Perhaps the most ridiculous case of blacklisting that I am aware of is that of the late, great Dundonian, Mr Syd Scroggie. He lost a leg and the sight in both his eyes serving his country during the second world war. He found himself on a blacklist. What was his crime? He had written to *The Scotsman* newspaper to commend the then Dundee district council for buying a portrait of Nelson Mandela. Will the Minister liaise with the Scottish Government to ensure that the odious practice of blacklisting is wiped out?

David Mundell: When the Scottish Affairs Committee report is published, I will undertake to discuss its recommendations with the appropriate Scottish Government Ministers.

Mr Brian H. Donohoe (Central Ayrshire) (Lab): As someone who has been blacklisted three times in the past, I can tell the Minister that it is an obnoxious way of going about business. Will he ensure that legislation is put in place to ensure that people like me and many others in Scotland do not have to face such a practice in future?

David Mundell: The Government take this matter very seriously. As the hon. Gentleman will know, legislation is already in place in the form of the Employment Relations Act 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations 2010. We await the Scottish Affairs Committee report to see whether it proposes any further measures.

Katy Clark (North Ayrshire and Arran) (Lab): The practice has clearly been going on for decades, and the law is not working. Has the Minister looked at the legislation to see whether further action is required to ensure that we bring the practice to an end?

David Mundell: We have looked at the regulations, which were brought in by the previous Government. We very much respect the work of the Scottish Affairs Committee and if it finds that the current legislation is not working, we will of course look at the matter.

Referendum Campaign

2. **Mark Menzies** (Fylde) (Con): What steps the Government have taken to fulfil their pledge to campaign to keep Scotland as part of the UK. [160885]

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Michael Moore): The United Kingdom Government are providing evidence and analysis to allow voters to make an informed choice about Scotland within the United Kingdom. We are publishing analysis papers on all the key issues throughout this year and next.

Mark Menzies: Does the Secretary of State agree that the Scotland analysis programme is already highlighting the clear benefits of Scotland being part of the UK, and of the UK having Scotland within it?

Michael Moore: I certainly agree with my hon. Friend on that. It demonstrates that Scotland enjoys the best of both worlds, with a strong Scottish Parliament and a strong voice here in Westminster. Our economy is able to benefit from the scale and support of the whole UK. Our place in the world is all the stronger, and our voice in the world all the louder, for being part of the United Kingdom.

Anas Sarwar (Glasgow Central) (Lab): Yesterday, the Scottish Chambers of Commerce highlighted what it called information gaps, which are a result of Scotland not yet knowing how it would handle business and income taxes and not yet knowing what its currency, its status in the EU or its relationship with international organisations would be. What will this Government do to ensure that all voters in Scotland have the facts, rather than the assertions being made by the Scottish National party and the Scottish Government?

Michael Moore: I commend the Scottish Chambers of Commerce for the work that it is doing, along with others. This week, the Scotland Institute has also highlighted some important deficiencies in the nationalists' arguments on defence. Our papers on devolution, on the currency and on financial services are setting out the arguments and analysis so that Scotland can make an informed choice. I remain confident that we will decide to stay part of the United Kingdom.

Sir Menzies Campbell (North East Fife) (LD): May I commend my right hon. Friend on the positive case that he is making? As he has just been joined on the Treasury Bench by the Secretary of State for Defence, will he ensure that all Government Departments including the Ministry of Defence take every opportunity to examine critically the defence proposals of the Scottish National party and the Scottish Government, which have yet again been the subject of strong criticism in an independent report this week?

Michael Moore: My right hon. and learned Friend makes a very important point. I can assure him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is very much engaged in this entire debate. Central to that debate will be the SNP's attempt to have it both ways by

reluctantly and belatedly signing up for NATO—three quarters of Scots support it, so that was perhaps inevitable—while not being willing to accept the obligations and rules that go with it, including a nuclear umbrella as part of the strategic concept.

Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): It emerged at the weekend that insiders of the no campaign against Scottish independence secretly call the campaign “project fear”. This is a campaign based on scaremongering and negativity. Is the Secretary of State embarrassed?

Michael Moore: I think people on the pro-UK side of the campaign could show their Twitter feeds to anyone to show what negativity and scaremongering are all about. I think, too, that hon. Gentleman should be a little careful about casting aspersions and should concentrate on getting on with the proper arguments. From his side of the argument, we have so far seen no arguments and no detail.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend comment on the thought that a possible independent Scotland would have an army? Would that independent Scotland be able to employ the same number of Scottish soldiers that the British Army employs at the moment?

Michael Moore: My hon. Friend, whose distinguished track record in these matters is well known to people across the House, makes a very important point. This week, the report of the Scotland Institute—an independent body—has put real and serious questions to the SNP and the yes campaign that they cannot answer.

Home Buyers

3. **Mark Lazarowicz** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op): Which Department is responsible for promoting in Scotland the UK Government’s policies on supporting home buyers; and if he will make a statement. [160886]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell): The Government are providing wide-ranging support to help people buy their homes. That support includes the UK-wide Help to Buy mortgage guarantee scheme, which is led by the Treasury and opens in January 2014. The Treasury has also worked with the Bank of England to implement the funding for lending scheme.

Mark Lazarowicz: Next year, home buyers in Scotland will have the opportunity to access the Scottish Government’s shared equity scheme, the Scottish Government’s mortgage guarantee scheme and the UK Government’s mortgage guarantee scheme. That may sound like a surfeit of riches, but it is leading to confusion, even now, about the best way to access these schemes. Why do the Government not take more action to ensure that there is a close relationship between what the Scottish Government are doing and what the UK Government are doing to make sure that the benefits of these schemes go not to second home buyers, buying houses of up to £600,000 a year, as the people who need them are first home buyers and people on modest incomes?

David Mundell: The hon. Gentleman will be pleased to know that we are working closely with the Scottish Government in relation to their equity scheme, which is equivalent to, but not the same as, the equity loan scheme available in England. The Home to Buy mortgage guarantee scheme will be available in Scotland, and we are working with the Scottish Government to ensure that there is a communications plan so that potential home buyers in Scotland fully understand how all the schemes work and how they relate to each other.

Ann McKechnin (Glasgow North) (Lab): As my hon. Friend has just pointed out, the capital limit on the mortgage guarantee scheme of the UK Government is £600,000. This is hardly designed for those on low and modest incomes. Would the money not be better spent on providing social housing, which is badly needed across Scotland?

David Mundell: I would have thought that the hon. Lady would have welcomed the 10% increase in loans to first-time buyers in Scotland in the first quarter of 2012. The limit of the scheme reflects house prices across the United Kingdom, and I believe that it is fair and equitable.

Common Agricultural Policy

4. **Neil Carmichael** (Stroud) (Con): What assessment he has made of the potential effect on Scotland of the outcome of the recent negotiations on reform of the common agricultural policy. [160887]

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Michael Moore): Negotiations have been making real progress in the last few hours. We aim to deliver a strong outcome for farmers in Scotland, securing full regionalisation of the common agricultural policy to take account of the particular circumstances of Scottish producers.

Neil Carmichael: Notwithstanding the proven need for environmental schemes, does the Secretary of State agree that it is important to enable the farmers to make decisions about their own production mechanisms, so that they can improve production and provide more sustainable food for this country’s future?

Michael Moore: I agree with my hon. Friend. I spoke to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in the last couple of hours after his all-night negotiations in Luxembourg. He remains committed to a scheme that will ensure that farmers get as productive as possible. He wants a scheme that is regionalised for Scotland, and he is delivering that. We have an arrangement that, I hope, will be fair to farmers, fair to consumers and fair to taxpayers.

Mr Ian Davidson (Glasgow South West) (Lab/Co-op): Obviously the most important issue for my constituents is the future of the shipyards, which are threatened by separation, but they are also concerned about the fact that the common agricultural policy supplies public money to landlords who have surplus acres, while the Government fine tenants who are deemed to have surplus bedrooms. Is that fair?

Michael Moore: Let me first pay tribute to the Chairman of the Select Committee, and welcome his evident return to robust good health. I agree with him about the importance of the shipyards in the context of the debate about independence. As for the agricultural issue, I hope that the hon. Gentleman—who is a long-time campaigner for reform of the CAP—will see an outcome from what is still an ongoing process that is fair to his constituents as well as to farmers.

Miss Anne McIntosh (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I know that regionalisation is just as important to the delivery of the common agricultural policy as it is to the delivery of the common fisheries policy, but is my right hon. Friend aware of the possible cross-border impact of the way in which the reforms are implemented in Scotland on constituencies that are very close to Scotland?

Michael Moore: Obviously I defer to the hon. Lady's expertise in this area, but, as one who represents what I believe is the longest section of the land border between Scotland and England, I am well aware of the issues that she has raised. What the Secretary of State has been negotiating in Luxembourg is an arrangement that introduces regionalisation for the whole United Kingdom, and allows us to design a common agricultural policy that is fit for local circumstances and fair to farmers throughout the UK.

Dr Eilidh Whiteford (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I am disappointed that the United Kingdom Government are set to negotiate a CAP deal that will leave Scotland with the lowest rural development budget not just in the UK, but anywhere in Europe. Had Scotland been negotiating on its own behalf, it would have benefited from the rule that no member state should receive less than €196 per hectare by 2020. Does the Secretary of State accept that being tied to the UK in these negotiations will cost Scottish farming £300 million a year for the next seven years?

Michael Moore: I am disappointed by the churlish tone adopted by the hon. Lady. I hoped that she might just have studied the tweets from the Scottish agriculture Minister, which have welcomed the major breakthroughs that we have achieved. We have done that as member of the United Kingdom, sitting at the top table and with the clout to deliver a regionalised CAP. It is now for Richard Lochhead and others to get on with designing a common agricultural policy that suits Scotland's needs, and Mr Lochhead has the ability to do that.

Graeme Morrice (Livingston) (Lab): If agreement is reached this week on a common agricultural policy that will benefit farmers throughout Scotland, will it not constitute more evidence that Scotland speaks with a louder voice in EU negotiations as part of the United Kingdom?

Michael Moore: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman, and the model of the negotiations reinforces his point. It should be noted that the Scottish farming Minister, Richard Lochhead, who has been involved in discussions with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs throughout the process, was in Luxembourg overnight, and has seen the United Kingdom deliver for Scotland.

Employment Figures

5. **Alun Cairns** (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): What assessment he has made of the most recent figures on employment in Scotland. [160888]

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Michael Moore): The most recent labour statistics show that between February and April 2013 employment in Scotland has increased by 47,000, while unemployment has fallen by 6,000 and the number of jobseeker's allowance claimants by 900. The Government will continue to take the necessary steps to build a stronger economy in a fairer society.

Alun Cairns: Unemployment in Scotland has fallen for seven months in a row. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that could be put at risk should Scotland vote to become independent?

Michael Moore: I believe that Scotland as part of the United Kingdom has the most appropriate opportunities, and that not only its businesses but its consumers benefit from the great strength of the UK economy. They have more choice and more security as part of the United Kingdom, and when times get tough—as we saw at the time of the banking crisis—the United Kingdom is there to help out. That is a good deal, and we should stick with it.

John Robertson (Glasgow North West) (Lab): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow South West (Mr Davidson), I represent a constituency in which the shipyards are the main employer. Scotstoun shipyard employs 2,000 people. What will happen to them if Scotland votes for independence next year?

Michael Moore: Once again, from the other side of the Clyde, the hon. Gentleman makes a very important point. That question is directed to the SNP routinely and it is one for which it has no answer. The arrangement we have with the shipyards and with construction at Rosyth and elsewhere is very good for Scotland, and we should long continue to be part of the UK.

Sir Robert Smith (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): Will the Secretary of State confirm that many of the jobs are in the offshore oil and gas industry, and we must not forget that that is a very dangerous environment to operate in, especially as we mark the 25th anniversary of the Piper Alpha disaster, when 167 lives were lost? Will he study the outcome of the conference Piper 25 held last week, to see the redoubled efforts of the industry to make conditions as safe as possible for those who work for us offshore?

Michael Moore: My hon. Friend is right to draw the House's attention to the tragic events of 25 years ago. The loss of 167 lives is something that the families, communities and area are still dealing with a quarter of a century later. We all remember that tragedy and remain committed to ensuring that we have the highest possible standards of health and safety in the North sea. As a Government, we remain committed to working with the sector, the trade unions and others to ensure that is the case, and of course we will study the recommendations from the conference to which my hon. Friend referred.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. It has suddenly gone quiet, which is very encouraging, but there was excessive noise in the Chamber. I know, however, that Members will want to be quiet for Margaret Curran.

Margaret Curran (Glasgow East) (Lab): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

For those who are in employment, will the Secretary of State for Scotland tell the House whether average wages have gone up or gone down in Scotland since the last election?

Michael Moore: I would have hoped the hon. Lady would have welcomed the fact that more people are in employment as a result of the measures we are taking, and that we have created nearly 150,000 private sector jobs in Scotland. Of course there are still challenges facing the economy, but the hon. Lady will remember the legacy she left us, and she can see for herself the crisis in the eurozone. We remain committed to taking the steps that will continue our progress on the road to recovery.

Margaret Curran: Once again the Secretary of State does not let the facts get in the way of the same old answer. Average wages in Scotland have, in fact, gone down by £1,100 since he took office. That is the equivalent of 14 tanks of petrol, 15 weekly shops, or over nine months of gas and electricity bills. The Secretary of State has said in the past

“the horrible truth is...everyone is going to have to make a contribution”.

Is this what he had in mind?

Michael Moore: Despite the changes from the shadow Chancellor in recent days, the hon. Lady does not seem to have caught up with the new script—the recognition that the Labour party left the decks burning when it went out of office three years ago. She is not going to be credible until she faces up to that. What I have said to her is, “Yes, these are tough times, and they continue to be challenging,” but what we are doing, by raising the tax threshold so that 224,000 Scots are out of tax all together and 2 million Scots are enjoying a £600 per annum reduction in their income tax bill, is very important. We continue to work for fairness and for a successful economy.

Discretionary Housing Payments

6. **Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): What discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions on the allocation of additional funds to local authorities in Scotland for discretionary housing payments. [160889]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell): Earlier this month my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and I met the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and Lord Freud, the Minister for welfare reform, to discuss information received from local authorities in Scotland on this matter.

Pete Wishart: The Minister will of course know that some 80% of affected households in Scotland contain a disabled adult, yet they get only a paltry 6.5% of the

total budget. Instead of concentrating on his pathetic scaremongering “project fear”, will he concentrate on the real fears of real Scots under this Tory-led Government?

David Mundell: What I am concentrating on is the real concerns of local authorities in Scotland. That is why the Secretary of State and I have met every single local authority in Scotland to discuss the specific concerns they have in relation to welfare reform, and we will meet the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities at the end of July to discuss the outcome of those discussions.

Economic Performance

7. **Mr Frank Roy** (Motherwell and Wishaw) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of the performance of the economy in Scotland. [160890]

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Michael Moore): Against a tough economic backdrop of the deficit we inherited from the previous Government and the crisis in the eurozone, we are taking the measures necessary to create a rebalanced economy with sustainable public finances.

Mr Roy: The Scottish economy needs people in work, but last year the Government supported the closure of the Remploy factor in Wishaw, and since then, nearly a year later, very few of those disabled workers have found a full-time job. How does that help the economy?

Michael Moore: I recognise the issue the hon. Gentleman raises on his constituents’ behalf, and others have done similar. I am very happy to meet him to discuss it further if he wishes. However, we want to ensure that we have an arrangement that helps those with disabilities, and others, to get into the workplace in a sustainable manner. [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. There is far too much noise in the Chamber. The House must and will hear Mr Alan Reid.

Mr Alan Reid (Argyll and Bute) (LD): Superfast broadband is very important for the economy of rural areas. The Government’s target is 90% coverage by 2015, but in the highlands and islands, Highlands and Islands Enterprise’s target is only 75% coverage in each local authority area by December 2016. Will my right hon. Friend meet me to discuss how we can get this target up to something comparable to the rest of the country?

Michael Moore: My hon. Friend is right to champion this cause, and it is very important indeed that we get superfast broadband as far across the UK as possible, and particularly in the highlands and islands. However, he might wish to wait for further announcements from the Government in the next day or so.

Angus Robertson (Moray) (SNP): As part of the “project fear” tactics, there has been a ridiculous level of scaremongering in relation to inward investment, whereas in fact, Scottish Development International and the Scottish Government have helped to deliver a 15-year high in investment levels. Will the Secretary of State apologise for the scaremongering tactics of “project fear” that he is a part of?

Michael Moore: The hon. Gentleman needs to relax a bit and address this issue sensibly. He surely recognises that that record investment comes on the back of a United Kingdom economic framework that is supportive to businesses wherever they locate in the United Kingdom, and through which businesses can get access to the whole of the United Kingdom economy, without any false barriers created by him and his friends.

Angus Robertson: But the failing austerity policies of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition Government are not delivering the growth we require in Scotland or in the UK. However, will he take the opportunity to welcome the help and support he is getting as part of the “project fear” campaign by those who agree with the austerity course, who will agree with the Conservative spending caps that have been announced, and who now agree with bedroom tax: namely—

Mr Speaker: Order. The question is too long.

Michael Moore: That is another neat diversion by the hon. Gentleman, but he cannot avoid the fact that he and his colleagues have no answers on the central questions of Scotland’s economy: what currency it will have, how the banks and others will be regulated, how trade will work across the United Kingdom. On every single important question, there are no answers from the SNP. It will not be listened to until those answers come.

Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con): Later today, the House will debate the High Speed Rail (Preparation) Bill. Does my right hon. Friend agree that this project will assist Scotland’s long-term economic growth?

Michael Moore: My hon. Friend is right: this is absolutely key to the whole of the UK’s economy, and I look forward to the benefits being enjoyed by all parts of Britain—north and south.

Mr William Bain (Glasgow North East) (Lab): This Government have delivered just one fifth of the promised growth since 2010. Is the Secretary of State also aware that the working-age employment rate in Scotland has fallen by 2% from five years ago, leaving a jobs gap for Scotland of more than 71,000? Does that not make the case for a jobs guarantee now to get Scotland’s young and long-term jobless people back into work, generate more tax revenues and help cut the deficit, which rose, not fell, last year under this incompetent Government?

Michael Moore: The hon. Gentleman should perhaps practise his questions a little more. Yet again, there is denial from him and his colleagues about the good progress we have been making on unemployment, and I hope he recognises that. It is absolutely essential that we take the measures to support people into work, which we are doing with the Work programme and the Youth Contract, and we will be making work pay with universal credit. He can shake his head, but he needs to get with the reality.

John Thurso (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): Does my right hon. Friend agree that connectivity through regional air hubs to international hubs is vital

to the performance of the Scottish economy? What can the Government do to assist in maintaining those links, particularly at Inverness and to the highlands?

Michael Moore: My hon. Friend is a real champion of those vital air links to the north and to the far north, which he represents. I know that he has been making strong representations recently, and we would be happy to have further meetings with him to discuss these issues.

Fiona O’Donnell (East Lothian) (Lab): The Office for Budget Responsibility states that real wages in Scotland will be lower in 2015 than they were when Labour left office. Why is the Secretary of State not standing up for hard-working Scots and protecting tax credits, and is instead giving a tax break to millionaires?

Michael Moore: There we go again. The hon. Lady, once again, chooses to ignore the absolute crisis that the Labour party left for the incoming Government three years ago. She forgets the measures we have taken to take low-paid Scots—224,000 of them—out of tax altogether. She forgets all those things. Without the firm measures we have taken in the past three years we would not be moving from rescue to recovery, as we are.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked—
Engagements

Q1. [161522] **Gordon Henderson** (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Con): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 26 June.

The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others, and, in addition to my duties in this House, I shall have further such meetings later today.

Gordon Henderson: Many people in Sittingbourne and Sheppey who have mortgages are benefiting from historically low interest rates. What reassurance can my right hon. Friend give my constituents that their mortgages will continue to be affordable under his Government?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We do enjoy record low interest rates, and that is good news for home owners. What we need to do is stick to the plans that we have set out and have a sensible fiscal policy, so that the Bank of England can keep interest rates low. Here is one piece of advice I will not be taking: on Saturday the leader of the Labour party said that he wanted to control borrowing but on Sunday the shadow Chancellor said borrowing would go up. Perhaps the leader of the Labour party will admit it when he gets to his feet: Labour would borrow more.

Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab): Last May, the Education Secretary said that “work will begin immediately” on 261 projects under the Priority School Building programme. Can the Prime Minister tell the House how many have begun?

The Prime Minister: What I can tell the right hon. Gentleman is that infrastructure spending under this Government has been higher than it was under Labour, and we have about £14 billion reserved for capital spending on our schools. But we have had to clear up the appalling mess left by the Building Schools for the Future programme.

Edward Miliband: I do not think the right hon. Gentleman knows the answer. I will tell him the answer: 261 schools were promised, only one has started. Now perhaps he can explain why.

The Prime Minister: We have had to recover from the appalling mess of the Building Schools for the Future programme. That is the mess that we inherited—as well as a record deficit—but it is this Government, as the Chancellor will announce in a minute, who are providing half a million extra school places.

Edward Miliband: I do not think the right hon. Gentleman knows the answer to that one. Let us try another one. In October 2011, he said he wanted to “bring forward every single infrastructure project that is in the pipeline”.

So, out of 576 projects set out in that plan, how many have been completed?

The Prime Minister: Let me give the right hon. Gentleman the figures for infrastructure spending. Our annual infrastructure investment is £33 billion, which is £4 billion more every year than was ever achieved under Labour. Now let me give him the figures for road schemes. We are investing more in major road schemes in each of the first—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. The answer from the Prime Minister must be heard and questions to him, from whichever side of the House, must be heard. It is very clear, very simple—it is called democracy.

The Prime Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman asked the question: how many of the schemes have been completed? You cannot build a nuclear power station overnight. By the way, the Labour Government had 13 years and they did not build a single one. Let me give him the figures on rail. This Government are electrifying more than 300 miles of railway routes. Perhaps he can tell us how many were electrified under Labour? How many? Nine miles—that is the Labour record that this Government are recovering from.

Edward Miliband: I will tell the Prime Minister about our record in infrastructure: 100 new hospitals under a Labour Government, 3,700 schools rebuilt under a Labour Government, and 3,500 new children’s centres—all under a Labour Government. He has no answer, so let me tell him it again: seven out of 576 projects, five of which were started under the previous Labour Government. He said that it takes a long time to complete these projects—I thought he might say that—but 80% have not even been started, despite the promises of three years ago. More promises, no delivery.

Let us see whether the Prime Minister can answer another one. Last year, the Government said that their NewBuy guarantee scheme would help 100,000 people buy a new home. How many people has it helped so far?

The Prime Minister: It has helped thousands of people and has been welcomed by the entire industry. The right hon. Gentleman talks about what was built under a Labour Government and we saw the results—a private finance initiative scheme on which we are still paying the debt and an 11% of GDP budget deficit that this Government will cut in half. That is the proof of what we are doing and we all know that the one question he has to answer is whether he will now admit that he wants to put borrowing up. Will he admit it?

Edward Miliband: Every time I come to Prime Minister’s questions, I ask the Prime Minister a question and he does not answer it—he just asks me one. The only fact that this House needs to know about borrowing is that contrary to the promise the Chancellor made in his autumn statement, it went up last year. That is the truth we find. Let me answer the question the Prime Minister did not know the answer to. He promised 100,000 new homes under NewBuy, but there have been just 2,000. At that rate, it will take until 2058 to meet the target he set.

The British Chambers of Commerce says that the Government’s plan for infrastructure is “hot air, a complete fiction.”

Even the Deputy Prime Minister has woken up to the problem. He said yesterday

“the gap between... announcement and delivery is quite significant.”

No kidding, Mr Speaker. Why should we believe the promises the Chancellor makes on infrastructure today when the Prime Minister’s own deputy says that they are failing to deliver?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman asks for the figures on housing, so let me give him those figures. We have delivered 84,000 new affordable homes. Housing supply is at the highest level since 2008, house building is increasing at a faster rate than for more than two years and we have put in place £11 billion for housing investment. Let me ask him again the question he will not answer—[*Interruption.*] I know that he does not want to answer the question, but that is why half the country think he is Bert from “The Muppets”, as they think he belongs in “Sesame Street”, not Downing street. Let me give him another go: will he admit that borrowing would go up under Labour?

Edward Miliband: Let me say to the Prime Minister that we will swap places any time. Here is the reality: the Prime Minister promised to balance the books, but borrowing was up last year; he said that we are all in it together, but living standards are falling; he promised to get Britain building, but the Government have not. All we need to know about this Chancellor’s spending review is that the British people are paying the price for their failure.

The Prime Minister: Let us remember what the Leader of the Opposition said at the time of the last spending review. He said unemployment would go up; it has gone down. He told us crime would go up; it has gone down. He told us volunteering would go down; it has gone up. He told us that poorer students would not go to university; the percentage has gone up. He told us that our immigration policy would not work; we have cut immigration by a third. That is what we have done—as ever, he is wrong about the economy, wrong about everything and never trusted by the British people.

Q2. [161523] **Rehman Chishti** (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con): Today, the Government publish the spending round for 2015-16. Will the Prime Minister confirm that it rejects the representations to borrow less by borrowing more, as proposed by the Opposition?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. On Saturday, the leader of the Labour party told us there would be iron discipline on spending, but on Sunday, the shadow Chancellor, on the television, having been asked five times, admitted that yes, borrowing would go up. So there we have it: they want to borrow less by borrowing more; they want to spend less by spending more; they want to cap welfare by spending more on welfare. No wonder it is not just people at Wimbledon saying, "New balls, please." [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. In congratulating the hon. Gentleman on his birthday, I call Mr David Winnick.

Hon. Members: Twenty-one today, twenty-one today, he's got the key of the door, never been twenty-one before—

Mr David Winnick (Walsall North) (Lab): I certainly would not suggest a vote on it, Mr Speaker.

Is the Prime Minister aware how shocking it is that the police apparently spent more time investigating the parents and friends of Stephen Lawrence than the racist murder itself, which took place in 1993? When the Home Secretary meets Mrs Lawrence, will she apologise for what occurred? Is it really right for the police to investigate themselves?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman makes an extremely serious point about a very serious situation. The Lawrence family have suffered appallingly: they lost their son; there was the failure to investigate properly, year after year; and now they hear these allegations that the police were trying to undermine them, rather than help them. My right hon. Friend the Home Secretary set out in the House on Monday the two inquiries— independent inquiries, already under way—and she met Mark Ellison QC again this morning to make sure that his inquiry will cover the allegations made overnight about the bugging by the police of a friend of Stephen Lawrence, but nothing is off the table. If more needs to be done and if further investigations or inquiries need to be held, they will be held. This is not an acceptable situation, and we must get to the bottom of it.

Q3. [161524] **Jane Ellison** (Battersea) (Con): My Battersea constituency is attracting a large amount of inward investment from around the world for major infrastructure projects. Does the Prime Minister agree with me that one of the ways in which we are restoring the UK's credibility overseas is by dealing with our debts and showing how we fund public spending properly?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. The redevelopment of Battersea power station, which for all those years under Labour stood there completely empty and unused, is to start this year, because under this Government we take infrastructure

seriously, we get investors to come into our country, and we get projects started—unlike the wasted years under Labour.

Q4. [161525] **John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): Never mind Battersea, what about Bassetlaw? In its last six years, the Labour Government delivered £225 million-worth of major infrastructure projects. Can the Prime Minister confirm that in his three years there has been zero delivery of such projects and zero starts of such projects? When will he stop faffing around and get the new Elkesley flyover and the new Serlby Park school, which were guaranteed by the last Government, started in my constituency?

The Prime Minister: The last Government made a lot of guarantees and wrote a lot of cheques, but they could not deliver and they left us with an enormous budget deficit. Let me give the hon. Gentleman the figures: our spending on capital spending is higher than what Labour planned, and annual infrastructure investment is £33 billion, which is £4 billion more than Labour achieved, even in the boom years. That is what happened: they had an unaffordable boom and a painful bust, and it is this Government who are delivering the recovery.

Ben Gummer (Ipswich) (Con): The Prime Minister knows Ipswich well and he knows that it has some of the poorest wards in the country. He will know that two of those wards were promised schools by the previous Government. They did not deliver them in 13 years. I have just been to the topping out ceremony of one of them, delivered by this Government, and next year we will break ground on the other. When it comes to promises to the least advantaged people in our community, Labour are very good at promising. We deliver.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Opposition do not like hearing the evidence of the new schools being built by the Government in difficult times. Also, when we talked about the east of England, year after year, there were calls for improvements to the A11—never delivered, but delivered by this Government.

Q5. [161526] **Mr Gregory Campbell** (East Londonderry) (DUP): The staging of the G8 proved that Northern Ireland is open to the world for business. Now we need the business of the world to come to Northern Ireland. Will the Prime Minister give us an outline of what he will do in conjunction with the American Administration and the Northern Ireland Executive to deliver a successful inward investment conference in October to deliver thousands of much-needed private sector jobs?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and I look forward to coming to Northern Ireland for that vital investment conference. I think that what we will be able to demonstrate is not only the success of the G8 and the great advertisement that that was for Northern Ireland but the coming together of the UK Government and the Northern Irish Assembly with plans both for economic development and for breaking down the barriers in Northern Ireland between different communities. That shared future agenda is important not just for the future of society in Northern Ireland but for the future of our economy too.

Sir Robert Smith (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (LD): I recently met Banchory Academy's Amnesty International group, which has highlighted concerns about the risks to women in Afghanistan. What reassurance can the Prime Minister provide that the Government will continue their efforts to make sure that there is no return to the threats to women that we have seen in Afghanistan in the past?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes an important point and we should continue to support the Afghan constitution, which gives important guarantees in that regard. I spoke yesterday to President Karzai, including on the issue of the Afghan constitution and how important it is. We are making a major investment by supporting the Afghan national security forces, and through our aid programme—over \$100 million a year—we can help to secure the sort of advances in Afghanistan that we all want to see.

Q6. [161527] **John Cryer** (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): Further to the question that the Prime Minister failed to answer last week, can he confirm that he has never had a conversation with Lynton Crosby about alcohol pricing or cigarettes? The question is not “Has he been lobbied?”, but “Has he had that conversation?”

The Prime Minister: As I said last week, I have never been lobbied by Lynton Crosby about anything. The difference between me and, frankly, every Opposition Member is that I can put my hand on my heart and say that I have never been lobbied by trade union after trade union making donation after donation, fixing parliamentary selection after parliamentary selection. That is the real problem in British politics, and it is time that we cleaned it up.

Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con) With Armed Forces day— [Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order. These are important matters: Mr Berry must be heard.

Jake Berry: Thank you, Mr Speaker. With Armed Forces day in mind this weekend, will my right hon. Friend join me in supporting a campaign in Rossendale and Darwen, supported by Support Our Soldiers, the *Rossendale Free Press* and the *Lancashire Telegraph*, encouraging local residents to come and pack boxes to be sent to our troops serving in Afghanistan? We hope that by the end of this weekend we will have packed 500 to be sent to our troops.

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my hon. Friend, and everyone in Rossendale and Darwen who is taking part in this excellent initiative. I have seen these boxes not only being packed in Britain but unloaded in Afghanistan, and I can see the huge pleasure and support that they give our troops in Afghanistan. We should continue to use the money that has been raised in fines from irresponsible bankers following the LIBOR inquiry to invest in the armed forces covenant. Under this Government, we have made real progress in delivering that sort of help and support to armed forces, their families and their communities.

Q7. [161528] **Mr William Bain** (Glasgow North East) (Lab): In October 2010, the Prime Minister told the Conservative party conference:

“In five years' time, we will have balanced the books.”

That promise is going to be broken, is it not, Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: We have cut the deficit by a third, and we will cut it further by the next election. Frankly, coming to the House complaining about borrowing when you plan to put it up is a pretty odd political strategy. That is the question that the hon. Gentleman has to put to his Front Bench. Why, if borrowing is a problem, is it Labour policy to put it up?

Charlotte Leslie (Bristol North West) (Con): In 2008 Labour buried three reports warning of a culture of fear in the NHS and warning about inspections. Now we find that its Care Quality Commission has buried concerns over baby deaths. Will the Prime Minister support a root-and-branch review of the sinister culture of cover-up in our NHS over the past decade?

The Prime Minister: First, I commend my hon. Friend for this campaign that she is fighting for openness, transparency and clarity in our NHS. She makes an important point, which is that there was a culture under the previous Government of not revealing problems in the NHS. The former Health Secretary is shaking his head, but this is what the former head of the CQC, Baroness Young, appointed by the previous Government, said—[Interruption.] I know the Opposition do not want to hear it, but they are going to have to hear it, because it is important that we understand the culture that went wrong under Labour. She said this:

“There was huge government pressure, because the government hated the idea that—that a regulator would criticise it by dint of criticising one of the hospitals or one of the services that it was responsible for.”

That is what Barbara Young said. And she said:

“We were under more pressure. . . when”—

the right hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham)—“became minister, from the politics.”

There was a culture problem under Labour, and the sooner the Opposition admit it, the better.

Q8. [161529] **Barry Gardiner** (Brent North) (Lab): We now know from the latest Office for National Statistics figures that borrowing did rise last year, and the Prime Minister will recall that the Chancellor of the Exchequer two years ago said, “We have asked the British people for all that is needed, there is no need to ask for more.” Today, why is he asking for more?

The Prime Minister: We have to have a spending review to cover the year 2015-16, which was not covered by previous spending reviews. We have got the deficit down by a third. It is hard, painful and difficult work but we are clearing up the mess left when the hon. Gentleman was a Minister in the previous Government.

Ian Swales (Redcar) (LD): Sixteen to 18-year-olds can receive free school meals in schools, academies, free schools and university technical colleges, but not in sixth-form colleges and further education colleges, such as those in my constituency. Will the Prime Minister act now to end this clear injustice left by Labour?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to look at this issue. I know that school meals are very much in the news this week because it is a week when we should be promoting healthy eating in our schools. I am happy to look at the issue, but we have to think very carefully about how best to use the education budget to get money directed to schools for all our children.

Q9. [161530] **Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I think the Prime Minister will agree that both his generation and mine were lucky enough to come on to the labour market at a time of full employment and great opportunity. Has he seen the OECD figures this morning in a report that shows the gravity of youth unemployment in our country? May we please, at this late stage in this Government, have a determination to stop unemployment up to the age of 25, as is the case in the Netherlands? Why cannot we deliver that for young people in our country?

The Prime Minister: I absolutely agree with the hon. Gentleman that youth unemployment is a scourge. There is good news in the fact that unemployment has been coming down and youth unemployment has been coming down, but he is absolutely right that it should not be the case that we have youth unemployment of 55% in Spain, yet it is under 8% in Holland. We need to make sure here in the UK that we are performing alongside Holland, Germany and the countries with the lowest rates of youth unemployment. We do that by having a flexible labour market and by helping businesses to invest and locate here. As we stand today, employment is growing faster here than it is in any other G7 country, including Germany, so we are doing the right thing, but we need to focus more on young people.

Mr Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): I have the Prime Minister's helpful recent letter to me, underlining in his own hand that housing development does not trump the green belt. I gave his letter to Martin Pike, the planning inspector reviewing Reigate and Banstead's core strategy, and I regret to report that he upheld the principle that green fields in the green belt could be identified for development against the wishes of local people. Will my right hon. Friend now direct the amendment of the national planning policy framework to better protect green fields in the green belt from unwanted development?

The Prime Minister: I remember underlining that part of the letter. The rules about the green belt have not changed. A local authority can change the green belt only by taking something out of the green belt and putting something back in, in consultation with local people. I know my hon. Friend is having that discussion with his local authority and I am quite convinced that, with the NPPF that we have in place, we can get the balance right between environmental protection on the one hand and the need for more housing on the other.

Q10. [161531] **Graham Stringer** (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab): This afternoon I shall vote enthusiastically for the High Speed Rail (Preparation) Bill, but can the Prime Minister explain why he has instructed his officials and Ministers to oppose the extension of the trans-European network north of London, which will mean that if we stay in the European Union, High Speed 2 and other transport links to the north of England will not be eligible for funding?

The Prime Minister: Obviously we will be looking at all the ways we can increase the funding available for high-speed rail because, as the hon. Gentleman says, it is very important not only that we achieve high-speed rail between London and Birmingham, but that we build the next stages as well.

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): The Prime Minister knows how hard the Shropshire MPs have worked to get a direct train service from London to Shrewsbury. Virgin wants to implement that direct service in December, but unfortunately Network Rail is trying to prevent that from happening. We are the only county town in England without a direct rail service to London. Will he use his good offices to ensure that that blockage is resolved?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that the Transport Secretary will be meeting him next week to discuss the issue. In terms of the answer I just gave on high-speed rail, I think that we have to recognise that there is a lot of congestion on our existing main lines and that high-speed rail will help free up services so that we can have more direct connections, particularly to important towns such as Shrewsbury.

Q11. [161532] **Meg Munn** (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab/Co-op): The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills proposes to abolish the protection for the name "Sheffield" that guarantees the quality of our manufactured goods. The Ministry of Defence proposes to move the headquarters of our Territorial Army regiment out of the city. What have this Government got against the businesses and people of Sheffield?

The Prime Minister: Sheffield is a fantastic city and a very important part of Britain's industrial base, and I am proud of the fact that, through the regional growth fund and other schemes, we are investing in its future. On the reserves, we are actually putting more money into the reserves—an extra £1.5 billion—to ensure that we get them up to the level of strength needed for Future Force 2020. On the other issue, I am reliably informed that the hon. Lady should have some confidence.

Sir Bob Russell (Colchester) (LD): Military bands are important not only to Her Majesty's armed forces, but to the civilian population. The previous Labour Government cut the number of Army bands by a quarter. In this Armed Forces week, will the Prime Minister give an assurance that there will be no further cuts to Army bands?

The Prime Minister: The assurance I can give my hon. Friend, as the Chancellor will say in a few minutes, is this: yes, of course we have had to make difficult efficiencies in the Ministry of Defence, but there will be no further reductions in the size of our Army, Navy or Air Force, and we will continue with an equipment programme that I think is second to none in terms of the capabilities we will be giving our brave armed service personnel.

Q12. [161533] **Stephen Pound** (Ealing North) (Lab): Mr Speaker, you will recall that over a year ago—you probably know the exact date—the Prime Minister announced an internal inquiry, to be led by the lustrously named Lord Gold, into the cash-for-access

scandal, in which major Conservative party donors were richly, if not royally, entertained at Downing street and Chequers. When does the Prime Minister plan to produce and publish the results of that inquiry?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to set out for the hon. Gentleman all the things Lord Gold recommended and all the steps that we will be taking, but as we do so perhaps he could impose the issue of donations on his Front Benchers and ask them when they will pay back the taxes they managed to dodge from their donor?

Q13. [161534] **Stephen Mosley** (City of Chester) (Con): School dinners are vital to ensuring that children eat healthily and in helping to tackle childhood obesity. Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the parliamentary launch of national school meals week, which will take place in the Jubilee Room this afternoon?

The Prime Minister: I certainly join my hon. Friend in that. I think it is a very important cause, because we have had several problems with school meals over the years. They are not attractive enough for young people who want to take them, and there are also problems with obesity, so getting this right, which has been happening over recent years, is extremely important. I speak as someone with two children who enjoy their school meals, and I want the school to go on winning the battle for school meals, rather than having to make the packed lunches.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): The revelation that the Metropolitan police may have withheld evidence from the Macpherson inquiry has rightly been met with public derision, but the Prime Minister's answer earlier on really did not go far enough. The public are not satisfied by the police investigating the police, and nor will an inquiry held in secret, no matter how eminent the QC, satisfy public opinion. Will the Prime Minister now give an undertaking to hold a public inquiry with the power to summon people and hear evidence under oath?

The Prime Minister: As I said earlier, I rule absolutely nothing out. We have got to get to the bottom of this. But to be fair, this is not the Metropolitan police investigating the Metropolitan police. Two inquiries are under way. One is led by Mark Ellison QC, who played a very major role in prosecuting some of those responsible and who met the Home Secretary today, and the second is led by the chief constable of Derbyshire police force. We need to make sure that they have all the powers and everything that they need. But as I said very clearly, if we need to go further to get to the truth, we will.

Q14. [161535] **Mr Mark Spencer** (Sherwood) (Con): As the spending round is published, will the Prime Minister assure the House that Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs will be given the resources to clamp down on tax avoidance, such as the £700,000 avoided by the Labour party?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. I said that I would mention this at every Prime Minister's questions; I have already managed to

get it in once and it is a great pleasure to get it in again. They owe £700,000 of tax that could be going into schools or hospitals. It is about time they realised what hypocrites they are and paid up the money.

Q15. [161536] **Ann McKechnin** (Glasgow North) (Lab): With more than 400,000 house building plots with planning permission remaining unbuilt on in this country, does the Prime Minister agree with me that we should now put pressure on companies to start building and creating jobs rather than simply waiting for their profits to increase?

The Prime Minister: I agree with the hon. Lady that we need to do more to encourage businesses to build on the plots they already have. That is why we have taken unprecedented steps, with schemes such as Help to Buy that are making mortgages available to young people. All those initiatives are actually making a difference, and housing starts are radically up compared with two years ago. But I do not rule out taking further steps as well.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): The Government deserve credit for having introduced the cancer drugs fund, which has helped more than 30,000 cancer patients since 2010, but can I share with the Prime Minister the fact that there is growing concern about the lack of clarity regarding its replacement at the beginning of the year? Will he look at this as a matter of urgency?

The Prime Minister: I am looking at it as a matter of urgency. I am very proud of the cancer drugs fund; as my hon. Friend says, it has saved many lives and made drugs available to more than 30,000 people. It has been expanded to include some treatments as well as drugs. I certainly want to see this a record that we build on and in no way put at risk.

Sheila Gilmore (Edinburgh East) (Lab): Last week, the Prime Minister said that people on the Labour Benches had forgotten about the bedroom tax. I can assure him that my constituents certainly have not. In my city last week, only 23 one-bedroom homes were available for let. Of those, four had more than 200 applicants. When is the Prime Minister going to admit that this is not the best way of reducing the housing benefit bill?

The Prime Minister: The point I make to the hon. Lady is that we are removing the spare room subsidy because it is right for there to be fairness between people in privately rented accommodation and people in socially rented accommodation. But this, in a way, is the perfect prelude to the spending review that we are about to hear. Labour has told us that it is now going to be responsible about spending and that it is going to accept the cuts that have been made, yet we hear, week after week, Back Bencher after Back Bencher, Front Bencher after Front Bencher complaining about the difficult decisions that we have had to take and promising to reverse them. That is why Labour has absolutely no credibility whatever.

Spending Review

12.33 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr George Osborne):

This coalition came into office with a commitment to address with firmness and resolve one of the biggest economic crises of the post-war era. The action we have taken, together with the British people, has brought the deficit down by a third, helped a record number of people into work, and taken our economy back from the brink of bankruptcy; and it allows us to say that while recovery from such a deep recession can never be straightforward, Britain is moving out of intensive care, and from rescue to recovery.

Today we announce the latest action to secure the recovery. We act on behalf of every taxpayer and every future taxpayer who wants high-quality public services at a price our country can afford. We act on behalf of everyone who knows that Britain has got to live within its means. We have applied three principles to the spending round I will set out today: reform, to get more from every pound we spend; growth, to give Britain the education, enterprise and economic infrastructure it needs to win the global race; and fairness, making sure we are all in it together by ensuring those with the broadest shoulders bear the largest burden and making sure the unfairness of the something-for-nothing culture in our welfare system is changed.

We have always understood that the greatest unfairness was loading debts on to our children that our generation did not have the courage to tackle ourselves. We have always believed, against much opposition, that it is possible to get better public services at lower cost—that you can cut bureaucracy and boost enterprise by taking burdens off the back of business. In the face of all the evidence, the opposition to these ideas has collapsed into incoherence. We have always believed that the deficit mattered—that we needed to take tough decisions to deal with our debts—and the opposition to that has collapsed into incoherence too. Today I announce the next stage of our economic plan to turn Britain around.

Let me start with the overall picture on spending. In their last year in office, the previous Government were borrowing £1 in every £4 that they spent. It was a record for a British Government in peacetime and a calamitous risk with our economic stability. As the note we saw again this week from their outgoing Chief Secretary put it,

“I’m afraid there is no money.”

So we acted immediately. Three years ago, we set out plans to make savings and to reduce our borrowing. Instead of the £157 billion the last Government were borrowing, this year we are set to borrow £108 billion pounds: that is £49 billion less in borrowing. That is virtually the entire education budget.

So we have made real progress, putting right what went so badly wrong. But while we have been acting, the challenges from abroad have grown: a eurozone in crisis, rising oil prices, and the damage from our own banking crisis worse than anyone feared. The truth is that we have to deal with the world as it is, not as we would wish it to be, so this country has to continue to make savings. I can report to the House that the biggest single saving we have made in government is the £6 billion a year less we are paying to service our debts than the

previous Government budgeted for. Bear that number in mind when you hear the Opposition complaining about cuts.

The deficit has come down by a third, yet at over 7% it remains far too high, so we must continue to take action—not just because it is wrong to go on adding debts to our children’s shoulders, but because we know from the global turbulence of the last few years that the economic risks are real and the recovery has to be sustained. If we abandoned our deficit plan, Britain would be back in intensive care. So the figures today show that until 2017-18, total managed expenditure—in other words, the total amount of Government spending—will continue to fall in real terms at the same average rate as it is falling today.

The task before us today is to spell out what that means for 2015-16. Total managed expenditure will be £745 billion. To put that huge sum into context, consider this: if Government spending had been allowed to rise through this Parliament at the average rate of the last three decades, that total would have been £120 billion higher. This Government have taken—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. The Chancellor must not have to shout to be heard. Members know that I will always accommodate the interests of Back Benchers on both sides in scrutinising these matters intensively, but the Chancellor and, in due course, the shadow Chancellor must be properly and fairly heard.

Mr Osborne: This Government have taken unprecedented steps to achieve that expenditure control. Now we need to find £11.5 billion of further savings. I want to pay a personal tribute to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary for the huge effort that he has put into delivering them. Finding savings on that scale has not been easy. These are difficult decisions that will affect people in our country, but there never was an easy way to bring spending under control. Reform, growth and fairness are the principles. Let me take each in turn.

I will start with reform and the obligation that we all have in this House to ensure that we get more for every pound of taxpayers’ money that we spend. With the help of my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Cabinet Office, we have been combing through Whitehall, driving out costs, renegotiating contracts and reducing the size of government. Cutting money that the previous Government were spending on marketing and consultants, reforming Government IT and negotiating harder on behalf of the taxpayer have already saved almost £5 billion. In this spending round, we will find a further £5 billion of efficiency savings. That is nearly half of the total savings we need to achieve.

We are reforming pay in the public sector. We are holding down pay awards, and public sector pay rises will be limited to an average of up to 1% for 2015-16. However, the biggest reform that we will make on pay is to automatic progression pay. That is the practice whereby many employees not only get a pay rise every year, but automatically move up a pay grade every single year, regardless of performance. Some public sector employees see annual pay rises of 7%. Progression pay can at best be described as antiquated; at worst, it is deeply unfair to other parts of the public sector that do not get it and to the private sector that has to pay for it. So we will end automatic progression pay in the civil service by 2015-16,

[Mr George Osborne]

and we are working to remove automatic pay rises simply for time served in our schools, NHS, prisons and police. The armed forces will be excluded from those reforms.

Keeping pay awards down and ending automatic progression pay means that, for every pound we have to save in central administration, we can better limit job losses. I do not want to disguise from the House that there will be further reductions in the number of people working in the public sector. The Office for Budget Responsibility has forecast that the total number of people working for the Government will fall by a further 144,000 by 2015-16. I know that for those who are affected that is difficult. That is the consequence of the country spending far beyond its means.

When I presented the spending round three years ago, I said that about half a million posts in the public sector were forecast to have to go. That is indeed what has happened, and we are saving £2 billion a year, with a civil service now smaller than at any time since the war. I also said three years ago that I was confident that job creation in the private sector would more than make up for the losses. That prediction created more controversy than almost anything else at the time, including with the Opposition. The shadow Chancellor called it “a complete fantasy”. Instead, every job lost in the public sector has been offset by three new jobs in the private sector. In the last year, five new jobs have been created for every job cut in the public sector. The central argument of those who fought against our plan is completely demolished by the ingenuity, enterprise and ambition of Britain’s businesses. I pay tribute to the hard-working people of this country who proved their pessimism wrong.

In this spending round, the Treasury will, as one would expect, lead by example. In 2015-16, our resource budget will be reduced by 10%. The Cabinet Office will also see its resource budget reduced by 10%. However, within that we will continue to fund support for social action, including the National Citizen Service. Ninety thousand places will be available for young adults in the citizen service next year, rising to 150,000 by 2016. It is a fantastic programme that teaches young people about their responsibilities as well as their rights, and we are expanding it.

Local government will have to make further savings too. My right hon. Friend the Communities and Local Government Secretary has set an example to all his colleagues in reducing the size of his Department by 60% and abolishing 12 quangos. He is a model of lean government, and has agreed to a further 10% saving in his resource budget. But we are committing to more than £3 billion capital investment in affordable housing and we will extend the troubled families programme to reach 400,000 more vulnerable families who need extra support. We are proving that it is possible to save money and create more progressive government. That is the right priority.

Here is another of the Government’s priorities: helping families with the cost of living. Because we know that times are tough, we have helped to keep mortgage rates low, increased the personal allowance, cut fuel duty and frozen council tax. That council tax freeze is due to come to an end next April. I do not want that to happen, so I can tell the House today that because of

the savings we have made we can help families with their bills. We will fund councils to freeze council tax for the next two years. That is nearly £100 off the average council tax bill for families, and brings savings on these bills for families to £600 over this Parliament. That demonstrates our commitment to all those who want to work hard and get on.

There is one more thing that we can do to help with the cost of living in one part of the country. For years, Members from the south-west of England have fought on behalf of their constituents who face exceptionally high water bills. Nothing was done until we came to office. Now we have cut those water bills by £50 per household every year until 2015. My hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice) and many others have campaigned to extend that rebate beyond 2015. I am happy to confirm today that we will do that. Taking money out of the cost of government and putting it in the pockets of families—that is what we mean by reform.

Local government has already taken difficult decisions to reduce staff numbers, share services and make savings. I pay tribute to Sir Merrick Cockell for all he has done in showing how this can be achieved. We were told by the scaremongers that savings in local government would decimate local services. Instead, public satisfaction with local council services has gone up under this Government. That is because, with our reforms, communities have more control over their own destiny. That is because we have devolved power and responsibility to manage budgets locally. That is because we have let councils benefit from the tax receipts that come when the local economy grows. Today, we give more freedom, including greater flexibility over assets, and we will drive greater integration of local emergency services. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood) for his fresh thinking in this area, which has helped to inform us.

We are also embarking on major reforms to the way we spend money locally through the creation of the single local growth fund that Lord Heseltine proposed. This will be £2 billion per year, which is at least £10 billion over the next Parliament. Local enterprise partnerships can bid for that sum, and the details will be set out tomorrow. Our philosophy is simple: trust people to make their own decisions and they will usually make better decisions. But in return for those freedoms, we have to ask local government for the kind of sacrifices central Government are making. The local government resource budget will be reduced by 10% in 2015-16, but when all the changes affecting local government that I will set out are taken into account, including local income and other central Government funding, local government spending reduces by approximately 2%.

I set out today the block grants to the devolved Administrations. Because we have prioritised health and schools in England, this feeds through the Barnett formula to require resource savings of about 2% in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Scottish resource budget will be set at £25.7 billion, and Scotland will benefit from new capital borrowing powers of almost £300 million. Being part of the UK means that Scotland will see its capital spending power increase by almost 13% in real terms in 2015-16. It is rightly for the

Scottish Parliament to decide how best to use it. That is devolution within a United Kingdom delivering for Scotland.

The Welsh resource budget will be £13.6 billion, and we will shortly publish our response to the Silk commission on further devolution of taxation and borrowing. When we do so, we will be able to say more about the impressive plans to improve the M4 in south Wales that my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Alun Cairns) and others have been campaigning for. The Northern Ireland resource budget will be £9.6 billion. We have agreed to provide an additional £31 million in 2015 to help the Police Service of Northern Ireland tackle the threat posed by terrorism. Those police officers do an incredibly brave job on our behalf, and we salute them. Separately, we will make 10% savings to the Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland Offices.

We believe that the cultural heritage of our nations is not just an economic asset, but has intrinsic value. When times are tough, they too must make a contribution to the savings this country requires. The Department for Culture Media and Sport will make savings of 7% in its resource budget. Elite sports will be protected and the funding of community sports, arts and museums will be reduced by just 5%, but because we recognise the value of our greatest museums, galleries and English Heritage, we are giving them much greater freedom from state control, which they have long called for, applying our reforming principles across the board and empowering those on the front line who know best—what the director of the British Museum called:

“good news in a tough economic climate”.

And while we are at it, we will make sure that the site of the battle of Waterloo is restored in time for the 200th anniversary to commemorate those who died there and to celebrate a great victory of coalition forces over a discredited former regime that impoverished millions.

We still have the finest armed forces in the world, and we intend to keep it that way. The first line of national defence is sound public finances and a balanced defence budget, and my right hon. Friend the Defence Secretary is helping to deliver both. He and his predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox), have filled the £38 billion black hole they inherited in the finances of the Ministry of Defence. We will continue to ensure we get maximum value for money from what will remain, which, at over 2% of our GDP, is one of the largest defence budgets in the world. The defence resource budget will be maintained in cash terms at £24 billion, while the equipment budget will be £14 billion and will grow by 1% in real terms thereafter. We will further reduce the civilian work force and their allowances; renegotiate more of the hopeless private finance initiative contracts signed in the last decade; and overhaul the way we buy equipment.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has rightly been clear throughout, however, that he is not prepared to see a reduction in Britain's military capabilities. This spending round not only protects those capabilities, but enhances them with the latest technologies. We will not cut the number of soldiers, sailors or airmen—we need them to defend our country—and we will give them the best kit to do that job: new aircraft carriers, submarines, stealth fighters, destroyers and state-of-the-art armoured

vehicles. We also make a major commitment to invest in cyber. It is the new frontier of defence and a priority for the Government.

We will look after families who have lost their loved ones and those injured protecting us long after the wars they fought in are over. We previously committed to fund the military covenant for five years, and today I commit to funding the armed forces covenant permanently. We will do that with the money we have collected from the LIBOR fines, so those who represented the very worst values will support those who represent the very best of British values. Our veterans will not be forgotten.

The intelligence services are on the front line too. Silently, and often heroically, these fellow citizens protect us and our way of life, and so we will protect them in return, with a 3.4% increase in their combined resource budget. The Foreign Office is the public face of our diplomacy, and my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague) is quite simply the best Foreign Secretary we have had in a generation. He, too, has demonstrated how we can make our taxpayer pound go further. While making savings in his budget, he has managed to expand our network of embassies in the emerging world and focus his diplomats on British commercial interests. There will be further savings in that budget of 8% in 2015, but he is still committing to strengthen our embassy network in high-growth markets, from Shanghai to Abuja.

The Foreign Office projects our values abroad, and the Home Office protects our values here in Britain.

Chris Ruane (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): Is she the best Home Secretary for a generation?

Mr Osborne: Police reform is a model of what we can achieve across Government. Police forces are more accountable to the public, with modern working practices, the latest equipment and democratic oversight, and all that on a smaller—

Hon. Members: Is she the best for a generation?

Mr Osborne: Yes, she is the best Home Secretary for a generation—and a hell of a lot better than the ones who went before.

What was the Opposition's prediction? They said that crime would rise, and what has happened instead? Crime has fallen by more than 10%. Thanks to the hard work of police officers up and down this country, crime is at its lowest level for 30 years. What was their prediction about our borders? They said that because of cuts we would not be able to control immigration, and what has happened instead? Net immigration is down by more than one third.

This Home Secretary is demonstrating that responsible budgets and reform can deliver better services for the public. In 2015, she will work with a resource budget of £9.9 billion, which is a saving of 6%, but the police budget will be cut by less than that. There will be further savings in the central Department, police forces will be encouraged to share services and some visa fees will go up, but protecting Britain from the terrorist threat remains a top priority, so I can confirm that the police counter-terrorism budget will not be cut at all.

[Mr George Osborne]

For the police to do their job, they need a criminal justice system that works a lot better. A case of common assault can take 240 days to pass through the courts and involves five separate sets of case papers generated on three different computer systems. In some prisons, the cost of keeping a prisoner is £40,000 a year, but in others, it is one third of that, while the cost of legal aid per head is double the European average. My right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor is reforming all these things, and by doing so will make savings of 10% in his departmental budget—and he will do that while for the first time offering probation services for those who have served short sentences to help to end the revolving door of crime and reoffending.

That is an example of the reform we are bringing in across Government, and every step of the way, every penny saved, every programme reformed, every entitlement reduced, every difficult choice taken, has been opposed by vested interests and those who got Britain into this mess in the first place. We will not let up. I will not let that happen. The reform will continue.

Government spending does not alone create sustainable growth; enterprise does, and the job of the state is to provide the schools, science, transport links and reliable energy that enable business to grow. Britain was once the place where the future was invented, from the railway to jet engine to the world wide web. We can be that country again, and today we set out how to get there. A huge amount of innovation and discovery still goes on, but successive Governments, of all colours, have put short-term pressures over long-term needs and refused to commit to capital spending plans that match the horizons of a modern economy. Today we change that. We commit now to £50 billion of capital investment in 2015. From roads to railways, bridges to broadband, science to schools, it will amount to more than £300 billion of capital spending guaranteed to the end of this decade.

Today, we raise our national game. That means that Britain will spend on average more as a percentage of its national income on capital investment in this decade, despite the fact that money is tight, than in the previous decade, when Government spending was being wasted in industrial quantities.

My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will tomorrow set out the next stage of our economic infrastructure plan, with specific plans for more than £100 billion of infrastructure projects. Here is what that will mean for the Departments. The Department for Transport will make a 9% saving in its day-to-day resource spending, bearing down on the running costs of Transport for London and on rail administration, but its capital budget will rise to £9.5 billion—the largest rise of any part of Government—and we will repeat that commitment for every year to 2020.

We are already massively expanding investment on major road schemes, but we will do more. We are announcing the largest programme of investment in our roads for half a century. We have already expanded our investment in the railways, but we will do more. We are committing to the largest investment in our railways since the Victorian age, and with the legislation before this House today, we should give the green light to HS2,

which will provide a huge boost to the north of England and a transformation of the economic geography of this country.

Here in London, we are digging Crossrail, the largest urban infrastructure project in Europe, but we will do more. We are looking now at the case for Crossrail 2, linking London from north to south. We are going to give the Mayor almost £9 billion pounds of capital spending and additional financing power to the end of this decade.

Ms Rosie Winterton (Doncaster Central) (Lab): Is he the best ever? Better than the Prime Minister?

Mr Osborne: Well, he's a lot better than Ken Livingstone, that's for sure.

Investing in our economic infrastructure also means investing in energy, so we will provide the certainty that investors are crying out for in western countries. This country is already spending more on renewables than ever before. Now we will provide future strike prices for low carbon. We are restarting our civil nuclear programme when other countries are unable to continue theirs, and now we are providing guarantees for new nuclear. Our exploitation of gas in the North sea is already second to none. Now we are making the tax and planning changes that will put Britain at the forefront of exploiting shale gas. We will provide our country with the energy of the future at a price that we can afford. Taken together, this should support over £100 billion of private sector investment in energy.

The Department of Energy and Climate Change will do this while reducing its resource budget by 8%. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will see a 10% reduction, but we will set out plans for a major commitment to new flood defences for the rest of this decade. Again, we are prioritising long-term capital through day-to-day cost savings, which is exactly the tough choice that Britain should be making.

It is not enough to have roads, power stations and flood defences. That is just the physical infrastructure we need to compete in the 21st century. We need the intellectual capital, too. This country needs to invent, pioneer and export around the world. That means backing the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, which helps us to do that. And it means taking tough decisions about what we should support. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills has agreed to a reduction of 6% in the cost of the Department. That means that we are making savings to student maintenance, keeping grants but not increasing them, and the cost of the central Department will also be cut further. That means that, within the reduced budget, we can put more money into apprenticeships and continue with the dramatic increase in support that we have provided to exporters through UK Trade & Investment.

We are not going to shift medical training and research out of that Department, because they are working well where they are. And in that Department too, we can shift from day-to-day spending to a huge 9% increase in capital investment. That includes a huge investment in science. Scientific discovery is first and foremost an expression of the relentless human search to know more about our world, but it is also an enormous strength for a modern economy. From synthetic biology to graphene,

Britain is very good at it and we are going to keep it that way. Today, I am committing to maintaining the resource budget for science at £4.6 billion, to increasing the capital budget for science in real terms to £1.1 billion, and to maintaining that real increase to the end of this decade. Investment in science is an investment in our future. So yes, from the next generation of jet engines to cutting-edge supercomputers, we say: keep inventing, keep delivering; this country will back you all the way.

We have infrastructure and we have science, but we still need an educated work force to make it happen. Because of our ongoing reforms to our universities, they are now better funded than before—[HON. MEMBERS: “What?”] Well, Mr Speaker, people will remember that the reforms to higher education were bitterly contested in the House. We remember the scaremongering about fees, and the claims that they would destroy social mobility and put off students from poorer communities applying. And what has happened since? We now have the highest ever proportion of students from the most deprived neighbourhoods applying to universities. We should all welcome that.

There is no greater long-term investment a country can make than in the education and skills of its children. Because of the tough decisions that we have taken elsewhere, we have been able to invest in education and accelerate school reform. When we took office, our country’s education system was falling behind other parts of the world. Now, thanks to the brilliant programme of reform by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and the Minister for Schools, my right hon. Friend the Member for Yeovil (Mr Laws), we are once again leading the way.

We have applied our reform principles in education too, freeing schools and teachers to concentrate on teaching and turning the majority of secondary schools into academies. In this spending round, that momentum of reform will grow. The Department for Education’s overall budget will increase to £53 billion and schools spending will be protected in real terms, fulfilling the pledge we made at the beginning of this Parliament, for all of this Parliament. We will transfer power and money from town halls and central bureaucracy to schools, so that more of the money for education is spent on education. So, while grants to councils and spending on central agencies are reduced, the cash going to schools will go up.

I can announce today that schools spending will be allocated in a fairer way than ever before. School funding across the country is not equally distributed; it is distributed on a historical basis with no logical reason. The result is that some schools get much more than others in the same circumstances. That is unfair and we are going to put it right. Many MPs on both sides of the House have campaigned for that. My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker) has been a particular champion in this Parliament. Now, the lowest-funded local authorities in this country will at last receive an increase in their per-pupil funding as we introduce a national funding formula to ensure that no child in any part of our country is discriminated against. We will consult on all the details so that we get this historic reform right. The pupil premium that we have introduced also ensures that we are fair to children from low income backgrounds. It will be protected in real terms, so that every poor child will have more cash spent on their future than ever

before. The capital budget will be set at £4.6 billion in 2015-16, with over £21 billion of investment over the next Parliament.

We will also tackle the backlog of maintenance in existing schools and we will invest in new school places. We will fund 20 new studio schools as well as 20 new university technical colleges, as they are outstanding new vocational institutions. Free schools are giving parents the opportunity to aspire to a better education for their children. The Opposition have said that they want no more of them, but we will not allow such an attack on aspiration to happen. Instead, we must accelerate the programme and bring more hope to more children. That is why I can announce that we will fund an unprecedented increase in the number of free schools. We will provide for 180 great new free schools in 2015-16.

The schools budget will be protected, there will be fairer funding across the nation, the pupil premium will be extended to more students than ever before and there will be a transformation in the free school programme. We will not make our children pay for the mistakes of the past. We will give them every chance for the future, because that is the single best investment we can make.

Our education settlement is also consistent with the third and final principle of this spending round—fairness. It is not possible to reduce a deficit of this size without asking all sections of the population to play their part, but those with the broadest shoulders should bear the greatest burden. The Treasury’s distributional analysis shows that the top fifth of the population lose the most after this spending round, and the independent Institute for Fiscal Studies is unequivocal that the richest 10% have paid the most. In every year of this Parliament, the rich will pay a greater proportion of income tax revenues than they did in any one of 13 years under the last Labour Government.

When it comes to Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs, despite the fact that this Department will see a 5% reduction in its resource budget, we are committed to extra resources to tackle tax evasion. The result is that we expect to raise over £1 billion more in tax revenues from those who try and avoid paying their fair share.

Fairness also means refusing to balance the budget on the backs of the world’s poorest. I know that not everyone believes we should fulfil our commitment to spend 0.7% of our national income on development—but I do. I am proud to support a Government who are the first in our history to meet our pledge and meet it not only this year, but next year and the year after that. Of course, overseas development is about more than just the Department for International Development budget, and we comply with internationally policed rules. The DFID budget is, however, the lion’s share, and it will be set at £11.1 billion in 2015-16. Even in these tough times, the decisions we make mean we keep to our commitments.

That includes our commitment to the national health service—an institution that is the very embodiment of fairness in our society. The NHS is much more than the Government’s priority; it is the people’s priority. When we came to office, the health budget was £96 billion; in 2015-16, it will be £110 billion—and capital spending will rise to £4.7 billion. New medical treatments and an ageing population mean that the demand for NHS services is rising, so we have not spared in also demanding reform and value for money in this service. This will not

[Mr George Osborne]

insulate the health service from tough choices; there are already 7,000 fewer managers, and the NHS will continue to make efficiency savings. Those savings will, however, enable new investment in mental health and funding for new treatments for cancers such as prostate and breast cancer. Let me respond directly to the breast cancer research campaign in which so many have taken part. We will continue to back the charity research support fund and look into making it easier for these organisations to benefit from gift aid.

Many older people do not just use the NHS; they also use the social care system. If we are honest, they often fall between the cracks of the two systems, being pushed from pillar to post, not getting the care they should. None of us here would want that for our parents or grandparents, and in a compassionate society, no one should endure it. It is a failure that also costs us billions of pounds: Britain can do better.

We said in the 2010 spending review that the NHS would make available around £1 billion a year to support the health needs of people in social care. It worked, and saved hundreds of millions in the process. Last year, these improvements meant almost 50,000 fewer bed days were lost to the NHS. So today, I can announce that I will bring together a significant chunk of the health and social care budgets. I want to make sure that everyone gets a properly joined-up service where they will not have to worry about whether a service is coming from the NHS or the local council.

Let us stop the tragedy of people being dropped in A and E on a Friday night to spend the weekend in hospital because we cannot look after them properly in social care. By 2015-16, over £3 billion will be spent on services that are commissioned jointly and seamlessly by the local NHS and local councils working together. It is a huge and historic commitment of resources to social care, tied to real reform on the ground, to help end the scandal of older people trapped in hospitals because they cannot get a social care bed. This will help relieve pressures on A and E, help local government to deliver on its obligations and will save the NHS at least £1 billion. This is integrated health and social care—no longer a vague aspiration, but a concrete reality transforming the way we look after people who need our care most.

So these are the three principles that guide the spending round: reform, growth and fairness. Nowhere could these principles be more clearly applied than in our approach to welfare. Two groups of people need to be satisfied with our welfare system: those who need it who are old, vulnerable, disabled or have lost their job, whom we as a compassionate society want to support. Then there is a second group: the people who pay for this welfare system who go out to work, pay their taxes and expect it to be fair on them, too.

So we have taken huge steps to reform welfare: changing working age benefits with universal credit so that work always pays; removing child benefit from the better off; capping benefits so that no family out of work gets more than the average family gets in work. And we have been making sure that benefit payments do not rise faster than wages. The steps we have taken will save £18 billion a year—and every single one of them was opposed by the welfare party on the Opposition Benches.

Now we propose to do three further welfare reforms. First, as I said in the Budget, we are going to introduce a new welfare cap to control the overall costs of the benefits bill. We have already capped the benefits of individuals, and now we cap the system as a whole. Under the system we inherited, welfare spending was put into a category called annually managed expenditure, but the problem was that it was not managed at all. The cost of welfare went up by a staggering 50%—even before the crash. Our welfare cap will stop that happening again. The cap will be set each year at the Budget for four years. It will apply from April 2015 and will reflect forecast inflation, but it will be set in cash terms. In future, when a Government look to breach the cap because they are failing to control welfare, the Office for Budget Responsibility will issue a public warning. The Government will then be forced to take action to cut welfare costs or publicly to breach the cap and explain it to Parliament.

We will exclude a small number of the most cyclical benefits that directly rise and fall with the unemployment rate to preserve the automatic stabilisers: housing benefit, tax credits, disability benefits and pensioner benefits will all be included—but the state pension will not. I have had representations that we should include the basic state pension in the welfare cap. That would mean that a future Government could offset a rise in working age benefits by cutting the pensions of older people. That penalises those who have worked hard all their lives. Cutting pensions to pay for working age benefits is a choice this Government are certainly not prepared to make. It is unfair; we will not do it and we reject those representations completely.

The new welfare cap is proof that Britain is serious about living within its means: controlling spending, protecting the taxpayer and being fundamentally fair. Today we are introducing a limit on the nation's credit card. The principles enshrined in the cap apply to our second reform today. We will act to ensure that we stop the cost of paying the winter fuel payments made to those who live abroad from rising in a way that no one ever intended. EU law now says that people living in the European economic area can claim winter fuel payments from us, even if they did not get them before they left the UK. Paying out even more money to people from all nationalities who might have worked in this country years ago, but no longer live here is not a fair use of the nation's cash. So from the autumn of 2015, we will link the winter fuel payment to a temperature test; people in hot countries will no longer get it. It is, after all, a payment for winter fuel.

The third welfare reform I announce today is about making sure we do everything to help people get into work. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has changed the national debate about welfare, and has comprehensively won the argument. He has committed himself to finding a further 9.5% of savings in his Department's running costs. That will require a difficult drive for efficiency, and a hard-headed assessment of underperforming programmes.

However, welfare reform is about much more than saving money, vital though that is. It is about reducing dependency and changing people's lives for the better. I am determined to go further to reduce worklessness with all its social consequences. Where is the fairness in condemning people to a life on benefits because the system will not help them to get back into work?

Today we are introducing Upfront Work Search. We are going to make sure that people turn up with a CV, register for online job search, and start looking for work. Only then will they receive their benefits. Thanks to this Government, lone parents who are out of work can now receive free child care for all their three and four-year-olds, so it is reasonable to ask that they start regularly attending jobcentres and preparing to return to work.

We are announcing further changes today. Half all jobseekers need more help with looking for work, so we will require them to go to the jobcentre every week rather than once a fortnight. We will give people more time with jobcentre advisers, and proper progress reviews every three months. We will also introduce a new seven-day wait before people can claim their benefits. Those first few days should be spent looking for work, not looking to sign on. We are doing those things because we know that they help people to stay off benefits, and help those who are on benefits to get back into work faster.

Here is a further change. From now on, if claimants do not speak English, they will have to attend language courses until they do. That is a reasonable requirement in this country. It will help people to find work, but if they are not prepared to learn English, their benefits will be cut.

As a whole, this new contract with people on benefits will save more than £350 million a year, and all that money will enable us to afford extra support to help people to get into work. Help to work, incentives to work, and an expectation that people should do everything that they can to find work: that is fair to people who are out of work, and it is fair to those in work who pay for them. Together, these reforms bring the total additional welfare savings in 2015 up to £4 billion.

Step by step, this reforming Government are making sure that Britain lives within its means. The decisions that we make today are not easy, and these are difficult times; but with this statement, we make more progress towards an economy that prospers, a state that we can afford, a deficit coming down, and a Britain on the rise. I commend our economic plan to the country.

1.22 pm

Ed Balls (Morley and Outwood) (Lab/Co-op): The Chancellor spoke for more than 50 minutes, but not once did he mention the real reason for today's spending review: his comprehensive failure on living standards, growth and the deficit. We have seen prices rising faster than wages, families worse off, long-term unemployment up, welfare spending soaring, a flatlining economy, and the slowest recovery for more than 100 years. As a result of that failure, for all the Budget boasts, borrowing last year was not down but up. The Chancellor has not balanced the books, as he promised to do, and in 2015 we will see a deficit of £96 billion. There has been more borrowing to pay for the Chancellor's economic failure, which is why he has been forced to come to the House today to make more cuts in our public services.

Does the Chancellor recall what he said to the House two years ago? He said:

"we have already asked the British people for what is needed, and... we do not need to ask for more."—[*Official Report*, 23 March 2011; Vol. 525, c. 951.]

We do not need to ask for more! Is not the Chancellor's economic failure the reason why he is back here today asking for more? More cuts in the police, more cuts in our defence budgets, more cuts in our local services: this out-of-touch Chancellor has failed on living standards, growth and the deficit, and families and businesses are paying the price for his failure.

Of course, it was not supposed to turn out like this. Does the Chancellor remember what he told the House three years ago, in his first Budget and spending review? He said that the economy would grow by 6%, but it has grown by just 1%. He pledged to get the banks lending, but bank lending is down month on month on month. He made the number one test of his economic credibility keeping the triple A credit rating, but on his watch we have been downgraded not once but twice. He promised that living standards would rise, but they are falling year on year on year. He said "We're all in this together", but then he gave a huge tax cut to millionaires. He promised to balance the books, and that promise is in tatters.

We see failed tests and broken promises. The Chancellor's friends call him George, the US President calls him Jeffrey, but to everyone else he is just Bungle—and I see that even Zippy on the Front Bench cannot stop smiling. Calm down, Zippy, calm down.

Did we get an admission from the Chancellor that his plan has not worked, and that Britain needs to change course? Did we get the plan B for growth and jobs that we and the International Monetary Fund have called for? It does not have to be this way. Surely, rather than planning for cuts in 2015, two years ahead, the Chancellor should be taking bold action now to boost growth this year and next. Investment would get our economy growing and bring in the additional tax revenues that would mean that our police, armed forces and public services would not face such deep cuts in 2015. Why did the Chancellor not listen to the IMF, and provide £10 billion in infrastructure investment this year? Given that house building is at its lowest level since the 1920s, why is he not building 400,000 more affordable homes this year and next? If the Chancellor continues with his failing economic plan, it will be for the next Labour Government to turn the economy around and make the tough decisions that will get the deficit down in a fair way.

I have to say to the Chancellor that there is no point in boasting about infrastructure investment in five or seven years' time; we need action now. I must also say to him that he ought to brief the Prime Minister better for Prime Minister's questions, because three years after the infrastructure plan was launched, just seven of the 576 projects that were announced have been completed. More than 80% have not even been started, just one school has been provided, and in the first three months of this year, infrastructure investment fell by 50%. On infrastructure, we need bold action now, not just more empty promises for the future.

As for the idea that this spending review will strengthen our economy for the long term, let me ask the Chancellor some questions. Where is the proper British investment bank that business wants? Where is the 2030 decarbonisation target that the energy companies say that they need if they are to be able to invest for the future? Where is the backstop power to break up the banks if there is no reform, which the Parliamentary

[*Ed Balls*]

Commission on Banking Standards called for? And whatever happened to the Heseltine plan's much-heralded £49 billion single pot growth fund for the regions? A mere £2 billion is pathetic.

Is this not the truth? Instead of action to boost growth and long-term investment, all we got today was more of the same from a failing Chancellor, and we got more of the same on social security and welfare spending too.

We have had plenty of tough talk and divisive rhetoric from the Chancellor and the Prime Minister, but on their watch the benefits bill is soaring. Social security spending is up £21 billion compared with their plans. We have called for a cap on social security, and we fully support the triple lock on the pension—something not even mentioned in the Chancellor's statement—but the fact is that in 2010 the Chancellor tried to set a cap on social security spending and he has overspent his cap by £21 billion.

If the Chancellor really wants to get social security bills down, why not get young people and the unemployed back to work with a compulsory jobs guarantee paid for by a tax on bank bonuses? Why not get our housing benefit bill down by tackling high rents and the shortage of affordable homes? Why not stop paying the winter fuel allowance to the richest 5% of pensioners? And why not make work pay with a 10p tax band paid for by a mansion tax, instead of huge tax cuts for millionaires?

The Chancellor is making the wrong choices on growth and social security spending, and he is making the wrong choices on departmental spending as well. Let me ask him: when thousands of front-line police officers are being cut, why is he spending more on police commissioners than the old police authorities? Why is he wasting £3 billion on a reckless reorganisation of the NHS that the public do not support? Why is he funding new free schools in areas with enough school places, while parents in other areas cannot get their children into a local school?

We will study the Chancellor's departmental spending plans for 2015-16. There is a lot of detail that he did not provide for the House. We look forward to seeing whether he will confirm the continuation of free national museum entry—maybe he can tell us in his response—but I have to say to the Chancellor that the country needs to know the detail, so let me ask him: will this spending review mean fewer police officers in 2015-16, on top of the 15,000 we will lose in this Parliament? Will it mean fewer nurses in 2015, on top of the 4,000 we have lost so far? Will it mean fewer Sure Start children's centres, on top of the 500 that have already closed? And will he continue to impose deeper cuts on local authorities in areas with the greatest need, when already in this Parliament the 10 most deprived local authorities are losing six times the spending per head of the 10 least deprived areas? People up and down the country want to know the answers to these questions, and they should be in no doubt that the scale of the extra cuts the Chancellor has announced today to our police, defence and local services are the direct result of his abject failure to get the economy to grow.

The Chancellor is failing on living standards; they are falling. He is failing on growth; it is flatlining. He is failing on the deficit, and all we got was more of the

same: no plan to turn our economy around, no hope for the future, and Britain's families and our public services are paying the price for this Chancellor's failure.

Mr Osborne: One thing is for certain after that performance: the right hon. Gentleman is the worst shadow Chancellor for a generation, and we want to keep him right where he is. What is amazing is that he spoke for 11 minutes and never said Labour wants to borrow more. Did anyone hear that in his comments? That is his argument: he wants to borrow more. Why does he not have the courage to get up and make his economic argument at the Dispatch Box? He finds himself in a situation where the entire argument he has been advancing for the last three years has completely collapsed. Where was the reference to the temporary VAT cut? Abandoned. Where was the reference to the five-point plan? Abandoned. He complains about all the cuts; here is a very simple question. We shall spend £745 billion in 2015; what will he spend? Does he match those plans or not? Hands up on the Labour Benches from those who want to match our spending plans. On Saturday, the Labour leader—

Mr Speaker: Order. May I just say—[*Interruption.*] No help from the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Jason McCartney) is required; he would not have the foggiest idea where to start. Let me just say to the Chancellor of the Exchequer that there is a way in which these matters are handled, and it is not by the Minister responding to questions posing a series of questions. That is in breach of parliamentary protocol, it is not proper, and it must stop right away—and others, including at the very highest level, ought to take note of that for future weeks. Let's be clear about it.

Mr Osborne: I will leave it to the country to ask these questions. I make this point. In this spending plan I have set out total managed expenditure of £745 billion, and it is up to all Members of this House to decide whether they support that. We do not know the position of the Opposition, because on Saturday the Labour leader said there would be no more borrowing, but on Sunday the shadow Chancellor said "yes, of course" there would be, so we will see what the position of the Opposition is on this.

The shadow Chancellor mentions what has been said in this House before. Well, let us be clear about what he said in this House before, and how we have responded to it in this spending plan. On 6 June 2011 he said there would be a return to mass unemployment. We have set out welfare plans that help people get back into work. Does he support those or not? That is the question the public will ask of him. He said in October 2010 that we were taking a huge risk with crime. Crime is down 10% or more. He said in July that year that the university reforms would shut out those from disadvantaged backgrounds from university, but actually a record proportion of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds applied to go to university. He said, in his own words, that the cuts to the border agency would mean we would be unable to enforce our immigration policy. That was wrong, too. Every previous prediction he has made, including the prediction that there would be no more boom and bust, has proved to be completely wrong, so why would anyone believe a word he has got to say about this at all?

The simple point is this: we have set out our plans—we have set out our economic strategy, we have set out our spending plans—and those who disagree with them should advance an alternative or retreat from the battlefield, because the shadow Chancellor finds himself in no man's land. He has abandoned his economic argument but stuck with a disastrous economic policy of borrowing more, and in the end, if we want to know why, we only need to hear what he said this month:

“Do I think the last Labour government was profligate, spent too much, had too much national debt? No, I don't think there's any evidence for that.”

All people want Labour to say is, “We're sorry, we got it wrong, we borrowed too much and we spent too much, and we won't do it again.”

To answer the specific question that the shadow Chancellor asked me, yes we will have free museum charges—so that people can go to our museums and see the antiquated economic policy advanced by the Opposition, which brought this country to its knees and gave us the worst economic crisis for a generation, and they can learn how this Government cleared up that mess.

These reductions and the control of public expenditure are absolutely essential. That will bolster the credibility of fiscal policy in the markets and it creates room for the private sector to lead the recovery and create the jobs we need, particularly in small businesses in our constituencies, who are desperately trying to find the funding to expand.

Mr Andrew Tyrie (Chichester) (Con): Behind all the noise, most Members actually do agree that both the deficit and public spending are much too high and have to come down, and we should be under no illusions at all among ourselves just how tough and remorseless a task that is. Those reductions and that control of public expenditure are absolutely essential. They will bolster the credibility of fiscal policy in the markets and create room for the private sector to lead the recovery and create the jobs we need, particularly in small businesses in our constituencies, some of which are desperately trying to find the funding to expand. Sustaining public expenditure control over this period, and now being able to set out plans for the years ahead, is a great achievement by the Chancellor, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the coalition.

I want to draw attention to and ask a question about a particular proposal. The cap on nominal welfare spending will need careful scrutiny; it may well be an essential measure to give teeth to controlling annually managed expenditure, which frankly has not been well managed and is threatening to get out of control. Will the Chancellor publish today all the necessary detail to enable Parliament and the Treasury Committee to examine this extremely important proposal?

Mr Osborne: I thank my hon. Friend for his support for the difficult steps we needed to take. Our trying to set out these spending plans further in advance, so that Departments have time to make the necessary adjustments, is a good innovation in fiscal policy. The certainty we now have for 2015 will, I think, mean better public policy.

We have set out some of the details of the welfare cap in my speech today, but in the document we publish, we have set its parameters, how it will be set in cash terms,

the period over which it will be set and when it will be set—at the Budget. However, it is absolutely my intention to listen to the Treasury Committee, which I hope will take an interest in this issue, and to examine best practice and make sure we get the final details absolutely right. If we want to change the Office for Budget Responsibility charter, we will have to legislate, but that is something we need to examine. We absolutely should work on the details, but the principles and the principal components of the cap have been established.

Mr Alistair Darling (Edinburgh South West) (Lab): I was interested in the Chancellor's claim to have rescued the economy. I think I am right in saying that in 2010, the economy was actually growing, whereas unfortunately, in 2011 it stopped growing. That is why he is borrowing more than he intended and why his target to reduce national debt has been moved well into the next Parliament.

On the new growth items the Chancellor announced today, particularly those relating to transport, how much of that is public money and how much is expected to be raised from the private sector? Can he also give us some idea of how much additional growth he expects to see in the economy as a result of the measures he has announced, most of which, I think I am right in saying, will not take effect until the next Parliament? Given the delay in delivery of these projects—a problem that has dogged successive Governments—it may be some considerable time before we actually see their economic benefit.

Mr Osborne: The right hon. Gentleman and I have, I hope, a cordial relationship, but I will just disagree on one point. The idea that he handed me a golden economic legacy and an easy set of books, and that somehow it was all fantastically booming after a 6% contraction in the economy, is something that will turn out, if I check his memoirs, not to have been the case.

To answer the right hon. Gentleman's specific points, the transport money we set out is public investment; of course, there are opportunities to lever in additional private investment. He was gracious enough to acknowledge that all Governments have had the challenge of how to deliver infrastructure projects, given the planning system we have and so forth. We are reforming planning and will set out this week changes to infrastructure delivery in Whitehall to try to accelerate the delivery of projects—something that has bedevilled the British Government for decades, and we shall do our best to put it right.

Mr John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I fully support the Chancellor's wish to reduce the growth rate of public spending in cash terms; it is a very necessary thing to do to get the deficit under control as economic growth picks up, as I think it is now doing. On the welfare reforms, will he look at the idea that any non-British citizen coming to our country should have to work for a period and pay taxes before being eligible for any welfare benefits?

Mr Osborne: I am certainly prepared to look at any ideas that my right hon. Friend puts forward on welfare. Of course, one of our challenges—one of the debates in this country and in other European countries—concerns the eligibility for benefits of people who move here. In that regard, we are hemmed in by European law, but there may be opportunities within it to make some adjustments, and we are looking closely at those.

Margaret Hodge (Barking) (Lab): The Chancellor said that one of the objectives of his statement today was to stimulate growth, and he announced £50 billion of investment in 2015-16. In 2009-10, this country spent £48.4 billion in cash terms. Will he now accept that that 2015-16 figure represents a real-terms cut in investment?

Mr Osborne: I inherited from the last Chancellor a plan greatly to reduce capital spending—to cut it by 50%. In the 2010 review, we increased it from the plans we inherited. We increased it in the years since, and now we are maintaining it in the years going forward and setting it out for the rest of the decade. So the big reduction in capital spending that the right hon. Lady refers to is one I guess she must have supported, because she was a Minister of that Government.

Stephen Williams (Bristol West) (LD): We all know that if we try to live a £40,000 lifestyle on a £30,000 salary, it soon leads to misery unless corrective action is taken. That was the legacy, at a national level, that we were left by the last Government. Despite that tough backdrop, have not this coalition Government secured funding for the national health service and for schools, including more money for children on free school meals, and today announced a massive boost to infrastructure spending and scientific research in order to smooth the way to sustainable economic growth?

Mr Osborne: My hon. Friend is right and in the end, this is about choices. I say to all the Labour Members getting ready to ask questions that, given that the Labour leader says that he will take these resource plans as a starting point, if they complain about any cut, they have to suggest what else they would cut. We have made choices as a Government. We have committed to protecting the NHS, committed to schools, committed to the pupil premium—we have done these things because we want a fairer society, and we also believe that investing in infrastructure and growth enhances our country's economic performance. Those are our choices: if people have an alternative plan, we have not heard of it.

Mr Peter Hain (Neath) (Lab): Why does the Chancellor think he is so right, and Keynes wrong?

Mr Osborne: We have drawn on the best economic evidence that the recovery from a banking crisis of the severity that we went through is long and protracted, but we have to de-lever an economy and try to fix our banking system. That is what I set out at the Mansion House. We also have to have a credible fiscal policy in order to allow monetary policy to be loose. I think that is the best economic approach.

Mr Brian Binley (Northampton South) (Con): My grandmother taught me that there are only two things people can do when they are in serious financial difficulty: cut spending, and earn more. The Chancellor's record on cutting spending has been commendable, but more needs to be done on earning more. What will he do to enhance productivity to help this country earn more?

Mr Osborne: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that Britain has got to earn its way in the world, and that is about increasing our earnings as well as dealing with our expenditure. In the Budget, we set out a number of

tax changes, such as the new employment allowance, which I know he strongly supports and which will help small firms by wiping out the first £2,000 of national insurance, taking a third of those firms out of national insurance. We have made a series of other tax changes to promote investment, and where we had to make tough spending choices, I have chosen in this spending round to prioritise things that will help businesses to create jobs.

Mr Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry North West) (Lab): Is the Chancellor not aware that he has been in post for three years now, that he owns these policies and that their failure is his responsibility? All the empty rhetorical questions directed at the Opposition and the shadow Chancellor will not airbrush away the failings on growth, living standards and borrowings. Is it not time he faced up to that and changed the policies that have failed so far?

Mr Osborne: I tell you what has happened while this Government have been in office. First, borrowing has come down—[*Interruption.*] The shadow Chancellor says it has gone up, but the problem is that if this really is his maths, the country would be in very serious trouble if he ever got himself back into Downing street. We were borrowing £157 billion a year under Labour and now we are set to borrow £108 billion in the coming year—£118 billion if we remove the asset purchase facility transfer. So borrowing has come down.

Secondly, more than 1 million jobs have been created. Thirdly, we can look around the world and see that this country is seen to have got its act together and is making the big reforms we need to education, welfare and the like. That is why we are absolutely determined to win the global race and people see us as a country capable of winning that race.

Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con): I sincerely congratulate my right hon. Friend on his statement. Not that he needs any advice from me, but he should stick to his guns because he is on the right track. I find myself agreeing violently with my neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton South (Mr Binley), that this is about earning. In particular, I congratulate the Chancellor on his policies on education and apprenticeships to get young people better educated and in work. May I bring to his attention the fact that I have just recruited a new apprentice for my parliamentary office from Magdalen college school in Brackley? Will he join me in urging all colleagues to look into the apprenticeship scheme and how it might help them in their work?

Mr Osborne: I thank my hon. Friend for her support and kind words. We are absolutely going to stick to this economic plan—that is what is taking Britain out of rescue into recovery. If we abandon that plan and if we listen to the advice of the Labour party—although the shadow Chancellor did not mention it in his statement, Labour's plan is to borrow more—we would be back in intensive care. She is right also to highlight the success of apprenticeships, as there are over 1 million more of them. We are committing to the funding of apprenticeships in this programme. A significant part of my statement was also about school reform, and when people look at it they will see that it is one of the most important parts of the statement.

Mr Michael Meacher (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab): As the Chancellor's private sector infrastructure proposals will take years to gain traction, if they ever do, why does he not use public investment to kick-start the economy now, as the only effective means to do so quickly, without any increase in public borrowing at all? He could do that through a further tranche of quantitative easing, specifically targeted on industrial investment; by instructing the state-owned banks to lend to industry at the scale required; or, most obviously, given that he talks about fairness, by taxing the super-rich, who have made massive gains since the crash, in the last five years.

Mr Osborne: First, we are committing to public investment as well as seeking to secure private investment. The first of the right hon. Gentleman's ideas is about printing money to spend it on things. That has been tried by a number of countries but it does not always have a happy ending. Secondly, he has this plan to take over full control of the banks and run the banking system as a nationalised banking system. I do not think that would be a sensible approach; it would make the problems in our banking system worse rather than better.

Thirdly, the right hon. Gentleman talks about taxes. I recall, as I was an MP on the Opposition Benches at the time, that he was a Minister when his Government had a 40% tax rate, whereas we have a 45% rate. I do not remember him getting up at this Dispatch Box and complaining all the time that his Government were not increasing taxes on the rich. I seem to remember his good friend Peter Mandelson saying that they were all "intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich".

Under this Government—I hope the right hon. Gentleman would support this—the richest are paying a greater percentage of our tax than under his Government.

Mr David Burrowes (Enfield, Southgate) (Con): My constituents will welcome a fair review of welfare, schools and health. Will the Chancellor take the opportunity to renew his and our party's vow to recognise marriage in the tax system and ensure that it is implemented as soon as possible within this Parliament?

Mr Osborne: I can give my hon. Friend the absolutely clear commitment that we will bring forward the proposals to recognise marriage in the tax system—the proposals we set out in our manifesto that are provided for in the coalition agreement—in due course.

Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): The Chancellor has told us today that he is going to bring forward infrastructure spending, but of course we have heard it all before. We reflect on a record of complete failure on infrastructure spending, whereby the money he announces does not actually get delivered. Why should we have any more confidence that what we have heard today will be any more successful than what he has brought to us the previous times he has stood at that Dispatch Box?

Mr Osborne: Because the road schemes that we committed to at this Dispatch Box got their planning permission, or are getting it, and the construction is starting. Some of those road schemes have been completed. The same is true with the schools and all the other pieces of infrastructure. One of our big problems was

the complete absence when we came into office of a bunch of plans that were ready to go and had planning permission. We have had to do all that. I am all for speeding up Whitehall and the planning process, but I seem to remember that the Labour party voted against the planning reforms. So when we try to make those changes, which the former Chancellor was good enough to acknowledge are needed because of all the problems that previous Governments have had, actually he has opposed them.

Dr Julian Huppert (Cambridge) (LD): I was delighted to hear confirmation that the unfair schools funding formula will finally change. Schools in Cambridgeshire have been underfunded for decades and pupils there now get the least of pupils anywhere in the country—they get £600 less than the average. I am very grateful for this money, as all the pupils in Cambridgeshire and other counties will be. When will that extra money start to arrive in our schools, which so desperately need it?

Mr Osborne: The Education Secretary and the Minister for Schools, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr Laws), will set out details of how the formula will work. It is certainly our intention to introduce it in this Parliament, but we shall consult on it. Obviously it is a complex reform, but we have set out the ambition and the principles today, and the Department for Education will now take it forward.

Stewart Hosie (Dundee East) (SNP): The Budget previously told us that discretionary consolidation for 2015-16 would be £130 billion rising to £155 billion. The Chancellor announced another £11.5 billion today and the pace of the cuts will go on until 2018. That still represents stripping consumption out of the economy equivalent to 8% of GDP, so why does he think that will deliver growth at all? He has told us previously that the ratio of cuts to tax rises would be 4:1, and nothing today changes that. He is still planning to balance the books on the back of the poor.

On the funding for Departments and, in this case, for Scotland, we face another £40 million revenue cut, on top of the £103 million revenue cut announced in the Budget and the 6.5% cut in the last comprehensive spending review, combined with a 25% cut to capital in the last CSR. This plan A has failed. What makes the Chancellor think that making the same mistakes all over again will deliver a different result this time around?

Mr Osborne: First, all parts of the United Kingdom have to make savings, but because of the application of the Barnett formula the savings in Scotland are 2%. I am not saying that will be easy, but it is not as difficult as the tasks that some English Departments face. We are also providing more borrowing powers for the Scottish Parliament to make its own decisions. We believe that is the right approach—devolution, with Scotland not only having the benefit of being in the United Kingdom and able to make its own decisions about the investments it makes, but benefiting from the very low interest rates that our credible fiscal policy delivers for all parts of the Union. It is pretty clear that if Scotland were independent, borrowing would be more expensive for the Scottish people.

Mr Brooks Newmark (Braintree) (Con): Most of my constituents care about two things: whether they have a job, and what level of interest they pay on the mortgage or their business. More than 1.3 million new jobs have been created in the private sector, over a quarter of a million new businesses have been created and we have record low interest on mortgages and on businesses. Does my right hon. Friend feel, like me, that that would be jeopardised if we followed the shadow Chancellor's borrowing plans?

Mr Osborne: I fear that it would be jeopardised and this country would be back in intensive care. It is remarkable that the shadow Chancellor did not have the courage at that Dispatch Box to say that Labour would borrow more. Labour did say that for three years and now it has completely gone silent.

Ed Balls: What are you talking about?

Mr Osborne: What I am talking about is that the Labour leader said on Saturday that Labour would not borrow more and the shadow Chancellor said on Sunday that it would. Because there are two alternative Labour economic policies out there, I would quite like to know which one is which.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): Bankers' bonuses are going up 64% this year because bankers have moved their income from a 50p tax year to a 45p tax year. Will the Chancellor act to reverse that tax evasion, which he caused?

Mr Osborne: Bank bonuses are down 85% since the previous Government left office. We have curbed irresponsibility in our City, which was rife when the shadow Chancellor was City Minister. In all the years for which the hon. Gentleman was a Member of Parliament for Croydon and sat on the Government Benches, I do not remember him getting up and saying, "I want a higher top rate of tax, Gordon Brown"—sorry, I mean the right hon. Member for Fife. We did not hear that. The truth is that the tax rate for rich people is higher under this Government than it was when the hon. Gentleman represented the good people of Croydon.

Mr Speaker: It is good of the Chancellor to refer to the former Prime Minister by the title of his constituency, but it is an even better idea to get it right as Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath.

Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): The Bank of England's Andy Haldane recently told the Treasury Committee:

"Let's be clear, we have intentionally blown the biggest government bond bubble in history."

What contingency plans have the Government made to cope with that bond market bubble bursting?

Mr Osborne: First, let me say that I stand corrected, Mr Speaker, although I think that Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath is in the Kingdom of Fife. Yesterday we issued a 55-year bond so we are clearly able to borrow money for the long term. Our economic policy, the further stage of which we set out today, commands the confidence of the world.

Helen Goodman (Bishop Auckland) (Lab): The Chancellor is presiding over a situation in which an extra 200,000 children will be living in poverty while at the same time cutting taxes for millionaires. Does he think the parents of those children will think that is fair?

Mr Osborne: Child poverty went up by 300,000 during the recession of the previous Government, and the hon. Lady was a Government MP at the time. We have taken a number of actions today, such as that on the pupil premium, to help the poorest kids, and there is also the troubled families initiative. That means 400 families helped by our plans. The distributional analysis, as I showed, shows that the richest quintile in our society are paying the most as a result of the collection of these measures. We are demonstrating that it is possible to have progressive policies while living with sane public finances.

James Morris (Halesowen and Rowley Regis) (Con): In my constituency, 2,500 more people are in work than at the time of the general election. That employment growth is largely a result of Government investment in apprenticeships and skills. Does the Chancellor agree that we need to invest more in apprenticeships and skills and to give local areas more control over how they invest in skills?

Mr Osborne: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. It is good to hear that the businesses of the west midlands and Halesowen and Rowley Regis are taking the opportunity to grow, expand and take people on. We are committed to the apprenticeship programme and are also committing to more local involvement in how money is spent through the Heseltine local growth pot, which will be £10 billion over the rest of the decade. Through some of our apprenticeship reforms set out in the Richard review, we will give the businesses my hon. Friend represents much greater influence over the kinds of skills that are taught locally.

Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): I welcome the protection of the counter-terrorism budget, although I do not think the Chancellor's claim that the Home Secretary is the best in a generation would necessarily win the vote among the police service. The Home Office budget as a whole will be cut by 7% and earlier this year the UK Border Agency was abolished by the Prime Minister. How will we get the backlog of more than 250,000 cases down if the budget is to be cut and mandarins at the Home Office still receive bonuses of several millions of pounds?

Mr Osborne: The Home Office saving is 6.1%, but my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has demonstrated that she can live with a tough budget—which is true of all Government Departments at the moment—while delivering real reforms and improving the service we get at the end of it. Crime has come down to a 30-year low and immigration has already come down by a third. If the House has to choose between public services that are completely unaffordable and bust the country and public services that do not deliver a good service, that is no choice at all. We are delivering good public services that the country can afford.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I am keen if at all possible to accommodate all remaining colleagues, but also to start the next business, the Second Reading of the Bill, by 2.30 pm. There is therefore a premium on brevity.

Sir Bob Russell (Colchester) (LD): Previous defence cuts mean that our Army is heading towards being smaller than it was at the battle of Waterloo, so that is hardly a triumph. Will the Chancellor confirm that there is now no need, based on his statement, for any cuts to any Army bands and will he also give a statement about why the family housing lived in by our brave soldiers is not being modernised?

Mr Osborne: We did win the battle of Waterloo with that Army, so we were not doing that badly. We are trying to make the choice to have a modern, deployable Army, fully equipped with the latest technology. To address the hon. Gentleman's specific points, no reduction is required to the uniformed services. I would assume that that would include military bands, but that is for the Defence Secretary to set out. On housing, the Defence Secretary has set out a multi-billion pound plan to improve the housing stock for our brave soldiers and their families.

Luciana Berger (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): Half a million people in our country accessed emergency food aid in the past year. The main reason people give for having to go to a food bank is delays in receiving the support to which they are entitled, whether they are in or out of work. How does the Chancellor believe that that situation will improve as a result of the announcements he has made today?

Mr Osborne: Food bank use went up tenfold under the previous Labour Government. We have advertised the services of food banks, which are great local community projects, through the jobcentres. I know that I am not allowed to ask questions, so let me pose a rhetorical question. Labour Members complain about the use of food banks, but can they explain why their use went up tenfold under the previous Government?

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): I so welcome the step change in joining health and care services around people who need care. That is most welcome, as is the extra £3 billion spending to allow that vital integration. Will my right hon. Friend let the House know when the details of this vital reform will be published, so that we can all plan ahead?

Mr Osborne: I know that my hon. Friend has been a campaigner on social care issues. This is probably one of the most transformative announcements in the statement. The Health Secretary and the Local Government Secretary will set out shortly how it will work, but it will involve the local commissioning of social care services jointly by the NHS and local government to try to end the divide between the two services that people fall into. I am sure that my hon. Friend's expertise will be drawn on, because she knows a lot about the subject.

Mark Durkan (Foyle) (SDLP): The Chancellor outlined a new annually managed expenditure regime. Will he colour that in a little, particularly as regards Northern Ireland? Does he intend Northern Ireland to have its

own separate welfare cap? How is it to be fixed? Will it take account of the higher rates of disability and long-term conditions in Northern Ireland or will the cap be used to try to taper Northern Ireland's higher spending on those benefits?

Mr Osborne: The welfare cap will be for the United Kingdom, as we have a UK welfare system. It certainly will not be used to target Northern Ireland in particular. We want to ensure that more people in Northern Ireland have the opportunity to work and to get off benefits and although the subject has not featured in these questions, some of the changes we have announced to the jobcentre regime will help in this regard. We will ensure that they are suitably applied in Northern Ireland.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): With the increased investment in nursery education, the pupil premium, apprenticeships, NHS social care and pensions, is this not a Government who help people from cradle to grave rather than saddling future generations with debt?

Mr Osborne: My hon. Friend makes an excellent point. We are doing everything we can to help people get a job, get on in life and aspire to better things, whether that means helping the poorest pupils in schools through the pupil premium, helping troubled families rather than abandoning them, or ensuring that our elderly get help from our social care system. Across someone's life, we are stepping in to help rather than, as my hon. Friend points out, burdening the next generation with debt that this generation does not have the courage to tackle.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. There are still a lot of colleagues standing. May I please ask colleagues now to put a single-sentence question, without preamble—in other words, a genuine short question, which I know will be accommodated by the Chancellor with a short reply?

Julie Hilling (Bolton West) (Lab): With 300,000 more children in absolute poverty, how many more will be in poverty by 2015?

Mr Osborne: Child poverty projections are made independently, but I say to the hon. Lady that we are doing everything we can to give children from poorer backgrounds the very best start in life, with measures such as the pupil premium.

Mr Speaker: Following the example of the Hilling handbook, I call Mr Andrew Selous.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): Will the Chancellor confirm that there will be a cap on benefits and not on the state pension in future?

Mr Osborne: Yes, absolutely. We received representations to include the state pension. We are not going to do so, but of course that will ultimately be decided at a general election.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): Given the 5% cut in the grant to museums and the increase in operational freedoms the Chancellor has announced, when does he expect charges to be introduced and how much does he think the average cost will be?

Mr Osborne: There will be no museum charges; free entry will remain. What we are doing in the museums sector is introducing radical new freedoms, which have been welcomed across the sector. I think that is the right reform, which is to give more freedom to the front line.

Charlie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): As so little has been done about problems of tax avoidance over the past decade, can the Chancellor confirm that HMRC will have the resources and the cultural enthusiasm it needs to tackle tax avoidance? Does he also agree—

Mr Speaker: Order. One question is enough.

Mr Osborne: The short answer is yes, and the Exchequer Secretary is doing an excellent job in changing that culture, with the Department.

Chris Williamson (Derby North) (Lab): The Chancellor talked about rail investment in his statement. How many jobs is he creating in Dusseldorf, now that his Government have finalised their plans to spend £1.6 billion building the Thameslink trains in Germany, rather than in Derby? Is that a sensible use of taxpayers' money?

Mr Osborne: Well, we were operating under the procurement rules of the previous Government.

Andrew Jones (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): May I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement of an increase in transport capital and his indication that it will be invested in our rail network? The boost in capacity and services will be welcomed by rail travellers.

Mr Osborne: I am glad for that welcome.

Roberta Blackman-Woods (City of Durham) (Lab): The Chancellor knows that the north-east is already suffering disproportionately from his Government's cuts, so can he tell the House what percentage of infrastructure spending will come to the north-east, and by when?

Mr Osborne: My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary will set out the regional breakdown tomorrow.

Dan Rogerson (North Cornwall) (LD): In his continuing discussions with the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Department of Health and the Home Office, will the Chancellor urge them to follow the example of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Schools in ensuring that money is spent fairly across the whole country?

Mr Osborne: Yes.

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab): Because 67% of the Department of Energy and Climate Change's budget is ring-fenced for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, the Chancellor's 8% cut actually equates to a 35% cut when the Department has to deliver an infrastructure plan which, at £200 billion, is the largest this country has ever seen. How is it going to be able to do that?

Mr Osborne: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point about infrastructure capacity in Whitehall, and we will set out changes to infrastructure delivery tomorrow. The Department of Energy and Climate Change is part

of that. Not only is the Energy Secretary on the case, but the new permanent secretary, Stephen Lovegrove, is too, and they are confident that they can deliver this within the budget.

Mary Macleod (Brentford and Isleworth) (Con): There is a record number of apprenticeships in my constituency. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the new announcement on apprenticeships means cross-sector and cross-industry support, as well as an increase in the number of girls going into science and engineering?

Mr Osborne: It is certainly our intention to increase the number of girls going into science and engineering and, indeed, to increase the number of people doing science and engineering subjects, both as schoolchildren and young adults. Our support for skills will help to deliver that.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): Some 10% of the capital funding for Northern Ireland will be in the form of financial transactions money, which requires the identification of private sector loan or equity investment-type arrangements. Can the Chancellor assure us that, with local Administrations, he will look for the greatest possible flexibility in the choice of those and in the timing of that spend?

Mr Osborne: I am happy to look at both the flexibility and the timing, and to make sure that my Department works closely with the devolved Administration in Belfast.

Stephen Mosley (City of Chester) (Con): Will the Chancellor do his utmost to ensure that all local authorities take advantage of the council tax freeze, which he has generously extended today?

Mr Osborne: I hope that all local authorities take it up, but ultimately that is a matter for them—that is local democracy.

Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): From 2006, the Conservative and Liberal Democrats who used to run Newcastle borough council spent all of our £50 million reserves. In dictating a further indiscriminate 10% cut across the board to local government, how carefully has the Chancellor considered its impact, council by council, on their ability to provide decent basic public services and to give discretionary support to valued community groups and organisations?

Mr Osborne: We are giving local councils more freedom, including some more flexibility in the use of assets, particularly where they want to spend to save. The broader point is that if all the changes in local government and social care I announced are taken into account, the change for local government is more like minus 2%—still difficult, but I think that good local councils can continue to deliver excellent local services.

George Eustice (Camborne and Redruth) (Con): I welcome the commitment the Chancellor made today to renew the water bill rebate for South West Water customers, which has been a vital respite for some 700,000 households in the west country. Does he agree

with me that it would be wrong of any future Government to reverse that commitment for this spending review period?

Mr Osborne: I commend my hon. Friend for the campaign he has run. He has represented not only the people of his constituency but people across the south-west of England. Water bills are abnormally high because of the money that needs to be spent on cleaning up beaches and the like, and we have stepped in to help. It is this Government who have done that, after years of campaigns, and we have made the commitment to extend it. As for whether a Labour Government would remove it—well, they never introduced it when they were in office, so I suspect they would.

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): Does the Chancellor accept that, since the beginning of this Parliament, the cut in central Government grant to local authorities has been twice as great as the cut in funding for central Government Departments? With that in mind, will he take seriously the comments of the chair of the Conservative party that local councils can manage the cuts announced today without any reduction in front-line services?

Mr Osborne: I think good local councils can manage the ask we are making of them. If the hon. Gentleman is complaining, the Labour party has not made it clear whether or not it supports this total mandatory expenditure, so the Opposition cannot really complain about individual cuts unless they tell us whether they would make other cuts, and so far I have not heard of any.

David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con): Is not the main message from today's statement that more can be done for less? Do we not need to move forward on that because of the mess left by Labour?

Mr Osborne: My hon. Friend is right: one of the central principles is that we can deliver more for less. Ultimately, we should not have to choose between public services we can afford and public services that deliver for people. We need both.

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): Is it true that, according to figures on page 11 of the spending review document, the Chancellor is cutting capital infrastructure spending by 1.7% in 2015-16 compared with 2014-15?

Mr Osborne: We are maintaining capital investment at £50 billion.

Justin Tomlinson (North Swindon) (Con): The decision to introduce a fairer national education funding formula is vital for my local schools. How much did Labour's formula short-change schools in Swindon?

Mr Osborne: The people of Swindon were short-changed in many ways by the Labour Government. Under the excellent leadership provided by my hon. Friend and his colleague, our hon. Friend the Member for South Swindon (Mr Buckland), not only is Swindon's voice heard in Parliament, but the changes this Government are making will help families in Swindon, including those with children at school.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): Given the news this week that the Government's flagship green deal is failing in terms of both the planned jobs and its environmental targets, why will the Chancellor not introduce a big, bold investment in green infrastructure and home insulation in particular, to get people into jobs, get tax revenues up, reduce benefits and give hope to the millions of young people around the country today?

Mr Osborne: We have introduced investment. We have increased investment in renewable energy, so that a record amount is now going in. My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will set out the strike prices this week, which will give long-term investors the certainty needed to increase renewable energy investment.

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): Why is the Chancellor not big enough to admit that he was wrong to claim that borrowing fell last year?

Mr Osborne: When I became Chancellor we were borrowing £157 billion a year. We are forecast to borrow £108 billion a year, which is a reduction in borrowing.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): Why is the Chancellor going to decide what capital investment projects should be delivered in Wales if the Silk commission is implemented, considering that transport is devolved?

Mr Osborne: There is a specific issue around borrowing powers and the M4 corridor through Newport. That has to be done in partnership with the Government in London, but we are very aware of the benefits of that scheme. The Welsh Assembly and the people of Wales will welcome what we are proposing to do on the devolution of further tax and borrowing powers. We will set that out shortly.

Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab): With the Government's own figures showing that, despite all the promises, house building is down, construction is down, homelessness is up, rents are up, and housing waiting lists are at a record level, does the Chancellor accept that it is the legacy of his actions, including the catastrophic decision to cut £4 billion in affordable housing investment in 2010, that brings him to the Chamber today, and that he is responsible for three wasted years?

Mr Osborne: No, I do not accept that at all. The last Labour Government had a shocking record on house building, especially affordable house building. If the hon. Gentleman turns up in the Chamber tomorrow, he will hear some positive announcements about affordable house building.

Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): Lord Heseltine's plan for localising regeneration funding in a single pot would have cost £49 billion. The announcement today is for just £2 billion. Lord Heseltine said that such a figure would be a slap in the face for local areas. Does the Chancellor agree, and why did he not stand up to the Lib Dem Business Secretary, who opposed that idea?

Mr Osborne: It is £2 billion a year, making £10 billion. For the first time, local enterprise partnerships will be able to put in multi-year bids on the basis of a competitive tender that will enable investment in skills, transport and housing locally. It is a revolution in how the money is spent, rather than the situation that we inherited, in which all the spending decisions were made by the people doing my kind of job.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Chancellor for his commitment and his comments. He referred to extra money for the police in Northern Ireland to combat dissident republicans. Will he confirm that within that money sufficient funding will be available for the recruitment and training of new officers to combat the dissident republican threat?

Mr Osborne: We have provided just over £30 million to the Police Service of Northern Ireland. I am confident that within that resource the PSNI can undertake the recruitment and training that it requires to police Northern Ireland effectively for all communities.

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): Given that 16 to 18-year-olds attend schools as well as colleges, does the Chancellor's unequivocal commitment to protect school funding in real terms extend to the funding of 16 to 18-year-olds?

Mr Osborne: We set out the school commitment in the direct school grant and the pupil premium. We have invested in the education of young people as well as the education of young adults.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): Does the Chancellor believe that since he came to office the average British family is better off after inflation, yes or no?

Mr Osborne: I think that they have better economic prospects than they did under the previous Government.

Sheila Gilmore (Edinburgh East) (Lab): The best way to reduce the housing benefit bill is to tackle the structural reasons for the rise in spending. What steps in the statement has the Chancellor taken to ensure that that happens—not by building houses at 80% of market rent, I suggest?

Mr Osborne: I agree with the hon. Lady, as one of the things that we need to do is build more homes, and that is what we have set out to do. The housing benefit budget ballooned under the Labour Government, and we have taken action to curb it. If she is against any of our housing benefit reforms she can always let us know. As far as I can see, the Labour party has not made a commitment to reverse any of them at the moment, but who knows, that might change.

Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): Confidence to invest long term in industry has been severely damaged by the Government's creation of uncertainty over the EU, their failure to set 2030 decarbonisation targets, and their failure to control excessively high energy prices. The steel industry faces a crisis in demand. How many of the Chancellor's mythical lists of infrastructure projects will actually begin this year?

Mr Osborne: As I said, we are spending more as a percentage of national income on infrastructure in this decade than in the previous decade. What I would say to the hon. Lady about energy-intensive industries such as steel is that there is support, which the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is going to extend as a result of the statement to help them to cope with their high energy costs.

Gemma Doyle (West Dunbartonshire) (Lab/Co-op): Living standards have fallen in every year of the Chancellor's Government. When is he going to get the message that his strategy is not working?

Mr Osborne: As I said, the economic plan is taking Britain from rescue to recovery. I do not know if the hon. Lady knows any more about what the Labour party's economic policy is. We did not hear from the shadow Chancellor the simple fact that he wants to borrow more. He has abandoned his argument but tragically he has stuck with the policy.

Mr William Bain (Glasgow North East) (Lab): The £50 billion figure cited by the Chancellor for capital investment for 2015-16 is gross. Will he say whether net capital investment in 2015-16 will be higher or lower than the year before?

Mr Osborne: As I said, we are maintaining capital investment in the way that I set out in the statement.

Mr Speaker: Fifty-five Back Benchers contributed in 47 minutes of exclusively Back-Bench time, so I am grateful to colleagues, including, of course, the Chancellor.

BILL PRESENTED

RAILWAYS BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Caroline Lucas, supported by John McDonnell, Ian Lavery, Katy Clark, Jeremy Corbyn, Mr Elfyn Llwyd, Jonathan Edwards, Hywel Williams, Kelvin Hopkins, John Cryer, Grahame M. Morris and Martin Caton, presented a Bill to require the Secretary of State to assume control of passenger rail franchises when they come up for renewal; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 18 October, and to be printed (Bill 81).

High Speed Rail (Preparation) Bill

Second Reading

Mr Speaker: Before I call the Minister to move the motion on Second Reading, I have a brief announcement to make. This Bill relates to a proposal which would affect my own constituency, as is well known. I have taken the view that it would best protect and demonstrate the impartiality of the Chair if I did not take the decision on whether the reasoned amendment should be selected. I therefore referred the matter to the Chairman of Ways and Means. His decision is that the amendment should be selected, and I have accepted that.

2.26 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Patrick McLoughlin): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Today, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has set out far-reaching plans to provide the infrastructure that we need to compete in the global race. We need better roads, better airports, better ports, and better rail links too—an ambitious programme for all parts of our country, with HS2 an important part of that. A growing economy, a growing population and growing demand for transport, which have seen rail travel double in a decade, mean that we must act. HS2 will be the first new main rail line north of London for 120 years, linking at least eight of our 10 largest cities, and improving services for Scotland too. I am pleased that HS2 enjoys the broad backing of all the main parties in the House. I want to make three points.

Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): The Secretary of State has just said that the proposed High Speed Rail (Preparation) Bill paves the way for links to Scotland, so will he explain why clause 1(2)(a) does not make any mention of Scotland or proposals to connect HS2 to Scotland?

Mr McLoughlin: I shall come on to explain, if I may make a bit of progress, the way in which we shall link up to Scotland, and why the Bill covers the area. The Bill provides that important opportunity, and I shall come on that in a short while.

As I was saying, I want to make three points: first, the reason why a new high-speed line is right; secondly, the purpose of the Bill; and thirdly, the work that we are doing to manage the costs of the scheme. Why is HS2 necessary? The answer is not only speed, although HS2 will take an hour off journeys between London and Manchester, and between Birmingham and Leeds, and it will bring two thirds of people in the north of England within two hours of London.

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): Is the Secretary of State aware that if there is to be a tangible economic benefit to my constituency and the wider Cheshire region, there must be a hub station stop at Crewe, otherwise it will take longer to travel by High Speed 2 up to Manchester and then travel down on a local line to that area?

Mr McLoughlin: I know that my hon. Friend is concerned, as I am, to make sure that there are sufficient connections right across the country. We have not yet reached the consultation stage on phase 2. Part of the

reason why we published phase 2, although it would have been easier not to do that, was to show our commitment to serving the north, right up to Manchester, Leeds and the east midlands. So I am pretty sure that I will be hearing a lot more from my hon. Friend and others on the question of where the station should be located—Crewe or Staffordshire.

Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab) rose—

Mr McLoughlin: I met a group of Members from—well, I was going to say Staffordshire—I met two Members from Stoke-on-Trent and one from Staffordshire, and I give way to him.

Paul Farrelly: I thank the Secretary of State for giving way and for his generous offer of coming to visit and see the lie of the land in north Staffordshire and east Cheshire. He will appreciate after our meeting that it is difficult for Members from north Staffordshire to support HS2 as it stands because it may very well, on the current modelling, reduce the number of direct trains from Stoke-on-Trent from 31 a day to just three a day. This knock-on issue is relevant to people from Stockport all the way down to Coventry, as he will see from the amendment. What assurances can he give that the west coast main line in the future, after HS2, will not become the ghost train line running a skeleton service, as the projections currently suggest?

Mr McLoughlin: I met the hon. Gentleman yesterday along with two of his colleagues, and I can assure him that this is about providing extra capacity, not reducing services to areas. I want to consider the points that he and two of his hon. Friends made to me yesterday along the same lines. I do not recognise where he gets his figure of three services per day compared to the present level of service. Of course, that will be part of the consultation and one of the aspects that we will examine fully as we move forward.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): The last time I looked, York, Manchester, Birmingham and London were in England. HS2 was clearly an England-only project, yet there will be Barnett consequentials. Unless the Secretary of State can state that there will be equivalent consequentials for Wales amounting to about £2 billion, we will vote against the Bill at every stage.

Mr McLoughlin: I am sorry the hon. Gentleman feels that way, because I believe there will be advantages to Wales as well. As HS2 serves an area up to the north Wales coast, there will be ways in which that can be an advantage. I think he is saying that he will vote against because he is not getting the opportunity to get high-speed services. If we do not get the route as currently proposed, he has no chance of getting any high-speed opportunity whatsoever. He will see, if he looks at the way the plans are laid out, that this can be developed further—even further up to Scotland, as the Bill makes clear.

Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): The Minister talks of expansion further up to Scotland. When? Given the remarks about no Barnett consequentials, the “when” is not in a decade, but should be here and now.

Mr McLoughlin: I announced last October the work that was already being commissioned by HS2 to take the link up to Scotland, and I am more than happy to have discussions with Scottish Ministers and the Scottish Government about that.

Mark Lazarowicz (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op): I suspect that even the Scottish National party does not expect the line to reach the constituency of the hon. Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Mr MacNeil) any time soon, but I hope it will reach my constituency.

Frank Dobson (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): This century?

Mark Lazarowicz: I would like to believe that it will not be next century and that my constituents will be able to benefit from the line as well. Clearly, they will benefit from faster services in so far as they can use the line further south, but we need to see work being done now and commitments made now to ensure that the further additions from HS2 do not start happening only in 2033.

Mr McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. As I announced last October, I have asked HS2 to start doing the work on that, and I hope to be in a position to say more about it in due course. I cannot give him a specific date at this stage because there are some very big issues to address.

I was saying that HS2 will bring about two thirds of the people in the north of England within two hours of London. Its purpose is not merely to keep pace with our competitors, although it is worth pointing out that Italy will soon have 926 miles of high-speed rail, whereas we have just 67 miles.

Julian Smith (Skipton and Ripon) (Con): Is not Lille in the north of France an excellent example of the benefits that high speed can bring to a city?

Mr McLoughlin: Indeed, and I will say a little more about Lille shortly. I think my hon. Friend may have a copy of my speech, although as I was working on it until not long ago, I would be surprised if he had.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr McLoughlin: Mr Speaker, I know that a great number of Members want to speak in the debate and I will give way a number of times, but I am mindful of the fact that you asked me to allow plenty of time for others to take part.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): I apologise to the Secretary of State for coming in late and I appreciate the fact that he has given way to me. Can he tell me what Coventry will get out of high-speed rail and, more importantly, what about a decent compensation package?

Mr McLoughlin: I will come on to say something about compensation later in my speech. I think Coventry will get many benefits. The whole west midlands area will get a huge number of benefits from HS2. I want to see councils such as Coventry start working to make sure that they can get the best out of High Speed 2,

from both the connections and the way we serve those areas. I know the hon. Gentleman is incredibly concerned about the way we serve Coventry. As somebody who knows Coventry relatively well, I am also concerned to see that take place.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): The Secretary of State is very kind to give way. My point is that not only is the route of HS2 environmentally damaging, but the whole scheme is socially regressive. It is unaffordable to the bottom 50% of income bands and, in effect, it redirects money from the poorest to the richest. How can he justify this reverse Robin Hood strategy when that £33 billion could be better invested in giving us a better rail system for everybody, not just for the privileged few?

Mr McLoughlin: I find the hon. Lady's position on the issue strange. I should have thought that the Green party would welcome such investment in public railway systems. [*Interruption.*] I think I had better answer the hon. Lady. HS2 brings a great increase in capacity and I want to say more about that a little later. That is one of the important issues that lies behind the need for HS2. Also, as I point out to colleagues, going from St Pancras station to Canterbury, the first part of the route from St Pancras to Ashford on a high-speed train is a fantastic fast journey, then one hits the Victorian railway network to Canterbury and the journey slows down completely. I want the rest of the country to get the benefit of high-speed rail, not just the area in the south which already has a high-speed service.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP) *rose*—

Mr McLoughlin: I am not sure I can extend the service to Northern Ireland.

Sammy Wilson: And I have no idea how the Minister would extend it to Northern Ireland, but Northern Ireland does not benefit from the Barnett consequentials of this spend, either. Because there is a construction interest, can he give an assurance that when it comes to procurement, there will be no repetition of the mistakes that were made in the past whereby UK-based companies did not benefit from some of the high-spend capital projects, and there will be opportunities for construction firms from Northern Ireland?

Mr McLoughlin: I am more than happy to do that and I shall say more about that later. Crossrail has set a good example. About 97% of Crossrail goods are serviced by British companies, and the Mayor of London is in the process of purchasing a huge infrastructure project, the new London buses, from Northern Ireland. That is very much in my mind with regard to the way I will be dealing with HS2 and talking to the management of HS2.

Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): My right hon. Friend mentioned his rail journey to Canterbury. I encourage him to take a different branch on High Speed 1 and travel to Folkestone, as he will see that the investment in High Speed 1 is the biggest single advantage we have in promoting the east Kent regional growth area.

Mr McLoughlin: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who makes that point from vast experience. It is worth remembering how controversial High Speed 1 was when it was built. I will talk about that a little later. The simple fact is that every infrastructure project—not nearly every project, but every project—is very controversial when it first starts, and in that regard High Speed 2 is no different.

Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr McLoughlin: I will not be in the position that you are in, Mr Speaker, of having actually counted the number of interventions I have taken, but I will give way to my hon. Friend.

Alec Shelbrooke: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right that all major infrastructure projects are controversial. Would he like to reflect on where he thinks the great city of Leeds would be today had we not built the M1?

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): Probably in the same place. [*Laughter.*]

Mr McLoughlin: Indeed, but it would be very difficult to get to, and it would not have benefited from the improvements we have seen there.

I think that the answer starts with a simple point: without HS2, the key rail and road routes connecting London to the midlands and the north will soon be overwhelmed. Even on moderate forecasts, the west coast main line, the nation's key rail corridor, will be full by the mid-2020s, a point made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski), who wants more services from Shrewsbury to Blackpool. Having served as a Transport Minister in 1989, I know that the fundamental change that has taken place since then is that the pressure on a Transport Secretary now is often to find more services for the rail industry and more rail connections across the country—I was just talking about the west coast main line—and that is despite £9 billion of improvements north of Rugby in recent years. That means investing in the current infrastructure and trying to improve it. There are still problems south of Rugby, which is why Virgin has suffered problems in meeting some of the criteria it regards as important in providing the right kind of service.

Mrs Gillan: Has the Secretary of State had an opportunity to look at the financial results released by Virgin Trains this morning? They indicate that profits are down by 40.5% but revenue is up by 2.8%, which is roughly the same rate as the fare increases, so the passenger increase must be very small. It says that it has now increased capacity by 40%, and this month it started a major advertising campaign to attract passengers. Does that sound like a railway line that is full to capacity?

Mr McLoughlin: No, it sounds like a railway that is providing the services that all colleagues want to see. As I pointed out a few moments ago, in certain areas hon. Friends are pressing for further services that cannot be provided because Network Rail says there is no availability on the existing highways.

Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con): My right hon. Friend can rest assured that, for a change, I will not be using this opportunity as a pitch to get more fast services to Nuneaton on the west coast main line. Can he assure me that, despite the investment being made in HS2, investment will still be made to continue to improve the services and capacity on the west coast main line?

Mr McLoughlin: Yes, indeed. That is one of the points that will become very apparent with the investment programmes we have over the coming years and that Network Rail will be carrying out. I can assure my hon. Friend that it is not a case of either/or; it is essential to invest in both areas.

David Mowat (Warrington South) (Con): I would like to add a thought on the capacity question. Will the Secretary of State confirm that over the past 15 years passenger numbers have increased by an average of 5% a year and that the business case for HS2 assumes an increase of 1.6% a year, which is quite a conservative estimate?

Mr McLoughlin: Indeed, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Basically, 15 years ago there were about 750 million passenger journeys, and the latest estimate is for 1.5 billion passenger journeys, which is a massive shift that I would have thought my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) would welcome.

Mr William Cash (Stone) (Con) *rose*—

Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con) *rose*—

Mr McLoughlin: Now, there is a choice. As a bit of a conservative, I will go with seniority, if my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Steve Baker) will forgive me.

Mr Cash: Will my right hon. Friend accept that, in relation to my constituency, this project goes from top to bottom and is deeply opposed by all and sundry? I have had meetings with thousands of constituents already. Will he accept that, according to the Public Accounts Committee, the pricing is unrealistic, the values for journey time savings are untenable and there has been insufficient analysis of non-rail alternatives? What answer does he give to the Public Accounts Committee and my constituents, who are deeply angered by this?

Mr McLoughlin: To my hon. Friend's constituents I say this: I understand that a big piece of infrastructure of the size of HS2 will obviously have an impact. I respect and understand that and do not criticise those people who raise objections. I will move on to talk about compensation later. He talks about an area where we are yet to confirm the route. We will be having a full and proper consultation later this year, when he and his constituents will be able to make those points. I will want to see what can be done to help with some of the environmental points. I also point out that part of the west coast main line runs through his constituency, and it, too, was very unpopular when it was built, but it is very beneficial to the area, because I know that he often takes the train from Stafford to get to London. I will give way once more to my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe, but then I will have to make some progress.

Steve Baker: In relation to passenger numbers, my right hon. Friend will know the old aphorism that if one subsidises anything, one gets more of it. Will he remind us how much subsidy the rail industry has received over the past few years?

Mr McLoughlin: One of the things we are trying to do is drive out some of the subsidy in the railways to make it cheaper and more affordable for companies, but it is certainly true that there is subsidy in the rail industry. However, we have to think about people being able to get to work and what that subsidy supports. Sometimes the commuter in London, and the commuter in my hon. Friend's constituency, deserves that support to enable him to get to the jobs that are available elsewhere. One has to be realistic and understanding about that.

I will now try to make some progress, because I have now been speaking for longer than I had intended to take for my whole speech. This is not about a choice between upgrading the existing railway and building a new one. Upgrades will not provide the extra capacity we need. The choice is between a new high-speed line and a new conventional railway. The significant additional benefits make high-speed rail the right answer. Of course, big infrastructure projects are always controversial. As I often say, the easiest thing in the world for the Government to do would be not to build HS2 or to commit to it, but the costs of doing so would be huge.

It would be a cost in jobs. Our modest estimates indicate that HS2 will create and support 100,000 jobs, while the group of core cities predict that it will underpin 400,000 jobs, 70% of them outside London. It would be a cost in prosperity. Some estimates suggest that HS2 will add over £4 billion to the economy even before it is open. The line is estimated to provide around £50 billion in economic benefits once it is up and running. If we do not go ahead with HS2, there will also be a cost in lost opportunities for the towns and cities in the midlands and the north. I am not prepared to put up with a situation in which someone can get to Brussels on a high-speed train line, but not to Birmingham; to Strasbourg, but not to Sheffield; or to Lille, but not to Leeds. We cannot afford to leave the economic future of our great cities such as Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham and Derby to an overcrowded 200-year-old railway.

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con) *rose*—

Mr McLoughlin: I did say that I would not give way any more, but I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown: My right hon. Friend knows, as does the rest of the House, that much of that high-speed European railway was built with European money. How much investigation has he done with the European authorities into how much he might be able to reduce the enormous £32 billion cost of the railway?

Mr McLoughlin: We will be looking at that. I will say a bit more about costs a little later, if my hon. Friend will wait. As always, we will look at how we finance, and not necessarily just in respect of the area to which he has referred. We could see private sector investment in some of the stations that we are going to develop. I will say something more about the stations in a few moments.

We will deliver the investment to develop new stations and growth at places such as Old Oak Common in west London, where we will invest more than £920 million in a new hub linking the west country, Crossrail and HS2. At Curzon street in Birmingham, we will invest £335 million on station developments. Similar investments are due in Manchester, Leeds and other great railway centres such as Sheffield and the east midlands.

HS2 will also allow for significant improvements to the rail service on the existing main north-south lines, providing benefits for towns such as Milton Keynes, Tamworth and Lichfield. It will provide real scope to get more freight on to the railways, which I would have thought the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) would welcome. It will also free up capacity on the M1, the M6 and the M40.

My second point this afternoon is about the Bill before the House. It will authorise essential expenditure on the preparation work for high-speed rail. Planning and building the line will take time.

Natascha Engel (North East Derbyshire) (Lab): On the point about this legislation being the paving Bill and agreeing the expenditure before the line gets built, will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that he will publish the receipts relating to everything spent as we advance to building the line, so that we can assure ourselves annually that the money spent represents value for money to the taxpayer?

Mr McLoughlin: I am about to make exactly that point; obviously, somebody else has an advance copy of my speech.

The line will be overseen and delivered by successive Parliaments, which is why it is right to provide Parliament with the opportunity to debate the project. The hybrid Bill will provide additional opportunities for closer scrutiny of HS2. This is the moment for Parliament to demonstrate that it is backing British business, jobs and growth by backing HS2.

Let me say how the Bill will help achieve those aims. Without this legislation, Treasury rules would limit the amount of work that could be done or undertaken until after Royal Assent on the hybrid Bill. That includes design work on the construction of the line, planning the movement of utilities and carrying out ecological surveys. The legislation will also ensure that future spending on the discretionary property compensation is compliant with the PAC requirements.

Dan Byles (North Warwickshire) (Con): My right hon. Friend is being generous with his time. From the moment the train line was announced, the property market up and down the route has frozen solid. Unless my constituents can demonstrate an exceptional hardship, they cannot sell their homes and move. I implore the Secretary of State once again to reconsider a property bond as the single most helpful move he could make to help alleviate a lot of the suffering being caused right now, today, by the project.

Mr McLoughlin: I assure my hon. Friend that, if he has a little patience, I will say something about that exact point a little later.

The PAC requirement states that when there is significant new expenditure that is likely to persist, authority should normally be sought from Parliament. I appreciate that

many hon. Members have concerns about the authorisation of expenditure on early works in advance of the subsequent hybrid Bill. That is why this Bill ensures complete transparency in what we are doing, when we are doing it and—crucially—how much we are spending.

The Bill creates a duty on the Secretary of State to produce an annual financial report on the amount of expenditure incurred, allowing Parliament to keep a check on the costs and progress. I hope that that answers the point made by the hon. Member for North East Derbyshire (Natascha Engel).

Natascha Engel: Will the Secretary of State publish the receipts?

Mr McLoughlin: I will look at the detail of that. I am certainly determined that Parliament should be kept well informed and, of course, the company will be open to the scrutiny of the Public Accounts Committee and the National Audit Office reporting to the PAC. There is a way in which the House can keep an eye on the matter.

My third point is about funding. We can today welcome the allocation made by the Chancellor in infrastructure investment. Tomorrow, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury will say more about our plans. I know that in the context of the Bill, the House will want to be updated on the cost of HS2. I can therefore tell the House that tomorrow I will be writing to the chairman of HS2 Ltd to set a target price for delivering phase 1 of the project. That amount is £17 billion at 2011 prices. That takes account of the design and environmental changes to improve the scheme. Those changes include a tunnel from Old Oak Common to Northolt, design changes at Euston station, and a tunnel under the M6 near Birmingham.

As a responsible Government, we must be prudent, which means allowing the right level of contingency. In addition, therefore, we have set an overall indicative amount for the budget for phase 1 of £21.4 billion. For phase 2, it is £21.2 billion, so the total is £42.6 billion at 2011 prices. That includes £12.7 billion of contingency.

Graham Stringer (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab): At Prime Minister's questions this afternoon, I asked the Prime Minister why the Government were opposing the continuation of the trans-European network north of London. The Prime Minister clearly did not have an answer, and I will understand if the Secretary of State does not. However, will the Secretary of State find out why we are opposing the extension of that network? While we are in the European Union, that could be cutting off a source of funding.

Mr McLoughlin: I heard the hon. Gentleman's question to the Prime Minister. Those debates on that whole process are ongoing and still at an early stage. I have some worries and I would want to get clarification before we changed the Government's position.

Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con) *rose—*

Mr McLoughlin: I have not yet given way to my hon. Friend, so I will now.

Andrea Leadsom: Will my right hon. Friend explain what the £12.7 billion of contingency will do to the benefit-cost ratio? During the consultation period, it was always made clear that the £32 billion was the absolute maximum and contained a vast sum for contingency.

Mr McLoughlin: At the moment, the value-cost ratio is reckoned to be 2.5. I also point out that the BCR tells us some things, but not everything. For instance, the BCR on the Jubilee line was a lot lower than that for High Speed 2. If the Jubilee line had not been developed, a lot of the development in Canary Wharf would never have taken place. The line brought a huge amount of investment into the area and the country. It is important that we are seen to be able to compete with other countries in the global race to attract businesses to this country. The point also relates to the Olympic games, where a contingency was allowed and in fact the price of the games came in below the budget that had been set by the Government. I expect the final costs to be lower than those I have outlined. However, I take on board my hon. Friend's point about BCR.

Andrew Bridgen: My right hon. Friend has announced that the total budget for the infrastructure plan will be about £43 billion. Does that include the £8 billion for the rolling stock?

Mr McLoughlin: If my hon. Friend will allow me to make a bit more progress, he will find that I am going to be very open with the House and put all this out into the public domain. I want to be as open as I possibly can.

Christopher Pincher (Tamworth) (Con) *rose—*

Mr McLoughlin: I give way to my hon. Friend, who I met yesterday—I think, but the days are getting a bit blurred at the moment.

Christopher Pincher: They are getting blurred for us all. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way and for yesterday meeting my constituents from Kingswinford and Drayton Bassett to discuss their concerns about compensation and mitigation. He has rightly referred to the great concern that people have about the compensation and mitigation that is available. In setting a budget for phase 1, will he prevail on HS2 to be as efficient as possible so that money can be saved and spent on mitigations in Staffordshire?

Mr McLoughlin: The meeting that I had yesterday with my hon. Friend and his constituents was very useful, and I gave them an undertaking to look at some of the points they made. I have had varying reports on how some of the public consultations have gone. I am determined that we improve the way in which they are conducted so that people get more reliable answers on the points they are making, and as quickly as possible, although sometimes these things take a lot of time if particular requests are made as to routes and the like. I thank my hon. Friend for behaving very constructively in the points that he is making.

Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way, and pleased to be able to follow the intervention by my hon. Friend the Member for Tamworth (Christopher Pincher). Next

[*Michael Fabricant*]

week I will be bringing people from Lichfield, Whittington and Armitage to see him to discuss, primarily, mitigation. May I ask him about compensation? He will know that with the current route I will have real difficulties with the hybrid Bill; in fact, I will not be able to support it. The Country Land and Business Association says that this stage of the game is the only opportunity to get compensation into legislation so that we can give it to people in my constituency, and indeed in Tamworth, who have been blighted for the past three years.

Mr McLoughlin: As someone who was born and brought up in Staffordshire, I know the area that my hon. Friends are talking about incredibly well. Without the authority of this Bill, we would be in a very difficult position as regards exceptional hardship. I mentioned earlier some of the requirements of the PAC in relation to accountability in spending money on a project without the approval of Parliament, and that also relates to compensation.

Mr Dennis Skinner (Bolsover) (Lab) *rose*—

Mr McLoughlin: I cannot not give way to my constituency neighbour.

Mr Skinner: The Secretary of State has been dealing with blight, and he mentions Staffordshire, but he also knows Derbyshire well, and he knows a village called Pinxton. I spoke about blight when he made his original statement, and I was staggered to be told within hours by a farmer in Pinxton who was selling his farm that as soon as the statement had been made he was told that he would never sell his farm. How is that farmer going to be compensated?

Mr McLoughlin: I will say a little more about compensation in a moment. I accept and appreciate the hon. Gentleman's point about the impact of naming the route. At the time of HS1 several routes were announced and there was potentially more widespread blight. In HS2 we have tried to be more specific about the routes so that we avoid widespread blight. However, I also say to the hon. Gentleman, who is well versed in how these things work, that we will be going out to consultation on phase 2—I will be announcing that in the very near future—and that will enable his constituents and those of the hon. Member for North East Derbyshire to make their points, find out more information, and possibly propose alternative suggestions and ideas.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): The Secretary of State said that there is a contingency provision of nearly 40% in this project. Is that typical of a project of this size, or does it indicate a higher degree of risk than would usually be associated with such a project?

Mr McLoughlin: It is a normal level of contingency that would be put into a scheme of this sort, and it is built in on an internationally based calculation.

This is the right way to plan for the project. In addition, with or without HS2, new rolling stock will be needed on the key inter-city routes linking London and the north over the next 20 years. I hope that deals with the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for

North West Leicestershire (Andrew Bridgen). We are therefore budgeting £7.5 billion for HS2 rolling stock. To put that in perspective, the current inter-city express programme to replace trains on the east coast and Great Western lines, which is creating jobs in the north east, will cost £4.9 billion. The money that I have just announced for the rolling stock for HS2 also includes a contingency of some £1.5 billion.

Good infrastructure is an investment in economic growth. We are investing £14.5 billion to build Crossrail, while £11 billion has been invested in new infrastructure at Heathrow since 2003. Over the period of construction, the cost of HS2 will be less than 0.15% of GDP—I repeat, less than 0.15% of GDP. This is an investment that the country can sustain and needs. That is why tomorrow the Chief Secretary will set out the detailed HS2 funding allocations for the six-year period until 2020-21.

Before I finish, I want to explain what we are doing for those affected by the line. As I said earlier and have tried to make clear throughout this Second Reading speech, I do not dismiss those with objections as irrelevant. We do indeed need to design HS2 carefully, consult properly and compensate fairly. I hope that I can reassure people about why it is right to go ahead. Some have concerns about the impact of HS2 on the landscape. While I cannot deny that a project of this scale will have an effect, I believe that the positive experience of our first high-speed line in Kent shows that the consequences can be managed without wrecking the countryside. For instance, while not a single mile of the M1 is in-tunnel, about 40 miles of HS2 will be in-tunnel. Of the 12.4 miles that crosses the Chilterns area of outstanding natural beauty, 5.8 miles will be in-tunnel and 3.5 miles will be in deep cuttings. No part of phase 2 of the route crosses any national parks or areas of outstanding natural beauty.

It is also important to ensure that proper compensation is made to those affected by HS2. That is why we have introduced the exceptional hardship scheme although there was no statutory requirement to do so. We believe that home owners already affected with a pressing need to move should have recourse to compensation, but without the authority of Parliament to incur expenditure to continue with this compensation, I would need to consider carefully what other mechanisms, if any, we could use. Very soon, we will start a new consultation on compensation.

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): I have met some of my constituents in Greasbro road in Tinsley in Sheffield, whose homes will be demolished by the scheme. They accept that to a degree, but they ask me whether it is reasonable that people who, for the greater good of the country, are moving out of a home that they do not want to leave will simply get 100% of the market value, plus home loss. Is there no room for the Secretary of State to be more generous and say to people, “You are doing something for the good of the country. Therefore, you should receive more than 100% of the market value”?

Mr McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman makes a very good point. We have said that we will go out to consultation. I fully accept that the position of his constituents is slightly different because the consultation, in the first

instance, will relate to phase 1. It is not possible to consult on phase 2 until we have confirmed the route, but there will have to be a consultation on that. Given that he is the Chairman of the Communities and Local Government Committee, which has an important role in this area, no doubt his Committee will want to consider the matter.

We will consider a range of compensation options, including a property bond, about which a number of Members have made representations.

In building HS2, we need to ensure that we make the best use of British skills and workers. For Crossrail, 97% of the contracts have been won by British-based companies. From 2017, HS2 will create 19,000 engineering and construction jobs.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): Supporting British jobs is essential. The Secretary of State will know that the finest rail in the world is produced in my constituency at the Scunthorpe steelworks. Will he assure me that he and his Department will do everything they can to ensure that Scunthorpe gets a cut of HS2 and that we see those benefits and jobs in our region?

Mr McLoughlin: I can assure my hon. Friend that I want HS2 to be not dissimilar in this respect to Crossrail, which saw 97% of the business going to British companies. However, I am cautious about awarding contracts and making promises from the Dispatch Box. I am certainly a little more cautious than my hon. Friend was in asking me to do so.

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State meet a delegation from Coventry, as he suggested he would just before Christmas when we met him to discuss this issue?

Mr McLoughlin: I hope the hon. Gentleman does not mind my pointing out that I met a delegation before Christmas. I have met one delegation and I am happy to have another meeting with the hon. Gentleman on the same issue. I recognise that the council has changed its position and I look forward to his changing his position as well.

Today marks an important milestone in the progress of HS2. We must keep it to time and budget, and minimise the impact on residents, the environment and the landscape. We can do that and we need to do that because HS2 is an engine for growth: growth in jobs, growth in opportunities for business and growth in the global race. HS2 is a project for our generation. Now is the time to make it happen. I commend the Bill to the House.

3.13 pm

Maria Eagle (Garston and Halewood) (Lab): Britain's railways face a major capacity challenge in the years to come. That was why, when we were in government, Labour proposed Britain's first new north-south rail line for more than 100 years. We remain convinced that the project is essential, as is completing the wider rebuilding of our rail network that began under the last Government to reverse the damage caused by decades of under-investment before 1997. Doing nothing is not an option because the existing network is fast reaching the limits of its capacity.

Attempting to upgrade the existing main lines could deliver some, but nowhere near all, of the additional capacity that will be needed in the decades to come, and yet the cost would still be great, as would the disruption to passengers and freight. It would mean that we had learned nothing from the experience of carrying out a major upgrade of the west coast main line while attempting to keep it in use. After a decade of inconvenience and disruption, and almost £10 billion spent, the job was finally completed, but it delivered nowhere near the benefits that will come from a new north-south rail line. By building a new line that extends from London to Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds, we can relieve the pressure not just on the west coast, but on all three existing north-south main lines.

It is vital that we are clear about why the scheme is necessary. Those of us from all parts of the House who support the new line need to be better at communicating why the investment is essential. The new north-south rail line is necessary to deliver a major increase in capacity on our rail network. That is why we cannot afford to delay the delivery of this project any longer.

Dan Byles: The hon. Lady has just said that the project is supported by Members from all parts of the House. She knows that I do not support it. What would she say to Labour councillors in my constituency who consistently call this a Conservative project and imply that it is not a Labour one?

Maria Eagle: I would not agree with that, except in the narrow sense that the project is being taken forward by a Conservative-led Government at present. The Secretary of State and I understand that, on both sides of the House, not everybody is in favour of the project. The genuine concerns that people have need to be heard and we will listen to them in detail.

There will be significant benefits in addition to the new capacity that the line will offer. It will enable the introduction of much faster high-speed trains than can be deployed on the existing network. Journey times between our towns and cities will be cut, significantly in many cases. By building the line, we can help to rebalance the economy between London and the south-east and the rest of the country.

It is worth understanding the extent of the reduction in journey times that will be achieved. The journey from London to Manchester that currently takes two hours and eight minutes will be cut by an hour to just one hour and eight minutes. Sheffield will be just one hour and nine minutes from London, compared with the current two hours and five minutes. Leeds to London will take just one hour and 22 minutes, which is a reduction from the current journey time of two hours and 12 minutes.

Crucially, the journey times to destinations beyond the new line will be reduced. I am not sure that that is always understood. It will take just three hours and 38 minutes to get from London to Edinburgh, instead of the current four hours and 23 minutes. I look forward to being able to get home to Liverpool in a little over an hour and a half. It is not yet widely understood that high-speed trains will run off the new line on to existing track, serving communities across the country. It will be possible to get on a train in at least 28 of our towns and cities, including nine of the UK's 10 biggest conurbations,

[*Maria Eagle*]

and begin a journey that will use the new line. We need to communicate better the extent to which the whole country will benefit from this investment.

The development of stations along the new line will provide major opportunities for regeneration and jobs, in addition to those created through the construction of the line itself. With fast inter-city services moved to the new rail line, capacity will be freed up on the existing main lines for new commuter services, further improving connectivity between our towns and cities further north, and generating opportunities to shift freight from road to rail. The line will deliver a credible alternative to short-haul flights and, therefore, the opportunity to reduce the emissions that contribute to climate change and free up capacity at airports in the south-east that could better be used to open new routes to emerging markets.

We remain convinced that a new north-south rail line is needed. It is the right priority for investment and it is right that we make the decision to proceed.

Chris Kelly (Dudley South) (Con): The hon. Lady talks about the communities that will be served by the proposed high-speed rail line, but what about ticket prices? Will it not just serve the type of people who work in professional services, such as lawyers and accountants, who will be able to travel at high speed on company expenses rather than out of their own pockets?

Maria Eagle: The hon. Gentleman raises a legitimate concern, which was probably not helped by the Secretary of State's predecessor, the right hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), referring to HS2 as "a rich man's toy". Consideration of pricing arrangements will help to alleviate some of those concerns.

Mr Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Maria Eagle: I will give way once I have answered the hon. Member for Dudley South (Chris Kelly).

The Opposition believe strongly that the north-south rail line will be a properly integrated part of our entire rail network. It should not be seen as separate from it. That also goes for pricing and ensuring that people can afford to use it.

Mr Mahmood: Does my hon. Friend agree that this project will have a huge economic benefit to places such as Birmingham and the west midlands? In my constituency, we have a company from the United Arab Emirates that was originally going to settle in London. It provides 20 jobs in Birmingham, a figure that will go up to 80 jobs by the end of the year. The company is asking for better transport links, so that employees can commute as fast as possible. That will provide better jobs and training for our people in the midlands.

Maria Eagle: My hon. Friend makes a good point and I agree with him.

Mr Brian Binley (Northampton South) (Con): Is not the truth of the matter that High Speed 2 will release capacity on the west coast main line? Has the debate not recognised the importance of freight, which is growing at more than 10% per year on rail? Does that not come into the discussions we are having today?

Maria Eagle: My goodness, I find myself in total agreement with the hon. Gentleman.

Despite the importance of this project, there has been a real lack of drive from Ministers—I am not necessarily talking about the Secretary of State—in taking the decisions and delivering the action needed to make it a reality. The former Labour Transport Secretary, Lord Adonis, set up HS2 Ltd as long ago as 2009. By August of the same year, he had already confirmed plans for a new north-south rail line because he was a high-speed Secretary of State. Nothing has moved anywhere near as fast as the Department for Transport since he left, except the revolving door that has meant I am facing my third Transport Secretary since the election. I hope very much that the Government reshuffle that is rumoured to be on the cards does not deliver yet another change. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will agree with me on that.

Mr McLoughlin: I hear what the hon. Lady says, but she should look at the average length of service of Labour Secretaries of State for Transport—they were also fairly rapid through those doors.

Maria Eagle: It is starting to worry me, when I contemplate my political future, that the average length across the parties of Secretaries of State for Transport appears to be somewhat on the short side. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman, while his Government are still in office, and I can increase the average length of time served.

Mr MacNeil: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Maria Eagle: I will make a little progress and then give way to the hon. Gentleman.

The fact is that it is only now, four years on from Lord Adonis's initial action, that the Government are introducing the legislation required to enable money to be spent in advance of construction. The legislation needed to actually begin construction is still nowhere in sight. The Secretary of State's own departmental plan continues optimistically to claim that Royal Assent on the hybrid Bill will be secured in May 2015, yet in *The Times* at the weekend he could not be any more confident than to say, "I hope it will." I know he does not want to admit it, but is it not the truth that there is absolutely no prospect of securing Parliament's approval for phase 1 before the next election?

Despite its inclusion in the Queen's Speech, Ministers cannot even guarantee a Second Reading for the hybrid Bill in this Session, leaving just one year to secure its passage through both Houses. It took two years and one month to take the hybrid Bill for High Speed 1 through Parliament, and Crossrail took three years and five months. Neither of those schemes was on the scale, or came with as much controversy, as this new rail line. The Government's inaction in the past three years requires them to rush the Bill at the end of this Parliament. The National Audit Office has warned that this compressed time scale poses even greater risks to the project:

"Faster preparation for the bill may increase the extent of petitions to Parliament which may make it less likely that royal assent is granted by the planned date of May 2015. It may also divert the Department and HS2 Limited from focusing on the deliverability of the design."

With construction due to begin in January 2017, less than two years into the next Parliament, Ministers know full well that they are now cutting it very fine indeed.

The fact that Royal Assent will no longer be achieved for phase 1 in this Parliament raises the question of why the new line was split into two Bills in the first place. We all know that that decision was taken to ensure that at all costs Conservative MPs did not have to go into the next election with pressure from their constituents to vote against it. The Government have failed to achieve that goal, and have completely unnecessarily opted for two hybrid Bills, when taking the proposals forward as one scheme would have provided greater certainty and ensured that there was no doubt about the Government's commitment to the whole north-south line, as Ministers claim.

Mr MacNeil: *Harvard Business Review* says that there are about 40 mega-regions in the world that straddle national borders. They contain about 18% of the world's population, 66% of its economic activity and 86% of the world's patents. In these islands, we have two such mega-regions: south central England and the central belt of Scotland. Professor Richard Florida of the university of Toronto says that linking these regions helps global aggregate prosperity. When would the hon. Lady like to see high-speed links between these two UK mega-regions?

Maria Eagle: We cannot get any further north than Leeds and Manchester until we have got to Leeds and Manchester. That is a constraint, and I hear what the hon. Gentleman says.

Andrew Bridgen: The hon. Lady talks with great enthusiasm about HS2. Will she reassure the House that Her Majesty's Opposition's support for HS2 will continue up to and beyond the next general election? The support of the Government in this case is, I believe, rather like the support given by the rope to the hanged man.

Maria Eagle: The hon. Gentleman is speaking in hope rather than expectation. I know his own personal concern about the scheme and I understand his point, but I can be clear with the House that Labour supports getting on with building this north-south line.

Mrs Gillan: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way. I am also grateful to her and the Secretary of State for being so understanding about the problems the scheme will cause to my constituents and my constituency. Does she agree that, in spending in excess of £50 billion minimum on such a scheme, one would expect it to connect effectively to HS1 and Heathrow? Is it not right to say that going ahead with this project and looking at the phase 1 route at this stage before Sir Howard Davies's review into airport capacity is putting the cart before the horse?

Maria Eagle: It is fair to say that there are concerns about connectivity and what is happening at the southern end, but it is also fair to say that the Government of the day must decide. It is reasonable for the Opposition to raise issues, but, with projects over multiple Parliaments, we must accept, as an Opposition, that we are not quite

as well resourced as the Government of the day to come up with well-thought-through alternatives. The Government of the day have to make the decisions, but it is fair enough for opponents and supporters of the scheme to raise issues, recognising that, if the project is ever to be delivered, the Government of the day must decide on the way forward.

Mark Lazarowicz: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Maria Eagle: I will do, and then I would like to make a little progress.

Mark Lazarowicz: I did not quite catch my hon. Friend's answer to the hon. Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Mr MacNeil), who asked about taking the line north of Leeds and Manchester. Will she confirm that we would wish to see the high-speed services and line taken north of Leeds and Manchester in due course? It is not just a question of speed, however; it is also a question of capacity, because, as she pointed out, the construction of high-speed lines further south will free up capacity on existing lines, but that will lead to capacity problems if all the high-speed trains end up going on the existing lines further north.

Maria Eagle: I understand my hon. Friend's point, and the one I made in response to the earlier intervention was simply that we had to get to Leeds and Manchester before we could go further. Work is going on—led by the Department, I think—looking at the prospects for further phases, if one wishes to put it that way, after we have got to Leeds and Manchester.

The delays over the past three years are no surprise, given that the Department has been promising to publish a transport strategy ever since the election, but has yet again delayed it until later this year. The failure to deliver progress on this new railway line could not be a better example of what happens when one decides on a transport strategy towards the end of a Parliament, rather than at the beginning. It means major transport decisions—for example, how we connect the new rail line into Britain's hub airport at Heathrow—are not being taken forward in an integrated way. That is entirely a consequence of ducking the big questions on aviation for the whole Parliament and of the Government's decision, which we believe to be wrong, to tell the Airports Commission not to report until after the next election.

It is not just the rapidly slipping timetable that raises alarm bells and worries those of us who support this project. The National Audit Office wrote:

“We identified three areas of risk to the Department's effective governance of the High Speed 2 programme:... Underdeveloped governance and programme management... Insufficient resources in the Department's High Speed 2 team”—

and

“Inadequate stakeholder management”.

The criticism that Ministers failed sufficiently to resource the team in the Department will be familiar to anyone who has followed the fiasco over the collapse of the Government's rail franchising programme. The NAO has warned that there is

“a high risk that it may have insufficient skilled staff in the areas of procurement, corporate finance, rail technical and programme management.”

[*Maria Eagle*]

Yet again, the reckless way in which the Department was reorganised after the election and the scale of cuts to key staff have put a major project at risk.

The Government have finally, belatedly, appointed a new director general for HS2 as well as a new senior management team, which is welcome news, but is it not extraordinary that, just as with the west coast main line fiasco, it took so long for a senior responsible owner to be identified for the project? No wonder the Major Projects Authority has rated the delivery of the new rail line as amber/red. That should have been a clear warning to Ministers to take its concerns seriously, not simply dismiss them as irrelevant.

To be fair to the Secretary of State, there was one bit of good news in the otherwise highly critical report from the MPA. It found that

“the Department has strengthened its working relationship with HM Treasury.”

That is very sensible indeed, particularly in the light of the NAO’s concerns about the budget for the project. It has called the Department’s use of a precise estimate of £16.3 billion for the cost of phase 1 of the scheme as “unwise”, as I think we have discovered today. It said that an honest figure would be between £15.4 billion and £17.3 billion, so I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has today given updated figures. I am sure that he will continue to do so, as he has undertaken to do.

The NAO was also unable to verify the Department’s claim that the £1.5 billion savings recommended by Infrastructure UK could be delivered. Work apparently only began on identifying those savings in September. The House needs to be told whether the savings have now been locked in. The NAO also raises doubts about the Department’s claim that phase 1 will result in reduced operating costs on the existing network of £3 billion over 60 years. This is on the assumption that fewer long-distance services are likely to run on the west coast main line, but because the Department has not set out any revised service patterns it is difficult to see how such a precise and neat rounded figure has been generated.

The Government should also be clear that the £42.6 billion cost of completing the north-south line as far as Leeds and Manchester does not include the £7.5 billion cost of the trains to run on the line.

The Secretary of State has made that clear today. These factors are an essential part of the project, and they ought to be included in the estimates in future.

Worryingly, the National Audit Office also claims:

“The Department has not included VAT in its cost estimates or affordability assessments”,

and warns that

“HS2 Limited will be liable for VAT at 20 per cent on almost all of its spending.”

Ministers need to confirm that the Chancellor and Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs have agreed that the VAT will be reclaimable. If that will not be the case, that should also be accurately reflected in the budget.

The NAO also warns that, even with the additional £3 billion capital spending from 2015-16 that has been confirmed today, there is a risk that the project

“may restrict the ability to fund other capital projects across government”.

It goes on to warn:

“We estimate that there could be a gap in affordability of £3.3 billion spread over the four years from 2017-18 to 2020-21, which are the peak spending years for phase one.”

The Secretary of State will, I think, have negotiated something in that respect, but he must make it clear, when he can, that the settlement he has reached with the Chancellor—the details of which we might get tomorrow—has closed that funding gap in full. It would be unacceptable if the Department’s failure to plan the spending needed for this scheme were to result in any cuts or delays to the vital upgrading on the rest of the network. That includes the rolling programme of electrification and new inter-city trains, both of which have already been delayed or scaled back under this Government.

Finally, on the budget for the scheme, there is already a creeping increase in spending from the allocation set for this Parliament in the 2010 spending review. The Minister of State, Department for Transport, the right hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr Burns), has admitted to me in a parliamentary answer that the budget for the current spending period has been revised upwards from £773 million to around £900 million. That is worrying in the context of the legislation we are debating today, which will effectively give Ministers a blank cheque from Parliament to spend on the scheme. I am sure that the Secretary of State will keep Parliament fully apprised of where the money is going.

In addition to the delays and the criticisms of the budget, serious concerns have also been expressed about HS2 Ltd. It was initially set up to advise Ministers on the route for the new north-south line, but the Government have expanded its role to include building support for the scheme and then delivering it, despite the fact that HS2 Ltd has faced criticism for the way in which it has engaged with communities along the route, with local authorities and with MPs. The fact is that it has not proved to be an effective advocate for the scheme.

The NAO has issued a warning on this, too, saying:

“The programme has a complicated governance structure. This is because the Department aims to preserve some independence for its development body, HS2 Limited, while also maintaining effective governance.”

By divorcing the scheme from delivery of the investment in the existing rail network, there is a risk that we will not focus on the need to create a fully integrated single rail network. It makes no sense that Network Rail is, in effect, having to mirror some of the work of HS2 Ltd, including appointing staff of its own to work on the scheme and having to lobby HS2 Ltd to ensure that decisions are taken in a way that does not have a negative impact on the wider network.

It is increasingly clear that a better option would be to transfer responsibility for the planning and delivery of the new north-south rail line to Network Rail. That would reduce duplication and cost while better enabling the integration of investment in the existing network and the new line. The hopelessly inadequate plans for connecting the new north-south line with HS1 are a good example. The focus of the debate on this issue has been on whether there would be any demand for services from the continent to go further north than London. We should surely not turn our backs on the opportunity to end unnecessary and environmentally damaging short-haul flights, but the real case for getting the connection right involves the opportunity to run the excellent Javelin

trains that served us so well during the Olympics further up the country, instead of simply between the coast and the capital.

Mr MacNeil: According to the latest Government figures, Scotland has 8.4% of the UK population but provides 9.9% of the taxes. In effect, Scots will be paying for 9.9% of the new high-speed rail development, so it is disappointing that neither the Secretary of State nor the hon. Lady can give the House a date, an ambition, a target or a hope of when it might reach Scotland.

Maria Eagle: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's premise that there will be no benefit to Scotland before the high-speed rail line gets there at some time in the future. It is clear that it will benefit from the project.

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): Does the hon. Lady agree that, if we are going to spend this large amount of money on HS2, we should get the maximum benefit from it? At the moment, it is planned to connect HS2 with HS1 only by a rather tortuous single-rail route, but there is a better, double-rail solution available. Would it not make more sense to fully integrate HS1 with HS2?

Maria Eagle: I have a great deal of sympathy for the hon. Gentleman's point. It makes no sense to me at all that passengers from the south-east should have to change trains in north London to reach towns and cities in the midlands, the north and up to Scotland. We do not see this connection as an optional extra that can be delivered in a patch-and-mend way; it needs to be re-thought.

Frank Dobson: Is my hon. Friend aware that HS2 is saying that it wants to use the north London line for the link because

"it is assessed to have less construction risk than a tunnel"?

Is she aware that the man from Bechtel who masterminded the successful channel tunnel link and the refurbishment of St Pancras decided to do a double-bore tunnel from Barking to St Pancras because it was "less risky" to have such a tunnel than to use the north London line. Who would my hon. Friend trust on that?

Maria Eagle: I would undoubtedly trust my right hon. Friend—there is absolutely no doubt about that. The points made by both the hon. Member for The Cotswolds (Geoffrey Clifton-Brown) and my right hon. Friend illustrate the concern and controversy that remain about this issue. I believe that a solution should be devised that can minimise the impact on communities in Camden while ensuring that we do not miss a perfect opportunity to redevelop Euston in the right way for the long term. I believe that the Government should keep looking at that.

Mrs Gillan: I am really grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way, because our speeches are being restricted to only six minutes in the main debate, so it will be hard to say everything that has built up over four years in those six minutes. From what she is saying, am I right to understand that her party might look at a different route for HS2, as the very point she is making about

connectivity to HS1 and to Heathrow leans towards another route that was originally in the set of proposals—one that was not chosen by this Government?

Maria Eagle: I do not think it fair to assume that if I had the Secretary of State's role after the next general election, I would tear everything up. I have made it clear that when there are projects that run across Parliaments, it is important to co-operate and to understand that decisions have to be made. We will, however, have to see where we are at by the time we get to the next election. I would certainly want to take every opportunity to make sure that the nation gets the best possible outcome from the money spent. As I say, we shall have to see where we are at that time. I am not interested in delaying going forward with what I believe to be a tremendously important scheme.

The Government must also be clear, following the successful judicial review, about how they intend to change the compensation scheme for households affected by the building of the line. The judge found that the consultation process was unfair, that not enough information had been provided and that the criteria for compensation options were not adequately explained. This failure has caused unnecessary added stress to those affected by the scheme, during what is obviously a very difficult time for them and their families.

It is simply not possible to take forward a project of national importance on this scale without causing a significant impact on some communities and on some people's lives, but the obligation on all of us is to do what we can to mitigate against that impact and to act fairly in terms of compensating people for the loss of property and value that they suffer. Ministers must now act quickly to bring forward a new, fair scheme and ensure that it is communicated clearly and transparently.

Andrea Leadsom: Do the Opposition therefore support the concept of a property bond that would try to improve on the blight that is experienced by so many people?

Maria Eagle: I am willing to support anything that can properly, fairly and reasonably compensate people in a way that still meets the obligation to be reasonable with taxpayers' money. I would thus be happy to look at the details of the scheme, as I think the Secretary of State has said he is, too. I think we have a particular obligation to treat those affected as fairly as we possibly can and within as speedy a time scale as possible.

Mr Betts: I would like to mention a point raised with the Secretary of State a while ago. Asking people to make a sacrifice for the good of the country—that is effectively what we are asking the people whose homes are to be demolished to do—and saying to them, "This is the value of your property now and you can have 10% extra for the loss of your home" is really not adequate compensation. We should be able to do a bit better than that for people who are being forced to move home through no fault of their own and no choice of their own.

Maria Eagle: That is an important point. Such action could, indeed, lead to other benefits, if it meant that matters were settled earlier than they would otherwise have been. I believe that some European

[*Maria Eagle*]

countries do as my hon. Friend suggests, and end up building their lines rather more quickly than we seem to manage to.

Ministers must now engage in a debate about the eventual cost of using the new north-south line, because that goes to the heart of the question of what kind of railway we believe in. There have been fears about the issue ever since the former Transport Secretary, the right hon. Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), started talking about rich men's toys.

Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con): I think it important to put on record the fact that the phrase “a rich man's toy” was presented to my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), who is now Secretary of State for Defence. He did not demur, but it is not a phrase that he generated. I happen to have been a member of the Transport Committee at the time. I think it important for us to clear this matter up before the hon. Lady starts accusing my right hon. Friend of making that comment.

Maria Eagle: I think every Member of Parliament realises, given the present state of journalism in this country, that if a phrase is presented to one and one does not demur, it is quite legitimate to say that that is what one agrees with. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point.

I hope that Ministers will agree with Labour's vision of a new railway line that is fully integrated with the existing network, and whose fares are fully regulated. That is the line for which we will all be paying, and its use must therefore be affordable for many people, not just for a few at the richer end of society.

It is disappointing that Ministers have so far shown little interest in ensuring that this significant investment delivers real opportunities, especially for our young people. Labour has made it clear that every £1 billion of investment in the scheme should deliver 1,000 apprenticeships, and I hope that the Government will make the same commitment to apprenticeships and to our young people. Ministers must learn the lessons of the Thameslink procurement. Those trains are now to be built in Germany. It is perfectly possible, within EU rules, to ensure that public investment delivers jobs and apprenticeships where they are desperately needed, here in Britain. Every other EU country manages to do the equivalent through its own train procurement. The new line must deliver British jobs and growth, not only after its completion but during its construction, and that must include the manufacturing of the trains.

It was a Labour Government who first set out the ambition for a new high-speed north-south railway line to address the capacity issue on our rail network while also cutting journey times between our towns and cities, and the case for making this scheme a reality remains strong. Indeed, it is all the more necessary at a time when the Government's economic failure has meant a failure to deliver the growth that the country so desperately needs. The progress made over the last three years, since Ministers inherited the project, has been disappointing, but it retains cross-party support. We will support the Bill today, but we urge the Government to get on with the hybrid Bill as soon as possible. We want to see the

enthusiasm and commitment from Ministers that is necessary to make a major project on this scale become a reality.

Mr Speaker: I must now announce the result of a Division deferred from a previous day. On the motion relating to the town and country planning regulations, the Ayes were 281 and the Noes were 185, so the Question was agreed to.

[*The Division list is published at the end of today's debates.*]

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. In view of the fact that more than 30 Back Benchers wish to speak in the debate, I have imposed a six-minute limit on Back-Bench speeches, with immediate effect.

3.48 pm

Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): I beg to move an amendment:

That this House declines to give a second reading to a Bill which authorises preparatory expenditure on a railway without specifying further detail of the route and a limit on expenditure.

Let me begin by paying tribute to all the constituents and volunteers who have worked tirelessly to protect our interests in the Chilterns. HS2 Action Alliance, 51m, Stop HS2, our Conservative councillors and all the conservation groups have worked so hard and deserve all our thanks and congratulations.

There is no doubt that if HS2 goes ahead, Chesham and Amersham and the Chilterns will be badly affected. Indeed, I think that my constituents will be paying twice: once through their taxes, and once through the disruption and blight that they are suffering.

We have heard that this project was dreamt up under the last Labour Government, and I am glad that the shadow Secretary of State took responsibility for it. The mistake we made was adopting it without asking the proper questions, and now, after three Secretaries of State in as many years, we have a £50 billion project—so we heard today—not connected to any airport or other transport system such as HS1, and divided into two phases with no guarantee that the northern route will be built even in my lifetime.

Graham Stringer: The right hon. Lady is an excellent constituency MP and the route north of Birmingham includes Manchester airport, so, as she was once a candidate who aspired to represent Manchester, does she think she would have a different position on this matter now if she had won that election?

Mrs Gillan: Ah, but fortunately I was elected to represent Chesham and Amersham, so I do not have to answer that hypothetical question.

This project is also almost 30 years out of date. Thirty years ago I might have been supporting it, but people are now looking to save costs in business by using teleconferencing and superfast broadband, and they are trying to reduce the amount of travelling their employees do. If we are in a global race, I would be much happier if we were in fact connecting effectively to Heathrow and HS1, because at the moment we do not even seem to be able to repair our existing roads and railways, and we cannot use the M25 without being

stuck in a traffic jam. Surely we should be looking at our infrastructure and maximising its potential before building a bright, new, shiny railway?

Last week the New Economics Foundation did an excellent piece of work: it published a report examining a variety of projects across the country that could be procured for the same sum of £33 billion. They included some very valuable improvements for northern cities, active transport systems and much more superfast fibre-optic broadband, which we need to deliver competitiveness for this country.

I may have been a nimby—when I started off, I was a nimby—but I have studied this project and I am convinced that it is the wrong project. I am not alone in questioning HS2. We have heard what the National Audit Office has said. Its report was damning. It highlighted that the Department had failed to outline clear strategic objectives, had made errors in calculating the cost-benefit ratio and is not sufficiently engaged with stakeholders, and it casts serious doubt over the capability of HS2 Ltd even to deliver this programme alongside the other demands on the Department.

The judicial review has resulted in a judgment that was shaming of the Department, finding that its consultation on compensation was so unfair as to be unlawful. The Major Projects Authority's report—which the Government continue to refuse to publish in detail, even though the Information Commissioner says it is in the public interest for them to do so—indicates that this project is in the red-amber category, denoting a very high risk of its failing to be delivered on time or on budget.

Mr Binley: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mrs Gillan: Yes, as I think I get extra time if I do.

Mr Binley: Does my right hon. Friend acknowledge that while the NAO report did, indeed, make those criticisms, it also said that at the end of the day there would be a return of 2.5:1 on this project, and does she not recognise the importance of that to the well-being of future generations?

Mrs Gillan: That is a nice try, but the cost of this project is going up minute-by-minute, so I doubt that that ratio is accurate even as I stand here today.

I also have to say that the Department and HS2 Ltd have already failed on other bases: engineering calculations have been wrong, and the costs of alterations to Euston were inaccurate. That, along with public failures such as the west coast main line franchise debacle, must prompt this question: do the Department or HS2 have the leadership capability or competence to deliver the largest infrastructure project in the UK in living memory?

If the project gets the green light, however—as I fear it will, judging by the number of Members present—I want to make two particular points to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. On the current consultation—I use that term loosely—by HS2 Ltd on the draft environmental statement, whatever the failings of the process, at the moment one thing is clear: the area of outstanding natural beauty, which belongs to everybody in this country, is going to be irreversibly damaged. My first request to the Secretary of State is that if this project does go ahead, can we have the best possible mitigation in the Chilterns in order to protect our precious, and highly endangered, environment to

the utmost level? A fully bored tunnel under the whole of the AONB would offer that protection, and I urge the Secretary of State to adopt that option.

My second request has I think been answered partly, because my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State accepted in his opening speech that he will look more seriously at, and perhaps even deliver, the property bond. The compensation scheme has been totally inadequate to date, and the engagement of officials and Ministers often the dialogue of the deaf, frankly. The Bill does not include specific undertakings on compensation that would fulfil the Prime Minister's assurance to me that it would be timely and generous to those people adversely affected. So I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will look at the property bond put forward by my constituent, Hilary Wharf, who is to be commended for her work in this area, and that the compensation system introduced is rapid, fair and does not make my constituents feel that the Government are wriggling to avoid paying them a proper price for their properties.

As you know, Mr Speaker, there are several Members of Parliament whose constituencies are affected by HS2 who are unable to speak today, so I want to say a few words on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr Lidington), who has worked tirelessly to put forward the interests of his constituents. He asked me to point out today that places such as Wendover Dean and the Hawkslade and Walton Court areas of Aylesbury are among the worst affected of any along the phase 1 route. He also asked me to highlight the need for better mitigation—a request that fits in with my own request for a fully bored tunnel. I know that you, Mr Speaker, have regularly communicated your constituents' overwhelming opposition to this project and, like me, have received thousands of letters and have similar experiences of the failure of the exceptional hardship fund to offer adequate compensation to constituents. Likewise, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Beaconsfield (Mr Grieve) is very worried about the Denham viaduct and the Colne Valley site of special scientific interest.

Why do we need a paving Bill? There was no paving Bill for the channel tunnel rail link, Crossrail or the Olympics. We could continue to spend money as we have already, without this Bill. Once it is passed, as it undoubtedly will be, the Government can claim that HS2 is backed by the will of Parliament. Frankly, all colleagues should be concerned about proceeding with this project. The Bill is a blank cheque, handed over before Parliament is in full possession of the facts, and to a Department that is having a hard job convincing people that the project is fit for purpose. On that basis, and because this is the first time we have even had a vote on HS2, it is with a very heavy heart that I say I cannot support the Government. I hope that colleagues in the House today will support my reasoned amendment and vote against the Bill. At this stage, I have no intention of calling votes on any other part of the proceedings, but I will on the amendment and on Second Reading.

3.57 pm

Mrs Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): I am pleased to support this legislation today, which is a significant step in securing High Speed 2. It is important to recognise that HS2 is about having a vision for the

[*Mrs Louise Ellman*]

future. It is about making a much-needed step change in capacity on our railways. It is about meeting growing demand for rail, addressing congestion on our roads and motorways, and connecting major cities not just across this country and the UK, but potentially across Europe as well. It has the potential to rebalance our economy.

However, it is very important that progress on High Speed 2 does not go ahead in isolation from considering the importance of continuing to invest in the existing classic line. Existing improvements such as the northern hub and the electrification programmes must continue and be stepped up. Assurance must be given that there will be proper access to high-speed rail, and that means that more attention needs to be given to the siting of the stations and connections to them. It is important that no local services be reduced as a consequence of building the high-speed rail line, and it is extremely important that the potential of developing the freed existing lines for both freight and passengers be addressed. That means that more work needs to take place, perhaps through local authorities and local enterprise partnerships working together, to make sure that proper plans are worked out so that the existing lines freed when high-speed rail comes to fruition will be able to be used to the maximum for freight and for passengers.

It is also crucial that the potential for economic development and rebalancing the economy is achieved. That means that we must not make any assumptions that simply building a high-speed line will automatically bring those economic benefits. Work has to be done, again by the LEPs, with the local authorities and with Government support, to develop economic strategies, regionally as well as nationally, to support business in taking advantage of those opportunities. I was very interested to read the results of studies instigated by local authorities. The Core Cities study put forward by major cities in our country identified about 400,000 new jobs that would come as a result of high-speed rail, and Centro's report, looking specifically at the west midlands area, identified about 22,000 jobs that would come. I emphasise that none of those jobs will come automatically; we need to give attention to economic strategies and support for business to make sure that those opportunities come to fruition.

A number of important issues must be addressed. Concern remains that under the Bill as proposed, high-speed rail may not go beyond Birmingham. We have heard assurances from Ministers but we need rather more than that; we need a commitment in the Bill to make sure that HS2 is not simply between London and Birmingham, and that the rail scheme progresses to Leeds, Manchester and beyond. The time scale is a very long one, even on the current proposals of 2026 to Birmingham and 2033 to Leeds, to Manchester and to other areas.

Mr McLoughlin: I completely agree with the hon. Lady's point. I wonder, Mr Speaker whether I might use this intervention to clarify something I said earlier, as I am afraid I gave the wrong figure. I said that the contingency was £12.7 billion but it is actually £14.4 billion, so it is larger than I said. I just wanted to take this opportunity, with your permission and that of the hon. Lady, to put the figure right.

Mr Speaker: The House is grateful.

Mrs Ellman: I thank the Secretary of State for clarifying that situation.

The consultation, which has not yet taken place across the whole of the proposed line, must be a very real one. A number of hon. Members have already told us of their local concerns. There are problems in relation to London and, in particular, the development around Euston station, which is an important and difficult issue. Hon. Members have also raised issues in the House relating to access to Stoke-on-Trent. The proposals for Liverpool are not good enough and need improvement. Important environmental issues need addressing, and the question of compensation has been raised in the House this afternoon. All those issues are vital and must be addressed in a reasonable way. It is important for them to be resolved successfully because that will help to deliver a successful HS2—high-speed rail that is about much-needed capacity, connectivity and economic progress for the future, throughout this country and beyond.

4.3 pm

Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con): It is always a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (*Mrs Ellman*), the Chairman of the Transport Committee. I have had the privilege of serving on the Committee for more than three years now. I have studied this subject not only through my Committee work, but through other personal research and I do not think I have studied any subject in more depth. I will try to put concisely my observations on the project in the next few minutes.

I support the principle of high-speed rail. I confess that I do not believe this route is the optimal one, and I have specific concerns and suggestions to make about it, but I support the Bill. I fear the opportunity cost of not proceeding with this project far outweighs the risk and costs of going ahead. I shall say a little about why I have reached that conclusion.

The point has been well made that many parts of our rail network are close to capacity. Rail passenger use and rail freight use have increased sharply in recent years and any reasonable projection shows that they will continue to rise in future decades. Simply taking into account the increased population of the country, particularly in areas such as mine, it is clear that there will be continued increased demand on transport services and rail in particular. Rail usage increased even in the recession from 2008 onwards.

It is often said that we should invest in the classic network rather than HS2. I would not support HS2 if it was at the expense of investment in the classic network, but there is substantial investment in that network. There is the electrification of the Great Western and midland main lines, as well as new rolling stock and junction improvements on the west coast main line. The Government have sensibly committed to reopening the east-west rail line from Milton Keynes to Oxford and Aylesbury. Those are just a few of the projects.

Essential and welcome as the upgrades are, they will not be enough for the long term. I have come to the conclusion from all my research, and from looking at all the projects and models that have been proposed, that we need to build a new north-south strategic rail line.

Andrea Leadsom: Does my hon. Friend think, like my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton South (Mr Binley), that this is a matter of needing more capacity? If so, why are we going for a very expensive system like high-speed rail, with its exponentially enormous engineering costs?

Iain Stewart: My research has shown that if we are committing to build a new railway line, the cost of building a fast one is not significantly more than building a conventional one. The majority of the costs come in building the cuttings, the bridges and all the other necessary infrastructure. Making a faster one costs a little more, but not a huge amount more.

If we merely expanded capacity on the west coast or east coast line, we would have to do that at the same time as running existing services. Anyone who used the west coast main line during the previous upgrade will say what an absolute nightmare that is. Such an approach would not solve the problem of competing demands for use on the existing line between commuter services, freight services, non-stop inter-city services and stopping services. We cannot continually squeeze more and more capacity out of one line, as we will reach capacity and will be overly reliant on that line. That is why I accept the case for a new high-speed line.

I accept that the project is controversial and completely understand the fears of residents along the proposed line of route. There are justifiable concerns about disturbing the peace and quiet of the countryside, but I urge right hon. and hon. Members to look at what happened during the construction and planning of High Speed 1. The same concerns were raised, but since the line has opened there have been very few, if any, complaints.

Sir Paul Beresford (Mole Valley) (Con): I can certainly back up my hon. Friend's point. I was on the Committee that considered the Bill and the line was going through the garden of England, and there was talk of devastation and horrendous things. Some of the complaints were justified, but many proved to be empty. It has worked.

Iain Stewart: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention. I took the opportunity to visit the route of High Speed 1 and saw the noise mitigation measures that had been put in place. The noise of the trains is not much more audible than that of an A road or other minor piece of infrastructure.

Alec Shelbrooke: I was on that trip with my hon. Friend and a notable fact given to us by Kent county council was that Maidstone is now lobbying to have the line go through the station, whereas it was vehemently opposed to that originally.

Iain Stewart: My hon. Friend is absolutely right.

To those who voice concern about visual intrusion on areas of outstanding natural beauty, I simply make the point that railway infrastructure need not be ugly—it need not be concrete blocks. Look at some of the fantastic pieces of railway engineering and architecture we have: the Forth bridge, the Glenfinnan viaduct, Brunel's bridges and tunnels—they have enhanced the landscape. I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister of State to make HS2 into an opportunity to showcase the

best of British design and engineering, with bridges, viaducts and other infrastructure that show off and augment our landscape.

In the couple of minutes remaining, I will highlight five specific concerns and make some suggestions. The first is about the rolling stock for the line and making sure it is compatible with the classic network, particularly on the Anglo-Scottish services. At present, we have tilting trains that allow conventional lines to be used at high speed, but if high-speed trains cannot tilt, journey times on the classic network will be lengthened to an extent that might offset the time gains on the high-speed line. I urge the Minister to consider that.

The second concern, justifiably felt by people in Buckinghamshire, is that the line goes straight through the county with no stop. The high-speed line will intersect with the new east-west line in Buckinghamshire. I ask that, when the scheme is considered in full—the Y-network and connection to the channel tunnel—the case will be reassessed for an intermediate stop at Claydon junction. I would suggest calling it “Milton Keynes Parkway”, but others may have different ideas. That would enable people in the area to access the lines, which I believe would augment the business case.

Only seconds remain, so I will very quickly highlight the point, which has already been well made, about properly connecting airports, High Speed 1 and the channel tunnel. I do not think the plans are optimal. Finally, I urge my right hon. Friend to look at capacity at Euston, where the tube network is already pretty crowded. I believe we need to consider Crossrail 2, so I was delighted when the Chancellor floated that possibility in his statement earlier today. Notwithstanding those concerns, I support the Bill.

4.12 pm

Frank Dobson (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): HS2 will unleash havoc on Euston, Primrose Hill and Camden Town in my constituency. It will demolish the homes of about 500 people and blight the homes of at least another 1,000. One local park will disappear for ever; another will be a building site for 10 years or more. The project will prevent the much-needed reconstruction of Euston station, which was intended to provide around 1,000 new flats for local people. It has already delayed plans to rebuild a local convent school. The link to HS1 will subject Primrose Hill and Camden Town to large-scale engineering works, mainly above ground level. Local shops and restaurants will be put out of business; quiet back streets are to become official routes for construction traffic. Yet the compensation and mitigation regime intended for our area is inferior to what has been promised outside London. That cannot be right.

When HS2 was given the go-ahead, we were told, first, that phase 1 would cost £17 billion; secondly, that it would be completed by 2026; and thirdly, that no one would suffer a significant loss. HS2 is backtracking on all three. For a start, as has been pointed out, £17 billion will not provide a working railway, because it does not include the cost of the trains, estimated to be £2 billion—it will be a train-free zone. Nor does it include the cost of the works at Euston needed to allow the already overcrowded tube and local roads to cope with additional passengers and traffic—that is probably another £2 billion. VAT at 20% will come to about £3 billion. The original

[Frank Dobson]

estimate for HS2 also included £1.4 billion for a spur to Heathrow. The spur has been dropped, but it is not at all clear where the £1.4 billion has gone.

Mrs Gillan: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that because we do not have the full environmental statement—we have only a draft—we do not know the full cost of any environmental mitigation that may be needed along the route?

Frank Dobson: The right hon. Lady is absolutely right. Recently, HS2 Ltd has been forced to confess that it underestimated the cost of the works at Euston by no less than 40%. We have been asked to write a blank cheque for people who underestimate costs by 40%. On top of that, HS2 Ltd admits that it has to rebuild or strengthen cuttings, embankments and bridges on the north London line and the main line. Originally, it denied that that would be necessary, so it did not provide for it in the initial costings. I remind Members that those costs have soared while HS2 is still at a desk-study stage. God knows what will happen when people get round to practical work on the site.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Is my right hon. Friend aware that last week, the New Economics Foundation produced the third independent evaluation of the project, saying that there was real doubt about its viability and what it would do for northern cities?

Frank Dobson: I cannot possibly disagree with my hon. Friend. In theory, a million years ago, I got a degree in economics, and I have reached the stage where I can usually work out when someone is talking drivel. When I heard the Government's cost estimates, I think I understood they were talking drivel.

Does anyone in the House really believe that the line will be completed by 2026? I was going to offer a bet against completion by then, but I suspect that the final completion date is so far in the future that I am unlikely to be around to collect my winnings, which brings me to compensation and mitigation.

At present, HS2 Ltd intends that people and businesses in our area should receive lower compensation, lower standards of protection and inferior mitigation measures. There is no excuse for that treatment of a settled residential and business community. Local council tenants, right-to-buy leaseholders, private tenants, leaseholders and owner-occupiers should be no worse off as a result of the project, which is being carried out, apparently, in the national interest. They must be found new homes that meet their needs, and without any detriment to the terms and conditions of their tenure.

The same approach should apply to businesses. Restaurants and small shops in Drummond street depend on passing trade to Euston station for up to 70% of their business, but HS2 Ltd proposes that for 10 years, they should be cut off from the station by a barrier that will be higher than the Berlin wall. What is worse, it is proposed that they would not receive any compensation at all. May I tell Government Members, who always say that they are speaking up on behalf of small businesses, that if they do not do something to prevent that wickedness, they will let down some small businesses? The same non-compensation rules will apply in Camden Town.

The Government must reconsider the project. Is it really the best use of a scarce £17 billion if we want to improve our creaking transport system? Even if it is, would not the London terminus be better sited at Old Oak Common which, unlike Euston, is on the Heathrow Express route and will be on Crossrail? It would be welcome there, and studies show that if people got off Crossrail at Old Oak Common, only 4% of London underground stations would take longer to reach than if they went to Euston. The stations that would take longer to reach are Euston Square, Regent's Park, Mornington Crescent and King's Cross St Pancras, so there is no disadvantage. If this goes ahead, most sensible travellers will get off at Old Oak Common anyway, whatever anybody says.

Finally, if it is decided to go ahead, I hope there will be agreement across the Chamber that there should be a special made-to-measure compensation and mitigation scheme for the whole length of HS2 and all the residents and businesses affected by it. It should be as generous as the Secretary of State promised, and I do not doubt the integrity of the Secretary of State.

I also have to say this: in all the years that I have dealt with public and private bodies, I have never come across an outfit as stupid, incompetent and incapable of even delivering letters as the people at present running HS2, and if I were in favour of the project, I would get someone else to do it.

4.20 pm

Mr Alan Reid (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I very much welcome the Bill. It is an important stage in implementing a promise from the Liberal Democrat manifesto. The Bill gives the Secretary of State the power, subject to the approval of the Treasury, to incur expenditure in preparation for the high-speed rail network. The language used in the Bill is open-ended because it states that this expenditure must include at least rail lines connecting London, Birmingham, the east midlands, Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester, and which connect with the existing rail network. The "at least" phrase means that the HS2 expenditure being approved under the Bill is not limited to the cities and regions mentioned, but prepares the way for further extension of HS2 in the future.

This is in line with the Government's wish to work with the Scottish Government on this issue, with the aim of having a third phase to connect the high-speed link on from Manchester to Glasgow and Edinburgh. By enhancing connectivity between Britain's large cities, HS2 will make investment in the regions outside London and the south-east far more attractive. This is vital if we are to help rebalance the UK economy and increase jobs and growth. HS2 will underpin the delivery of at least 100,000 jobs, and hopefully far more.

It is estimated that HS2 will transfer approximately 9 million journeys from road to rail and 4.5 million from air to rail. This will ease road congestion and reduce some of the pressure on our airports, allowing our economy to grow in an environmentally friendly manner. Passenger demand is expected to grow and if we do nothing, it is anticipated that the west coast main line will reach full capacity during the next 15 years. High-speed rail provides the best possible option to cope with ever-rising passenger demand and to ensure that we have sufficient future capacity to satisfy the needs of the UK economy.

HS2 will also help to free up capacity on the existing rail network, in particular the west coast main line. As well as improving services for passengers, it will free up capacity for more freight on the railways. HS2 will radically shorten journey times between London, the midlands and the north of England and Scotland. For example, it will shorten the journey time between London and Edinburgh by 45 minutes. That is after phase 2 is completed and without waiting for phase 3.

Mr Sheerman: Has the hon. Gentleman seen some of the research that shows that rather than strengthening the provincial cities, HS2 will reinforce the power and influence of London and do the absolute opposite of what most people thought it would do?

Mr Reid: I have seen some of that analysis, but I disagree with it. All the past experience is that by connecting cities, we bring jobs and growth to both ends of the network. Our Victorian predecessors had great vision. No doubt there were people in those days who said, “This will all be a waste of money. Rail will never take off”, but experience shows that when we connect up people and cities, we create more jobs at both ends of the network.

It is important to point out to the Scottish National party, whose Members have departed and have not bothered to stay for the full debate, that it does not matter where the railway line starts—whether at the London end or the Scotland end. The journey time cut by each mile of track is the same, no matter which end one starts from. Were the SNP’s plans for the referendum to come to fruition and Scotland and England became separate countries, I cannot see a UK Government building the line any further than Manchester, whereas if Scotland remains part of the United Kingdom, I am confident that we will, in time, see high-speed rail all the way from London to Glasgow and Edinburgh.

It is important to point out that other countries, such as Germany, Japan and China, have already invested heavily in high-speed rail and have several rail connections that are much faster than ours. The United States also has plans to develop a high-speed rail network. If we do not go ahead with HS2, there is a great danger that the UK will fall behind our international competitors. We must make plans to meet future passenger demand, provide more capacity and cut train journey times for millions of passengers. The railway lines between our major cities are overcrowded and far slower than they should be.

I believe that the case for HS2 is clear and overwhelming. It will bring much economic development, delivered in an environmentally sustainable manner. The Bill is an important step towards delivering a vital high-speed rail network and I urge the House to support it tonight.

4.25 pm

Mr Roger Godsiff (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab): Two acts of monumental folly have been imposed on the railway industry over the past 50 years. The first, back in 1963, was the Beeching report, which led to the butchering of lines linking communities across the UK. Indeed, one consequence of Beeching is highly relevant to today’s debate, because one of the lines he closed was the Great Central line, which ran from London to Sheffield and Manchester. Were it still in operation, I

suggest that we would be debating whether to spend money upgrading it, rather than committing £17 billion, rising to £32 billion, on High Speed 2, for which the infrastructure work will not even begin until 2017.

The second act of monumental folly, of course, was the decision in the 1990s to privatise the railways, something that even Mrs Thatcher steered clear of. She had the good sense to realise that it is not possible to privatise a railway system and divorce the operating companies from the infrastructure. As we all know, privatisation has brought no benefit whatsoever for the consumer. The subsidies now paid to train operating companies are double what they were pro rata when British Rail ceased to exist. The Secretary of State was a little reluctant to answer when asked what the subsidy is. Well, I will help him out: £2.6 billion a year is spent subsidising a railway system that is not fit for purpose.

I would have hoped that the Secretary of State and his colleagues would not bring to the Chamber today something that I believe will be yet another act of folly imposed on the railway industry, particularly in view of all the information that has come out over the past two years as the economic case for HS2 has unravelled. Regrettably, that appears not to be the case.

Reference has already been made to the National Audit Office report, but the comments made in it should be repeated again and again, not least the fact that it estimates that there is already a £3.3 billion funding shortfall, a figure that has just been glossed over as far as London is concerned, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Frank Dobson) said. Indeed, the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee has said that the Government’s business case is “farcical” and

“clearly not up to scratch”.

Furthermore, she said that some of the Department’s assumptions were “ludicrous”. I am talking about the National Audit Office and the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, yet we have been told again and again today that the figures do stack up.

Mr Sheerman: Has my hon. Friend looked at the really interesting French research showing the deleterious effects on the provincial cities of France as the French rapid trains were introduced? It drove those cities into penury.

Mr Godsiff: I have. As my hon. Friend said earlier, there is a report that makes just that point—that such projects do not spread wealth out, but quite the contrary.

David Mowat: The hon. Gentleman makes the point, as I understand it, that infrastructure spending does not spread wealth out. In that case, would he like to make the north really prosperous by closing the M1 and the M6?

Mr Godsiff: We are where we are. I do not wish to have an argument about whether the building of the M1 and M6 was folly. What is folly is the privatised section of the M6, which is uneconomic and will soon go bust. It was supported by the Conservatives—“Let’s bring private capital into our motorways”. It is part of the motorway that is never used and will soon either go bust or have to come to the Secretary of State and ask for a handout.

David Mowat: The hon. Gentleman is generous in giving way a third time. I make the point again: the logic of his argument is that the north would be richer if the M1, the M6 and perhaps the existing west coast main line were all closed. That is ridiculous.

Mr Godsiff: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says, but I do not understand the point that he is trying to make.

As I said, we need to look at the economic case. The National Audit Office report and other reports have said that the project is already spiralling out of control. Already, figures that we were told about a year or so ago just do not stack up and people who have a vested interest in pushing the project ahead seem to be plucking figures out of the sky to suit whatever argument they are making. At the end of the day, the British taxpayer will have to pick up the tab if it goes wrong.

At this time of austerity and cutbacks across a range of services, the idea of reducing the time that business men take to travel from Birmingham or Manchester to London by 30 minutes and one hour respectively is absolutely farcical. It seems completely to disregard the fact that business men tend to work on trains nowadays. They use computers and mobile phones. Not one single, solitary business man in Birmingham has said to me, “Unless the project goes ahead and I can travel from Birmingham to London 30 minutes quicker, my business is going to suffer and be in danger.”

Mark Garnier (Wyre Forest) (Con): I will come straight back to the hon. Gentleman on that point. I have met a lot of business people in Birmingham who are arguing strongly for HS2. A lot of the hon. Gentleman’s constituents are definitely asking for it.

Mr Godsiff: I say again that not one business man has come to me to make the argument.

The project is absolutely desperate. Secretaries of State always like to leave a legacy, and I understand that. However, I believe that High Speed 2 will not be a legacy. It is a vanity project, and if it goes ahead it could turn into a white elephant.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): Order. Interventions have taken up a lot of time, so I am having to reduce the time limit to five minutes, and might have to reduce it again to get everyone in—[*Interruption.*] If you want to moan, please do so, Mr Gummer. The point is that everyone wants to speak. If you are suggesting that I knock somebody off the list, please tell me.

4.34 pm

Jessica Lee (Erewash) (Con): The eastern side of my constituency, in the heart of the east midlands, borders the proposed site for the east midlands hub. I share that border with my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry), and I assure the House that as time goes on we will be working together on issues arising from the proposed site.

At this preliminary stage in the proposals for HS2, I speak in support of the project. That broadly reflects the representations made to me by businesses and constituents, although, it has to be said, not universally. On the current plans, the route clips the eastern edge of

Long Eaton, and a few roads in the town will not survive. I will deal with the concerns of its residents later. I also have very many constituents who welcome and support these plans. They are right to do so. Put simply, the proposals offer a chance for investment and regeneration on a vast scale in our midlands and northern towns and cities. In Erewash we have a proud history of jobs, businesses and apprenticeships in the railways sector. My late maternal grandfather worked his entire life on the railways. This project brings new opportunities to continue that historical link. The possibility of being a neighbouring town to the east midlands hub has to bring much more with it.

I was recently privileged to bring the Minister of State on a visit to Long Eaton to show him the proposed route. I was very grateful for his generous use of his time to visit Erewash. I am sure he agrees that the opportunities for my constituency in terms of jobs and investment would be second to none. In addition, my right hon. Friend will have noted the road infrastructure in Long Eaton. I hope he agrees that this scheme could bring with it an opportunity to improve the road infrastructure for the town, because as it stands the roads would struggle to manage the new traffic levels.

As I said, some businesses and homes in Erewash would be affected by the proposed route. Of course, it is impossible for any of us to imagine someone’s shock and worry on hearing the news that their home may not survive the construction of the project. However, like many other constituency MPs, I take my responsibilities to assist such residents extremely seriously. I have called a meeting and have been helping on a personal, individual basis every constituent affected by dealing with their correspondence and any application they wish to make under the hardship fund.

I bring to my right hon. Friend’s attention the historical Trent cottages that I was able to show him, which are located on the route. The cottages were built in the early 1860s to serve the railwaymen working close to Trent railway station, which was built at a similar time. They are a historical record of Long Eaton’s railway past, and I ask him to have due consideration of this when reviewing the route.

I return to my starting point in welcoming the possibilities of this project. I take into account the proposed costs of the scheme and the environmental impact, based on the information that we have so far, but I also note the simple fact that we need to address capacity on our railway network. This project, with broad cross-party support, will be the biggest investment on our railways since the Victorian era. In the past 15 years demand for long-distance rail travel has doubled to 125 million journeys a year.

Mr Andrew Turner (Isle of Wight) (Con): Is my hon. Friend aware that 1.5 million train journeys are carried out each day and that 56 million people never, or very seldom, travel on trains?

Jessica Lee: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I hear his statistics, but I also look to the future. The broad fact is that we are reaching full capacity on our railway network. We can either ignore that or address it; I think we need to address it.

We also need to compete on a global basis. I will give just one example.

Richard Harrington (Watford) (Con): If my hon. Friend would like to see, as I have seen, the benefits of such a scheme, she should go to China and have a look at the effects of the high-speed network there, because those are the people we are competing with. I hope that she will do that before very long.

Jessica Lee: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's imaginative ideas. If an opportunity arises to visit China and observe its high-speed rail, I will be delighted to take it.

Finally, I will always support projects that put Erewash on the map. The location of the east midlands hub will do that and more. Although my constituents can travel by train from Long Eaton to London in one and a half hours, there is a strong case for improving the travel times and infrastructure for the towns and cities of the midlands and further north. I will certainly advocate that case in Erewash.

The Minister knows of my obsession with supporting local rail services. Time and again in Parliament, I have raised the campaign to fund the reopening of the train station at Ilkeston. I am delighted to say that that has been successful. I thank him for his support on that project.

I represent a constituency at the heart of the east midlands, which has a strong and proud history of employment on the railways. If this project goes ahead, I have no doubt that that proud historical link will continue well into the future.

4.40 pm

Graham Stringer (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab): I will not detain the House long. I speak as the joint chair of the all-party parliamentary group for high-speed rail. I am therefore highly supportive of High Speed 2. I will make four simple points.

First, this country has a shocking and disgraceful record on infrastructure, under Governments of all political persuasions. The costs of not keeping our infrastructure up to date are much greater than the costs of High Speed 2. We have built one new runway since the second world war, we have the lowest motorway density in what used to be called western Europe, the Diben port proposal was turned down, we have only a few kilometres of high-speed rail between the south coast and London, and we have a much smaller rail system than we had 40 or 50 years ago. Our competitors are investing in all those areas of infrastructure, to our economic disbenefit.

Secondly, the justification for High Speed 2 is not the speed, as has been said, but the capacity. Having high-speed rail will cost only 10% more than the alternative of building a brand new route and will bring the speed benefits as well as the extra capacity. The alternatives that are put forward by the opponents of High Speed 2 would provide only half the benefit, while costing a great amount of time, money and disruption, as we learned from the west coast main line build. If people are worried about the projections that are used to justify the investment in High Speed 2, they should consider the fact that train passenger numbers are already at the level projected for 2021.

On the economic benefits, I am enormously sceptical of almost all economic models. There may be disbenefit to some towns and cities. The Transport Committee

found that some towns in Europe that were joined to the TGV or other high-speed routes had benefited enormously, whereas others had disbenefited.

Mark Garnier: The hon. Gentleman is making a convincing argument in favour of HS2. He raises the important point that one of the perceived benefits is that economic activity will be drawn up the track. However, there is a risk that economic activity will actually be drawn down the track, away from the regions to London. Does he agree that, to mitigate that risk, it is important that we look to build a hub airport up the track as part of the infrastructure development of this country? A hub airport in Birmingham would be a good alternative to what is being suggested at the moment.

Graham Stringer: I will not be drawn into a discussion about hub airports.

On the benefits and disbenefits, it is up to the people who run our towns and cities to ensure that people go in their direction and invest in their area. There is no doubt that such people want the high-speed line. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs Ellman) said earlier that she wants the high-speed route to go to Liverpool. I do not blame her, given the potential benefit.

I am sure that some of the arguments made against HS2 were made when railways began. The vested interests of stagecoach owners and bargees almost certainly led to their using similar arguments about how railways would not catch on. I know of no economic analysis that captures the likely benefits, but what we do know, from looking around the world, is that countries that invest in their transport infrastructure almost always do better economically. We should therefore invest.

Frank Dobson: As the proud MP who has King's Cross, St Pancras and Euston stations in his constituency, I am rather in favour of the railways. For that matter, I am a member of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers. However, I think my hon. Friend is falling into the sort of syllogism that something must be done, this is something, and therefore this must be done. There are better ways of spending this money on improving the railway system.

Graham Stringer: I hope I am not falling into that trap. I think that a high-speed system that will eventually join Edinburgh and Glasgow, through Manchester and Leeds, to Birmingham and London will be of enormous benefit to the country. I do not believe it is a perfect system and I do not believe it is being constructed in the best way, but it has all-party support and it can be improved. I personally believe that we should be building north to south, as well as south to north. I believe, as my right hon. Friend the shadow Secretary of State said, that we should be building a link directly through to High Speed 1. However, I do not believe that any of those problems are sufficient to stop us investing in infrastructure that will help the whole of the country.

Andrew Bridgen: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Graham Stringer: I will not, if the hon. Gentleman will forgive me. I have already given way twice.

[Graham Stringer]

My last point comes from the experience of being responsible for building the second runway at Manchester airport. Paying compensation on the basis of free market value at the time is an extremely costly way of building infrastructure. Giving free market value plus 10%, 20% or 30%—whatever is appropriate—will speed up the process and save money. I hope the Government will give consideration to that, and to serious mitigation. If people take legal action because they think they are being treated unfairly, and if there is blight for a long time, that will hinder the project. It is estimated that delays in tunnelling on some high-speed routes have cost as much as the actual tunnelling. I therefore hope that on compensation the Government will not be short-sighted. I hope they will deal with the problems outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Frank Dobson), and be generous in looking at the problems and pain caused. That will benefit the high-speed system in the end.

4.48 pm

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): I rise to support the Bill. I am in favour of expanding our high-speed rail network. I respect hon. Members who represent constituencies that will be directly affected, and it is right that they fight for the best interests of their constituents. I have the advantage of representing a constituency that is in no way affected. Even the increased capacity, which is the prime motive for the development of a new network, will be of minimal benefit.

Andrew Bridgen: My hon. Friend says that his constituency will be in no way affected. Unfortunately, it will be, because his constituents—this is true of every constituency—will initially receive a bill for £75 million, rising to a possible £100 million.

Martin Vickers: My hon. Friend makes a fair point, but similar points could be made about every item of Government expenditure. Ultimately, the increased capacity will benefit the more provincial towns and peripheral areas of our country. The network is operating to capacity. We heard from the Secretary of State that the west coast main line would be at capacity in the early 2020s, and similarly the east coast main line, which has an impact on my constituency, will soon be full.

People have talked about blight, but speed is essential. Yes, there can be blight on individual properties and so on, but if that is to be the case, the sooner we get a decision on routes, compensation and so on, the better. Speed is also essential for the economy. We have heard, quite understandably, that connectivity is important to the development of our towns and cities, and that has been proved by countless reports over time. If Hudson and the other Victorian rail moguls had had to operate to timetables as stretched as that for HS2, I doubt whether the network would have developed to anything like the extent it did and from which this country benefited in the late-19th and 20th centuries.

The Minister has just scuttled out of the Chamber. Perhaps he suspected that I was about to mention that increased capacity would allow additional services to Cleethorpes and elsewhere—but that is for the future. If we are to rebalance the economy to the benefit of the

north of England, it is important that we have this increased capacity and connectivity. I can understand the arguments against it. The cost is phenomenal, and, as my hon. Friend the Member for North West Leicestershire (Andrew Bridgen) pointed out, my constituents will have to bear some of that cost. [Interruption.] Does my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton South (Mr Binley) wish to intervene?

Mr Binley indicated dissent.

Martin Vickers: No. Sorry, he looked, err—[HON. MEMBERS: “Keep going!”] I’ll keep going, right. I think what he, err—I’ve lost my track now, I should say.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle): You’ve lost your train of thought.

Martin Vickers: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I will try to get back on line.

I am very supportive of where the Government are going with this. I was talking about rebalancing the economy. The economy of my own area in northern Lincolnshire is highly dependent on rail. We talked about the importance of freight earlier. Some 25% of freight tonnage moved throughout the country starts or ends in my constituency at Immingham, so I hope that the increased capacity will provide greater opportunities not only for passengers, but for freight. I therefore support the Government and, sadly, will oppose the amendment.

4.52 pm

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): I, too, will support the Bill. I supported the Y route before it was the policy of the last Government, let alone of the parties in this Government, and argued strongly for it. I also agree with the comments made in the excellent speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackley and Broughton (Graham Stringer), in which he recognised the importance of this scheme for our economy and the fact that over the years we have fallen behind our competitors in our investment in infrastructure.

This is an important long-term investment for the country. Of course, different cost-benefit analyses will say different things. The problem is that the scheme will take 20 years to build and then will—we hope—deliver benefits for the country for many years after that, and if we put minor changes of assumptions into any cost-benefit analysis we will come up with very different results. To some extent, this is an act of faith. Do we believe that investment in the infrastructure of this country over the long term is likely to be good for the economy? I do, and I believe that high-speed rail is part of that long-term investment.

For the same reasons, it will be important to the rebalancing of our economy by concentrating on the major growth points, which will be our city regions in the midlands and the north. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blackley and Broughton said, the impacts will be different in different parts of the country, but the greatest benefits will tend to be in the city regions. We need to ensure that we get those benefits.

I am therefore very pleased that Sheffield is on the route, and that there will be a station there. That has been welcomed by all parties in the city and by those in

the public and private sectors. There is a difference of opinion on where the Sheffield station should be located. I understand the argument for having a loop into the city centre, but I equally accept that a station at Meadowhall in my constituency could have incredible benefits for the wider city region, provided the need for connectivity to the region is properly recognised. We do not want to hear the argument in the future that, because we have high-speed rail, we will get no further investment in our transport infrastructure, and that everything will be for local councils to decide.

Looking ahead to the tram-train project, we need to determine how to develop that means of transport. I am sure it will be a success, even though it has taken nearly 10 years to get this far. When it has been proved to be a success, we must immediately start planning how to use it as a way of linking the Sheffield city region into the station hub at Meadowhall. That would benefit the whole city region.

I also want to mention compensation. There are industries in my constituency that will be affected by the project, including Outokumpu, a major steel works. It is important, when we compensate such industries, that we recognise the time that they will need to prepare for the changes that high-speed rail will force them to make. It is also important to ensure that we give the compensation in a way that does not allow a firm to take the money and run, taking the jobs elsewhere.

The Government's exceptional hardship scheme is a welcome step forward, in regard to compensating people for their homes. We need to recognise that there might be people who have to move house, for whatever reason, before the full compensation scheme comes into effect, as well as those who might want to move for family or other reasons.

Mrs Gillan: Does the hon. Gentleman appreciate that compensation has already been paid to some people, and that it can continue to be paid without this Bill? The problem is that the exceptional hardship scheme is proving difficult for people who meet the criteria but find that the compensation does not meet their circumstances because the value of their house has gone down so dramatically.

Mr Betts: I can understand that. I think that the right hon. Lady is making a wider point about the need to look at the whole compensation scheme, and I shall come to that in a second.

Property owners in my constituency have not yet had any experience of the exceptional hardship scheme, but I wonder whether it could be widened to include those who want to move and make the same choices for their families as anyone else could make, but who are unable to do so while the potential blight from the high-speed line is hanging over them.

Frank Dobson: In my constituency, someone who used to be an owner-occupier got a job elsewhere and let their place. They have been told that they do not qualify for compensation because it is intended only for owner-occupiers.

Mr Betts: I understand that point. I have a constituent who bought a small property as an investment with a view to putting down a deposit on another family home into which they were planning to move in a year's time. They, too, have been caught by that provision.

I made the point earlier to the Secretary of State and to my hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle) that if we are asking people to make sacrifices for the benefit of the country, they deserve compensation of more than 100% of the value of their homes. They would get 100% if they chose to sell, but they are not choosing to sell; they are having to move, and we need to be more generous. My hon. Friend the Member for Garston and Halewood made the very reasonable point that if we were more generous, it would almost certainly speed up the process, so let us have a look at that.

In particular, let us have a look at the circumstances of my constituents who live on Greasbro road, which is a very low-value area. It is next to an ex-steelworks and to the motorway, and many people would not choose to live there, but it is a friendly road where people know their neighbours and family members who live nearby. They are worried about moving, and they know that they will probably not be able to buy another house in the local area with the compensation they will get. They ask why they should be penalised and forced to move away from the community that they know. Something more than the market value of their homes would help those people. It would not have to be a percentage increase on the market value; a lump sum in excess of the market value would particularly help people in low-value properties who do not want to reach retirement age in 10 years' time and find that they have to take out an extra mortgage that they cannot afford.

I support the high-speed rail scheme wholeheartedly, and I support it coming to Sheffield, but let us see whether we can help those people who will be affected and make the benefits to the community more generally accessible.

4.59 pm

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con): I draw the House's attention to my previous declaration—that the proposed route of HS2 not only bisects my beautiful constituency, but runs within 100 yards of my home.

I came to this place to try to do the right things for my constituents and, indeed, my country. I seem to find that a large amount of my time and effort is spent trying to stop bad things happening, which my constituents often reassure me amounts to much the same end, but I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is nowhere near as satisfying. There are few projects that I have ever believed are such a bad thing not only for my constituents, but for the whole country, as HS2. If this goes ahead, my constituency will take all the pain for none of the gain.

What we are being asked to vote for today is the signing of a blank cheque for HS2 Ltd for a railway that is, in my opinion, a solution looking for a problem. This is a scheme with vast financial costs for the taxpayer and a high human cost for those unfortunate enough to live or to have their business on or near the proposed route. The financial costs were initially estimated by the Government this morning as £33 billion, but stand at over £42 billion this afternoon, with a further £7.5 billion for rolling stock. That is an enormous commitment at a time of austerity for a project that will not be ready until 2033 and is of questionable economic benefit.

[Andrew Bridgen]

How can we be certain that today's £10 billion of additional budget will prove to be the last? When it comes to keeping to budget, Government rail projects certainly have a terrible record. The west coast main line upgrade, which was initially estimated to cost £1.5 billion, ended up costing £9.9 billion. The Thameslink upgrade was estimated to cost £650 million in 1996, but the end costs will be nearer £6 billion on completion. We could be looking at a project with a final bill of many tens of billions more than the Government's initial estimate or even today's estimate. All that for a railway where the cost-benefit ratio analysis, even before today's £10 billion, did not stack up. For phase 1, the Department for Transport claims that HS2 will produce £1.40 of benefit for every £1 spent. The Government categorise schemes below £1.50 as being low value for money—and that is before today's extra £10 billion.

Mrs Gillan: Does my hon. Friend agree that the cost benefit has been pushed to one side by Ministers today? Now claims are being made about extra capacity, but has it not been true of this project that at one moment it is about capacity, at the next moment it is about speed and at the next it is about restoring a better north-south balance? The objectives are always used to fit whatever the argument demands, and they seem to move around.

Andrew Bridgen: I thank my right hon. Friend for that intervention. She is absolutely right, and I shall deal with the issue of capacity later in my speech.

The cost-benefit ratios are questionable. As has already been pointed out, the assumption is that all time spent on trains is wasted time, so the figures are based on the extraordinary idea that when someone goes on a train they do not do any work. Anyone who travels on our railways will know that that is certainly not the case. It should also be noted that, compared to our European neighbours, journey times between first and second cities are considerably shorter in the UK. The journey time between Birmingham and London is already half that of high-speed rail travel in France and Spain.

David Mowat: My hon. Friend makes the point that others have made—that the business case does not properly reflect productive time, iPads and all the rest of it. Page 51 of the business case addresses that point explicitly, stating that if trains are overcrowded, people who are standing will not be able to work on PCs. The business case would be better if it took that into account.

Andrew Bridgen: My hon. Friend makes a valid point, and I shall deal with the issue of capacity later in my speech and hope to address it then.

When it comes to saving time—this point has been made several times today—I have never met a business person in my career who has said that the reason why their business is not thriving is that they cannot get to London quickly enough.

Another argument cited is that HS2 will rebalance our economy. I agree with that argument, as I believe that it will rebalance our economy, but further in favour of the London and south-east. Indeed, no serious academics support the view that HS2 will reduce the north-south divide. For weekend and leisure travel, for instance,

which is the more likely scenario—that more families will travel from London to spend an evening in Birmingham or Manchester, or that families from Birmingham and Manchester will use the route to spend time and money in London? I suggest to hon. and right hon. Members that the latter is the more likely scenario, and that HS2 will simply suck more money from the regions into London and the south-east.

I therefore appeal to all Members to think very carefully about whether they are acting in the best interests of their constituents in supporting the signing of a blank cheque for this white elephant of a project, which is already forecast to cost every constituency in the country £75 million, and which, given the expected further overruns, could easily end up costing each constituency more than £100 million. Are Members prepared to support a scheme that will inevitably suck money away from transport schemes that could benefit their own constituencies? As for the issue of capacity, figures show that the west coast main line has the capacity for the 100% increase in passenger numbers that was proposed by FirstGroup when it submitted its franchise bid.

Mr Brian Binley (Northampton South) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Andrew Bridgen: With pleasure, and some trepidation.

Mr Binley: Does my hon. Friend not recognise that it has been stated categorically that capacity will be reached by 2026, although other people think that it will be reached earlier? Has he travelled on a London Midland train to London on which he could not get a seat and could hardly get through the door?

Andrew Bridgen: I put it to my hon. Friend that anyone predicting what capacity, or the demand for any commodity or product, will be in 20 years is living in dreamland. The capacity on the railway was driven by punitive taxes on company cars in the 1990s, and that will level out.

HS2 is a huge project that will take a lot of stopping, but I suggest to Members that they would not eat an elephant in one sitting, even if it were a white one, and that today's debate is merely the first serving of many. I do not believe that this project represents the best use of taxpayers' money, and I therefore urge Members to support the amendment and vote against the Bill.

5.6 pm

Natascha Engel (North East Derbyshire) (Lab): I shall vote for the amendment and against the Bill's Second Reading, because I believe that this is the wrong scheme at the wrong time.

In the few minutes available to me, I want to present a passionate defence of nimbyism. I think that this is a case less of "not in my back yard" than of "not through my front door and the rest of my house". When we consider the people whose lives this project is affecting, we realise that the position is far too serious for them merely to be asked "How much compensation do you want?" People living in the villages and towns that the trains will pass through if the scheme goes ahead are being expected to wait for 20 years with it hanging over their heads, seeing no shovel in the ground anywhere in

North East Derbyshire, unable to sell their homes, and money is being lost hand over fist in very small rural businesses.

Andrea Leadsom: I pay tribute to the hon. Lady. There is rarely an occasion on which I do not agree with her. Constituents of mine have been literally suicidal because of the complete lack of sympathy for them, and because they are unable to obtain to compensation although their businesses are failing. Does she agree with me that we must get the compensation right?

Natascha Engel: Absolutely. It has already been suggested that the compensation schemes should mirror those in other countries such as France, where big infrastructure projects go ahead with no problems because the schemes are so generous. However, it is not compensation that people are after. They are saying “I have lived in this town, or this village, for four or five generations and I do not want to move. I am being asked to accept all the disbenefits of HS2 without gaining any of the benefits.” If I represented a major town, I might be able to see the benefits of this project, but it does not bring us in North East Derbyshire any economic benefits. In fact, it does exactly the reverse. I cannot see the sense of what is happening, and I shall explain why. I would welcome the Minister’s response to this.

Derbyshire county council has spent many years cleaning up, developing and redeveloping sites that were ruined by the results of the end of the mining industry and the steel industry in Sheffield. For decades those places have slowly been brought back into the economy. Up to £77 million has already been spent in Markham Vale, an area that I share with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr Skinner). That £77 million will, in effect, be wiped off because HS2 will be going straight through it. Chesterfield canal is one of the best and biggest pieces of redevelopment and regeneration in North East Derbyshire, bringing investment to the Chesterfield waterside project. There will not be a waterside project and the £310 million of investment that is coming into the local economy.

What about the small businesses in towns and villages such as Renishaw, too? Such businesses become the focal points of villages. Already, only months after the route has been published, a local wedding business has lost £70,000, some 20 years before anything is due to happen.

Andrew Bridgen: Does the hon. Lady share my concern that about 30% of the businesses on the route that could be affected have suggested they would close down, rather than relocate, so all those jobs would be lost all the way along the route?

Natascha Engel: That is absolutely right. This affects rural areas differently from how it affects cities. We are talking here about HS2 and a national economic policy, but we are not distinguishing between the cities and the rural areas.

I was going to go into the detail of the issue of connecting cities. This absolutely will connect cities, but that is not the issue for people who live in North East Derbyshire. In Apperknowle, what people want is to get a bus to the hospital, not to go to London. In each of the recent public meetings I have held, attended by

hundreds of people, we asked when was the last time anybody had been to London. In one group of 300 people, five people had been to London in the past five years. This is not being done for the benefit of the people of North East Derbyshire.

I have serious doubts about the business and economic case, too, but those concerns have been raised by other Members, so I will not rehearse them. I do want to say, however, that I have found the consultation to be the most disappointing part of this whole project. HS2 Ltd has been very good at consulting stakeholders, but the stakeholders do not include those people whose houses and businesses the route is going through. The project has failed at the level of going and talking to people—not just persuading them of why the train has to come through their front room, but explaining why a high-speed rail link is needed. People are just not convinced.

At the same time as there is the hardship scheme, we are being told the route has not yet been fixed and the consultation has not even been opened, and therefore no decisions can be made on where the route is going to go. At the same time, however, not very far away from my constituency, a kink has been put in to get the train to go around Firth Rixson steelworks in Sheffield. Why are we allowing and announcing changes to the route when the consultation has not even been opened? If the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd are open to persuasion, will they please put in a kink and go all the way around North East Derbyshire?

5.12 pm

Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con): My views on HS2 since being elected to Parliament in 2010 are well known. I started by supporting the principle of high-speed rail but opposing the route, but the more I have found out about the project, the more I have become convinced it will not be to the benefit of British taxpayers.

We have rightly heard a lot of talk about the value to the economy as a whole of any new railway line, and that is, of course, true: any new railway line will generate jobs and growth. There is no doubt about that, but the essential point that differentiates one project from another is value for money, and that is what we are not hearing about with the necessary level of clarity. What it costs to generate the growth is what matters. Today, we have heard that there is now a £14.4 billion contingency plan, which potentially makes this project 25% more expensive than before.

We have also heard comparisons with the motorway network, the Jubilee line and HS1. They were all very much resisted at the time, but every single one of them was unique in its own way. For motorways, there is a junction every few miles, so everybody benefits from them; they undoubtedly promote growth in our economy. Likewise, the Jubilee line has many stops, and therefore benefits a huge swathe of the population. HS1 is unique in the sense that it was the link to mainland Europe. HS2 is none of those things; it is a decision that we have taken in isolation.

Stuart Andrew (Pudsey) (Con): HS1 has brought some multinational companies to the end of the route at King’s Cross. Surely that is a benefit that HS2 can bring to other cities, such as mine, Leeds.

Andrea Leadsom: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend, and I am not denying that any railway line or other infrastructure will bring growth. I am saying that the critical differentiator is whether the line brings more growth and jobs than something else, and that is where the case for HS2 is not proven.

Mr Binley: I welcome the point about making more use of the high-speed track. Why, then, is my hon. Friend not campaigning vigorously for a station in Brackley, which would be of enormous benefit to her constituents?

Andrea Leadsom: I am delighted that my hon. Friend intervened, and that would be a possibility. The bottom line is that we are all here to represent our constituents. There is a case for making that argument, and if I made it, it would undermine the view of many of my constituents that this project is just wrong. Winning that argument would almost certainly cast the line in stone. My hon. Friend will understand that I could not do that, against the very clear wishes of my constituents.

If this is about the value for money of this project versus that of any other project—not the absolute but the relative level of growth and jobs generated by this project, compared with a different one—we need to ask ourselves, first, is this the best value for money for taxpayers? HS2 does mean little curvature of the line. My hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes South (Iain Stewart) said that a high-speed track is not much more expensive than a regular train track. That is not what HS2 engineers have told me. They said that it is very engineering-intensive. Because it has to go in a straight line, because there are lots of flood plains, hills and other inconveniences, and because of the speed of the trains, the line has to go through, under and over those obstacles. Therefore, it is much more expensive.

Secondly, high-speed rail has an exponentially higher carbon footprint, so in that sense it is not environmentally friendly compared with a classic line. HS2 has a massive impact on valuable open countryside and sites of special scientific interest, battlefield sites, grade I listed homes and so on.

Thirdly, if, as my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton South (Mr Binley) said, this is about capacity, why not go slightly slower but along an existing travel corridor, so that costs and the impact can be reduced? Fourthly, is the project going to deliver soon enough? We will have no use of it until 2026, yet people say all the time that rail capacity is needed now. Fifthly, does it create the maximum number of jobs? Would another, less engineering-intensive project along an easier route, which we could easily find if speed were not the only goal, generate more jobs? Finally, what about both ends? Does it really make sense to decide where the traveller ends up before we have decided on our strategy for airports?

Having said all that, I note the commitment of the Government and the Opposition, who are determined to see this project built. Although I remain optimistic that during the Bill's progress substantial changes may be achieved, it is important for me to be realistic. If HS2 is to go ahead, I want to achieve fair compensation and mitigation for the hundreds of my constituents who will be so devastatingly affected.

On mitigation, I urge the Government to ensure that HS2 is much more transparent and that they engage with communities much better than they currently are. Communities' ideas on mitigation must be given full and proper consideration. The Department for Transport must prioritise the consultation on a full compensation scheme as a matter of urgency. It is shocking that a judicial review had to determine that the original consultation was unfair and in fact unlawful. The exceptional hardship scheme, to my constituents' bitter experience, has been nothing short of a disaster. Residents up and down the proposed line of route and in the surrounding communities find themselves trapped in their own homes, unable to move either home or business. I strongly urge the Minister urgently to help with this situation.

I hope that, as well as a full compensation scheme that is more generous than the statutory requirement, the Government will agree to a property bond, and that the Secretary of State will meet with the Council of Mortgage Lenders and the National Association of Estate Agents, among others, in order properly to explore the options for a property bond. If banks will not give mortgages on properties because they are blighted by HS2, people cannot get on with their lives, at least until 2026. That is absolutely unacceptable.

Finally, I really regret the position that many Members have been placed in by the Bill. We have been told that this is a vote on the principle of HS2, yet we are also told it is an opportunity for a meaningful compensation scheme to be put in place for those affected. That makes me very schizophrenic, and it places all Members who have strong feelings about this project in a difficult position. I do not want to vote in favour of HS2 but I also do not want to do anything that delays my constituents' receiving the compensation they deserve. As this is the first opportunity in the Chamber to vote on the principle of HS2, I shall, with a heavy heart, have to vote for the reasoned amendment and against the Second Reading of the Bill, and I urge colleagues to do likewise.

5.20 pm

Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab): I am delighted to be at this debate and supporting this Bill, providing, as it will, the ability for the Government to spend money preparing the way for a second high-speed rail service serving London and the regions. My constituency has running through it the route of High Speed 1 and, in talking about spending and finance, I would like to draw the House's attention to the need to ensure that spending on the new route is planned in a way that capitalises on investment already made, so that we get more bang for the taxpayers' bucks.

How we will do that is by providing for a substantial link between HS1 and HS2. This new spending should provide this link, with the most obvious and effective way being to utilise the connection to Stratford in my constituency of West Ham. I am arguing that the link between HS1 and HS2 should be substantial and robust enough to enable Stratford to play a major role in the wider high-speed network. That would include it being the London stop for those international services that originate in the regions, thus adding to the viability and the financial business case of those services and, indeed, of HS2 itself. I am not aware of any costings yet

undertaken on the funding needed for a robust link, so I ask the Minister to enlighten me in his summing up as to whether any are so far available.

If Stratford becomes a major support station in east London catering for HS2, inter-city and inter-regional services, that would significantly reduce the numbers needing to use the Euston terminus, and Euston could be smaller as a result. The planned Old Oak interchange on its own will not enable enough HS2 travellers to avoid the Euston terminus; we need an enhanced role for Stratford in the east to cater for a similar proportion and then we can have a much slimmed-down Euston terminus.

Mr Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): I hate to disagree with my hon. Friend, particularly as she is my Whip, but I think she will see that the overwhelming consensus of opinion is in favour of the Old Oak interchange. Although I understand that she is standing up for her constituents, I think she is whistling in the wind rather here.

Lyn Brown: Old Oak—where? All I would say to my hon. Friend is that Stratford has an international station, called the Stratford International station—the message is in the title. I suggest that he needs to look further and wider than his local concerns in order to understand the case. And if he ever wants to be slipped again, I suggest he stays seated.

As I was saying, we need an enhanced role for Stratford in the east to cater for a similar proportion and then we can have a much more slimmed-down Euston terminus. With a twin-track link to Stratford from Camden town, and with the proposals for Old Oak, the number of platforms at Euston would reduce from 12 to six or fewer. Recent research shows that there would be almost as much demand for trips to east London, docklands, Essex, East Anglia and Kent from HS2 travellers as for trips to central London. Using Stratford helps to cater for those needs. Perhaps the Minister would like to talk to the leader of his local county council, who, along with others, funded this research. His constituents will also, I am sure, be interested in the better travel options that will be available to them if this money is spent wisely. The interconnectivity of Stratford is already good, unlike—where was it? The two stations at Stratford serve 100 million passengers a year and it is the UK's rail hub with the sixth highest use. It has two tube lines, regional rail services to Kent, Essex and East Anglia, and the docklands light railway, and it is strategically positioned for Canary Wharf, London City airport, and the Excel exhibition centre. Of course, it will have Crossrail.

The expenditure we are talking about today must include a robust and substantial link to Stratford between HS1 and HS2. About £1 billion of taxpayers' money has already been invested in Newham's international station, so it should get the international services for which it was built. To do otherwise would be crazy.

The business case for spend on HS2 will be greatly strengthened by a link that enables Stratford International to play a full role in the new network and the spending we are talking about today will be more effective as a result. I urge the Minister to try to ensure that that link is delivered.

5.25 pm

Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con): I am pleased to speak in favour of Second Reading and against the amendment. I have been struck today by the large degree of cross-party support that High Speed 2 commands. Obviously, we have heard objections from Members on both sides of the House, largely from people representing constituencies that will be affected by the route. That is perfectly understandable; that is what happens in the House of Commons. Different interests come together—often there is conflict, and often there is compromise. It is perfectly legitimate for people whose constituents, and their livelihoods, are affected by the direct building of the route to state their objections, but it is also perfectly reasonable for people to speak in this House on behalf of the national interest and it is clear to me that High Speed 2 is very much in the national interest.

Frank Dobson: I am reminded that within a week of first becoming a Member of this House, there was a vote on an issue that had those on both Front Benches on the same side. An old Tory knight of the shires said to me, "Whenever the two Front Benches are in agreement, some poor devil is being done down."

Kwasi Kwarteng: I appreciate the right hon. Gentleman's witty intervention, but I do not think it has anything to do with the debate. It was a well-enjoyed interlude.

We have not had any real perception, understanding or analysis in the debate of what high-speed rail has meant for our partner countries in Europe. I am a member of the Select Committee on Transport and we went to France and to Germany. Nobody in those countries is suggesting that they should close down their high-speed routes. Indeed, everyone we met, from local residents to other stakeholders, Government people and business people, was determined to expand the network.

I am not suggesting for a minute that because such things are supported in France and Germany we should follow that path, but I am saying that we should investigate, as we have, the reasons behind their approach. We need some very good reasons why Britain is so peculiar and different that high-speed rail will not benefit us. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State observed, Italy has 960 miles of high-speed rail. We have only a small amount—only 60 miles, I believe—

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr Simon Burns): Sixty-seven.

Kwasi Kwarteng: I am sorry—67.

Everyone else—including China and others around the world—is looking to expand their high-speed rail network. It is only in this country where we are looking not to build any further expansion of the network. That should strike right hon. and hon. Members as very bizarre.

Mr Cash: In his pilgrimages around the European Union, did my hon. Friend have the opportunity to speak to the citizens of Lyon and see whether they were as enthusiastic as he is about high-speed rail? I hear something quite different.

Kwasi Kwarteng: I am not sure which citizens of that famous French city my hon. Friend has been speaking to, but the ones we met were very enthusiastic, as were people in other cities. Lille, for example, has been transformed by the high-speed rail—of course it has, and that is a good thing. No one in France is suggesting that the high-speed rail network should be closed down and the country should go back to what it had before.

There are clear economic benefits. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton South (Mr Binley) suggested that freight transport is growing at 10% a year. How on earth can that growth in freight be accommodated without substantial investment in our railway infrastructure and without building a high-speed rail network? As my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes South (Iain Stewart) said, simply building another line that is not a high-speed line will cost just as much and not give the benefits, and no one is suggesting that as an alternative.

Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Lab): I am suggesting precisely that alternative. I have a scheme for a dedicated freight route, capable of carrying lorries on trains, that would cost a fraction of HS2 and take all the freight off the north-south lines, freeing them up for more passengers.

Kwasi Kwarteng: I am pleased that we have Members with such fertile imaginations in this House that the hon. Gentleman has his own scheme. I have not looked at it, though, so I could not possibly comment.

What is clear to me, as a Member for a south-east constituency that is very built-up and highly residential, is that disputes about infrastructure spending are inevitable. I suggested that when the Tower of London was built, people objected to it on quite worthy grounds. There have been objections to every piece of infrastructure spending in this country for hundreds of years, but that does not mean that we have not gone ahead and built the railways or the ports. We are a commercial nation with incredible skills in engineering. We have, or we used to have, great architecture and engineering—I am not casting aspersions on current architecture, just suggesting that it was very good in the past—so there is no reason to suggest, as some have, that HS2 will be a blight on the countryside. It will change of course, but as has been pointed out, Isambard Kingdom Brunel and other Victorians completely transformed the landscape of this country, but they did not make it worse in any way.

Mr Andrew Turner: It was the private sector that did it, not the public sector.

Kwasi Kwarteng: I hear my hon. Friend chuntering from a sedentary position. We have an extremely interesting side of the Conservative party that refuses to countenance any Government spending on infrastructure. Happily, I am not of that wing of the party and recommend that both sides of the House come together in support of the Bill.

My final few words will be about the financing. Yes, £50 billion is a lot of money, but it will be spent over 20 years and, if one uses straight line depreciation, it is not much more than the infrastructure spend on Crossrail. I would suggest that HS2's benefits are much more

transformative than the Crossrail project's, so on that basis alone, I urge colleagues to vote in favour of Second Reading.

Several hon. Members rose—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo): Order. Sixteen Members still wish to participate in the debate, and I fully appreciate how important this is for their constituencies. I am therefore reducing the time limit to four minutes from now on. May I please ask Members who have already spoken to intervene sparingly, if at all, and those who are still waiting to speak to realise that an intervention will take time from their speaking time later in the debate?

5.34 pm

Mr Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow, even at two thirds of the rate, the stirring speech made by the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Kwasi Kwarteng). I support the Bill, the principle and, indeed, the route—with the caveat about the London terminus—for many of the reasons given by the Secretary of State and shadow Secretary of State. It seems bizarre that when most of the developed world believes in having a high-speed rail network, we might want to rely on 19th-century railways. That is not to disparage the existing railways, which have stood us and continue to stand us in good stead, but the example of how they were built is one that I think we should follow, rather than shy away from. Having said that, I am concerned about pricing. Completion is a long way off, and there is a danger of this becoming a rich man's railway. Cost control is an issue, and costs have spiralled before the project has even left the drawing board. There is also the issue of compensation, and whether it will be adequate.

It appears, however that there is consensus—given the time, I shall restrict myself to this—about the proposal that Old Oak, which is in my constituency, should be the major interchange. It would become the fifth busiest station in the country, with a Crossrail station, and links to HS1, tube lines, First Great Western services and Heathrow. A rail interchange in west London would be of massive benefit in an area much of which is categorised as being in the 1% most deprived in the country. Within a mile of the proposed station, 50% of the adult working population is unemployed.

On Friday, the boroughs and the Greater London authority will publish a vision for the future of Old Oak, described in rather hyperbolic terms as the new Canary Wharf. There is talk of 90,000 jobs and 19,000 new homes, and I am pleased that the boroughs have already taken an interest. However, there are local problems. As currently envisaged, there are poor links with HS1, tube lines and the west London line. There is an inadequate road network and poor-quality station design. We should look at the option of making Old Oak the terminus. I have an open mind on that, although I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Frank Dobson) would urge me to be stronger in my opinion because he does not want the line to go to Euston, and he is certainly right that the connectivity from Old Oak is better than the connectivity from Euston. It appears that HS2 Ltd wanted to go to Euston simply because it wanted to say that it had a central London terminus, but it should look at that

again. With all due respect to my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown), who is no longer in the Chamber, Stratford International is an exception to the rule, “If you build it, they will come.” There is consensus about where the interchange should be.

My other caveat is that we have to take care with the construction. Most compulsory purchase schemes are hopelessly inadequate both in the compensation that they offer and the way in which people are dealt with. The effect on small businesses and even large businesses—Cargiant is in my constituency, as well as Wormwood scrubs, which is a large area of important open space—must be considered, and I hope that the project will be undertaken sympathetically, however important it is to the nation. Finally, I back my right hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras in saying, “Please take HS2 Ltd off the job”. The company is not making a good job of promoting the scheme, and we should find someone who will take this national project forward in the way that it should be done.

5.37 pm

Mr Brian Binley (Northampton South) (Con): Life can deal some heavy blows, but not usually from so kind a Deputy Speaker. I will discard most of what I was going to say about capacity to meet your requirements, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will simply say that connectivity is vital. Capacity is highly limited, and one need only talk to my constituents in Northampton to know how much capacity impacts on performance. They are pretty sick of it.

I was going to discuss whether it was worth the money or not but, again, that argument goes out the window. I would only say that any business man would willingly accept a benefit ratio of 2.5:1, and would grasp at it. To say that that is not good enough for a national project of this kind is crazy. I was going to discuss the benefits of the project for my good constituents, but that is out of the window too. I shall merely say that we are driving ahead with a project called Northampton Alive. We are expected to build 56,000 houses to help ease the problems of the south-east and London, and we need a better rail link to service those people. The only way we are going to get it is by having additional capacity.

Now let me talk about the one thing that most speakers have not talked about, other than my good friend the hon. Member for Luton North (Kelvin Hopkins)—an honourable friend, too. Freight is a major player in the whole of our rail network. It has grown sizeably, to the point where it is now delivering 90 million tonnes of goods each year. That rate is growing by more than 10% a year. We cannot accommodate that growth on the west coast main line. We need another line to enhance the corridor. That is why high-speed rail is so important, why it impacts upon the national interest, and why it is massively important to Britain’s prosperity and to the future well-being of my children and grandchildren.

Do not forget the freight issue. It is vital to the debate. The second issue that is vital is connectivity, as I indicated earlier. If we do not have a high-speed rail link to Europe and beyond, we will miss out massively. I am sorry if my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Mr Cash) is thinking, “Rarely do you do this as a little Englander.”

In the long-term future we will have high-speed rail links to south-east Asia and to the middle east, provided people there can settle down and settle their differences. That future is what we are thinking about when we talk about High Speed 2.

So what are my conclusions? High Speed 2 is vital to the nation’s future economic well-being. It will improve rail connections between economically important parts of our country and with our markets in Europe and beyond. It will stop heavy lorries from Prague, Warsaw and Bratislava messing up our road network. I want to see a more effective rail network and High Speed 2 is a vital part of that. I pray that this House has the courage to make that decision and make it now.

5.41 pm

Kelvin Hopkins (Luton North) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Northampton South (Mr Binley). His emphasis on freight is absolutely right. I have a scheme which would solve all his problems and, I believe, the country’s problems, but that is another story.

I am a long-term passionate believer in railways as the mode of transport for the future. That was not true 30 years ago. It is gratifying to see Members on both sides of the House supporting the principle of railways, even if we disagree about what particular railways we ought to build. I remain sceptical about HS2. I believe it is unnecessary and extremely expensive, and the opportunity cost of spending elsewhere is very great indeed. But I do not want to be negative; I want to propose sensible, practical alternatives.

The core of all the problems of capacity is London to Birmingham and there is an alternative, which is to upgrade the route between Paddington and Birmingham Snow Hill via Banbury. That could double capacity between London and Birmingham, and also would go to a very sensible terminus at Paddington, which is of course on Crossrail. At the Birmingham end, Snow Hill is in the town centre. The station for HS2 will be away from the town centre, so much of the advantage of speed will be lost in extra transport from that station into the town centre, but Snow Hill is in the centre. That would be a great advantage.

In 1990 British Rail, as it was in those days, freed up the line and ran a train from London to Edinburgh with a two-minute stop at Newcastle. For most of the journey it was a 140 mph operation. The journey took three and a half hours—two and a half hours to Newcastle, three and a half hours to Edinburgh—which was eight minutes faster than the time advertised for HS2 now, so it can be done. We need to upgrade the route on the east coast main line, which means a double viaduct at Welwyn, so that there are four tracks at Welwyn instead of two; an east-west flyover at Peterborough; and a flyover for the Lincoln route at Newark.

All that will free up the line for a very fast, mostly 140 mph, operation on the east coast main line, and we can get that journey to Edinburgh eight minutes faster than HS2. It also means that we could get a one and a half hour operation from King’s Cross to Leeds, using the east coast main line. There is even another route to get to Sheffield via Retford from King’s Cross, providing additional fast capacity—not high speed, but fast. Much of that route would be 140 mph.

[Kelvin Hopkins]

There are sensible alternatives. They would require a bit of upgrading, such as the redevelopment of some stations, but we would be talking about spending a couple of billion pounds, not £50 billion or more. They would make life much easier for everyone and free up all that extra spending for other routes. The whole railway system, being Victorian, needs an enormous amount of work, including electrification and track renewal, which is needed in many areas.

I also think that we need a dedicated rail freight line, built on old track beds and underused lines, running from the Thames right up to Glasgow, linking all Britain's main conurbations, and capable of carrying lorries on trains. Some 80% of freight goes by lorry, rather than container. They cannot get through tunnels and bridges, so it would have to be on a new dedicated route capable of taking that kind of traffic. That is what we need to do, and it would cost a fraction of HS2. All those other operations, when added together, would cost much less than HS2 and provide much more benefit. If the cost-benefit analysis was done for that, and for the other routes I have mentioned, I think we would see that it is much more desirable in social, economic and financial terms.

5.46 pm

Mr Andrew Turner (Isle of Wight) (Con): HS2 has been proposed as a solution to the problems we currently face. We are told that it is green, that it will deliver regional growth and that it will resolve slow journey speeds between British cities. However, all those claims are questionable. It is important that we highlight them before UK taxpayers are asked to foot the enormous bill of £32.7 billion.

HS2 will lead to an increase in CO₂ emissions. Its supporters insist that the project is carbon-neutral. However, according to HS2 Action Alliance, 250 mph trains use three times as much power as 125 mph trains. HS2 Ltd's plans rely on transferring passengers from existing classic rail, which uses much less fuel and carbon, to high-speed trains. That means that the new line will have few, if any, environmental benefits.

We have also failed to learn lessons from High Speed 1. In Kent, Thanet remains one of the most deprived areas in England, despite being served by high-speed rail that runs direct to London. Even the experts are questioning the proposals. Professor Mackie of the University of Leeds has said:

“For various reasons HS2 is rather unlikely to make much difference to the north-south divide. A spatial analysis would probably show London to be the main benefiting region”.

It is unlikely that HS2 will deliver the regional benefits that have been promised.

London operates as a brilliant hub, and cities across the country have brilliant connections with the capital, but that should not be the focus of investment. Lines outside London need investment too. People do not travel out of London to work and then back again to sleep; the overwhelming majority come into London for work. Our European neighbours have had a similar experience. I will give just one example. In France, on the line connecting Paris, Rhone and the Alps, passenger growth to Paris was three times greater than that from Paris.

The only people who will benefit from the project will be those living within about a 10-mile radius of the station near Birmingham on the HS2 line. Those who live any further away, such as the black country or Coventry, will be asked to travel more than 10 miles. Will people really be prepared to pay the cost of travelling to stations more than 10 miles away? Even if subsidised travel is provided, why should 99% of people have to pay for the 1% who use the line?

Mrs Anne Main (St Albans) (Con): Does it not seem rather perverse that we are reducing the amount of public subsidy for some commuters, such as those who take the line from my constituency to London, while putting massive public subsidy into another line? It is very much like cherry-picking.

Mr Turner: I must agree. Only a very small percentage of people use trains regularly. As the Transport Secretary has said, 10 million people travel annually on HS1, or about 30,000 people a day; another, say, 1.5 million people travel on all the other trains. What is the number of those not travelling? Practically everyone else in the country—59 million, say. That is the difference: 1.5 million on the one hand and 59 million on the other.

Another argument in favour of HS2 is that current trains are too full and the project will provide the opportunity to increase capacity. I disagree. If trains are currently too full, why not put the prices up? The way to make that fair would be to say to current regular commuters, “Yes, you can keep the current rate but a new user of the trains should be required to pay a bit more.” That would encourage further growth and investment in towns and cities outside London and raise more money towards the costs of running trains.

If it is to be delivered, the project must be delivered using private funds. The public sector should not be expected to foot the bill for HS2 while people are having to make their own financial sacrifices, and there will be no need at all to spend public money once we are out of austerity.

5.50 pm

Susan Elan Jones (Clwyd South) (Lab): Like many Members, I was rather saddened when I realised that the time for our speeches would be cut by half, until I realised that that is exactly what will happen to train journeys to my part of north Wales with the advent of high-speed rail.

Many local concerns have been legitimately aired in this debate and it is important that Front Benchers on both sides take those seriously, because they are fair and legitimate in respect of compensation. However, for me the crux of the matter is that I do not believe it can be right that from here it is quicker to get to Paris than to Wrexham, to Brussels than to Liverpool and to Rotterdam than to Glasgow. It is not right that while France, Germany, Italy and Spain all enjoy high-speed rail networks, we in Britain—the country that invented railways—do not have a comparable system.

I lived and worked in Japan for almost three years and saw how that country's amazing bullet trains, the Shinkansen, can connect a nation and make travel so much faster. The Bill will bring jobs, growth and investment to the UK as a whole and, critically for me, to my home

area of north Wales, although it is not directly on the line. I am delighted that such eminent Welsh experts as Professor Stuart Cole of the university of Glamorgan are pointing to the real benefits to Wales in terms of inward investment due to speedier connections and greater capacity.

As I said, the planned route does not go directly into Wales, but it is still hugely important for connectivity and investment. Getting the journey time from London to such key hubs as Manchester or Liverpool down to an hour and 10 minutes—and to Birmingham, I believe, down to 49 minutes—would be a massive improvement. If the proposed Crewe stop in the second phase takes place, as I very much hope it will, that would also improve things immeasurably. The investment would mean that getting business representatives from London to north Wales and back in a day would be easy. That is the sort of investment that we need.

I do not believe that backing HS2 excludes support for other improvements—indeed, both together are complementary. Backing HS2 does not exclude making the case for direct-line trains now from Wrexham, Gobowen and Shrewsbury to London on the west coast main line service. A Conservative Member made that case earlier and colleagues from north Wales and neighbouring Members from Shropshire, across the political divide, will continue to press it. Supporting HS2 certainly does not exclude the importance of electrification for north Wales and improvements to rail services in west Wales. All those programmes are vital.

We must, of course, ensure that there are sensible, proper connections from HS2 stations. Last week, in a debate in this House, we were reminded that it was the anniversary of the battle of Waterloo. I am loth to tread on the subject of European politics in this place, but might I be so bold as to ask why, if the French can manage high-speed trains, we should settle for something slower and second best?

I believe that the programme is needed for jobs, investment and connectivity—I emphasise connectivity, given the nature of my constituency. It is good for Wales, including north Wales, and for Britain. I welcome it and wish it well.

5.54 pm

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): In the light of your entreaty and decision to cut us down to four minutes, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have binned my speech.

I say to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that I am going to support this Bill because I believe strongly in the principle of a superb infrastructure to enable this country to be competitive in the 21st century. I hope, however, that he will regard me as a critical friend, because I think that his proposed route contains two fundamental weaknesses.

Before I talk about that, I would like to concentrate on the costs. In discussing this Bill which we are, I hope, going to pass, we need to know precisely what costs we are dealing with. My right hon. Friend has now given us two lots of costs, and I hope that he or the Minister of State will clarify exactly what those costs are. I believe that we are now talking about £42 billion for phase 1 and phase 2, plus some £9 billion for rolling stock, making a total of about £51 billion. It would be enormously helpful if he could clarify those costs.

It was not an idle intervention that I made on my right hon. Friend earlier. I do think that money should be available from Europe in the transnational networks, and I hope that he and his Department are urgently investigating that. As the hon. Member for Clwyd South (Susan Elan Jones) said, a lot of the superb high-speed rail network was funded by Europe.

In the very short time I have available, let me deal with the two fundamental flaws in the proposed route. First, it is completely wrong to have an holistic transport policy that does not link HS2 with our major hub airport. Sir Howard Davies and his airport commission will not report until after the next election, so how can it make sense to fix a route when we do not know where the hub airport will be? If, for example, he favours—I make no recommendation as to which option he should favour—an estuarial hub airport solution, the current route would be in completely the wrong place.

The other fundamental flaw in the route is that it does not properly link HS2 and HS1. Other Members have talked about this, particularly the hon. Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown). I would say to her, and to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, that they should look at the process that was involved with HS1. The then new Secretary of State, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir Malcolm Rifkind), very late in the day, called in all the evidence and changed the route. That route, which had been designed by British Rail, went right through south London and was going to blight large numbers of houses, and he changed it at the very last minute. If he had not done so, Stratford International would never have come into being and the Olympics would never have taken place. I say this to my right hon. Friend: do please look at the route, because if we are spending this vast amount of money, let us, as a nation, get the maximum out of it.

I commend to my right hon. Friend a solution proposed by Ove Arup—the Heathrow hub. A Heathrow hub would produce a truly holistic transport policy integrating road, rail, freight and air. Above all, it would benefit my constituents in the west, because the newly electrified west coast main line would go into the Heathrow hub rather than having to go into Paddington and out again, as is currently the case if people want to get to Heathrow by rail. A Heathrow hub would also benefit my right hon. Friend—my good friend—the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan), because the route could be altered to be taken along the M40. I ask my right hon. Friend to think about existing transport networks, as with HS1, because if HS2 is run along existing motorway links, each one cancels out the other.

I believe in this new HS2 project, which will put Britain into the forefront of competitiveness in the 21st century, but will my right hon. Friend please have a look at the route?

5.58 pm

Graeme Morrice (Livingston) (Lab): I firmly support the delivery of a new north-south rail line, because faster journeys will bring the constituent parts of our island closer together.

As a Scottish MP, my views on HS2 as it affects and, indeed, benefits Scotland, are coloured by the area I represent. The announcement of plans to extend the high-speed rail network north of Birmingham is welcome

[*Graeme Morrice*]

news, but it is right that all parts of the country, including of course Scotland, should benefit from such a significant expansion of the country's transport infrastructure. As it stands, the plan takes high-speed rail only halfway from London to Scotland, so there is a real necessity to extend the network further north to Edinburgh and Glasgow. These better services would provide benefits to the Scottish economy of about £3 billion, as businesses in the cities would be able to operate more efficiently, increasing their productivity while accessing new markets and labour pools. Firms throughout the UK would be able to look to Scotland for business opportunities that distance and congestion had previously made less attractive. Tourism on both sides of the border would be boosted as the UK was opened up to faster, more convenient travel. Scotland's strong engineering base might also benefit from the employment opportunities that the planning and construction of High Speed 2 will provide.

Importantly for Scotland, bringing Edinburgh and Glasgow closer to London, as well as to the cities of the midlands and the north of England, would undoubtedly boost growth across all of its major conurbations. It would also open up the opportunity for through trains to run from Scotland to Paris and Brussels.

The argument is reinforced by reports that estimate that the regional economic benefits of high-speed rail for central Scotland would be about £20 billion over a 60 year period, which compares with £5.4 billion for the west midlands. Studies reiterate that the most cost-effective option for a rail route between London and Scotland is a new high-speed route that connects London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and Edinburgh. Such a network would be expected to deliver up to £50 billion of business benefits alone. That would be felt greatly in Scotland and the north of England, as well as in the south.

We need extra capacity on north-south routes sooner rather than later and all northern cities must be able to link into those routes. It is apparent that that might not be fully realised. I understand that the HS2 technical director has described the construction of the UK's high-speed rail network as the work of generations. It will be many years before England and Scotland are connected in this way. Public opinion demands that the high-speed network be extended north of the border. Concerns have also been expressed about the lack of information about funding, costs, routes and the location of terminal stations.

To sum up, the Scottish end of the UK's high-speed network should be built as soon as possible so that we can have the immediate benefit of a high-speed line between Edinburgh and Glasgow. I call on the Minister to commit to a concrete timetable for extending high-speed rail to Scotland. Not only would high-speed rail boost the Scottish economy and support thousands of jobs in Scotland and throughout the UK, but it would give us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reshape the economic geography of the whole country.

6.2 pm

Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): I offer a heartfelt thank you to my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State and the Minister of State, who have

been exceptionally receptive to me and my constituents and have worked hard to resolve the issues with HS2 in my constituency.

I fully support HS2. It is a vital project for Leeds. Unfortunately, the plan that has been put forward is unacceptable, but my right hon. Friends have worked very closely with me and we have come up with some ideas. The route will still go through my constituency, but hopefully those ideas will form part of the consultation. As has been said, it is important that we utilise, as far as is possible, the high-traffic corridors that already exist, such as the M1, which is 12 lanes wide up to Leeds.

Andrew Bridgen: My hon. Friend says that he overwhelmingly supports HS2. He supported it this morning when it was going to cost £33 billion. He supports it now that it will cost £43 billion. Will he support it when it will cost £50 billion or £60 billion?

Alec Shelbrooke: I am glad for the extra minute, but my hon. Friend knows that he is making those figures up. He is including the contingency, which will not necessarily be spent. The Secretary of State has also made it clear that £5 billion will be spent on rolling stock, which could go on the existing west coast and east coast main lines. My hon. Friend knows that he is being rather naughty with the figures.

Returning to the advantages for Leeds, over the past decade Leeds has been a growth city. A great deal of business has come to Leeds. There are things that we need. I lead on transport issues within the team of Leeds MPs. Leeds is crying out for its transport network to be improved, because it is worse than it was in the 1950s. We want to move forward with the tram-train system.

None of those things will happen unless there is investment in our northern cities. That is one reason why HS2 is so important. There are huge commercial opportunities in Leeds. There is also a willing and able work force in and around Yorkshire that can be drawn to Leeds. We have got to get away from the idea of its being a Leeds to London link. The most important benefit to Leeds—yes, we will be able to get to London within an hour and 20 minutes—will be the Javelin trains, which will service a wide area of the Leeds city region and will link up, if I can get a tram-train system put in, with the Leeds-Bradford International airport, which is vital to the economy of Yorkshire. Thanks to lobbying by the airport and local MPs, there are now three British Airways flights a day to Heathrow, which dock at terminal 5. The Javelin trains will cover the wider area, so that people in south Yorkshire and west Yorkshire will be able to get to Leeds-Bradford airport in minimum time, get airside and get off in New York, San Francisco, Australia or wherever they are going. HS2 will open that up. It is nonsensical to say that we need to discuss where we are going with the airline industry first before we talk about HS2—they complement each other.

In April, we came to the House during the recess to reflect on the death of Margaret Thatcher. Many Members on the Government Benches gave speeches about how she was a visionary, and how she led and did what she thought was right. I ask my hon. Friends to reflect on the great lady's comments in 1986, on the opening of the M25:

“Now some people are saying that the road is too small, even that it’s a disaster. I must say I can’t stand those who carp and criticise when they ought to be congratulating Britain on a magnificent achievement and beating the drum for Britain all over the world.”

I am sure my right hon. Friend the Minister remembers the quote. She went on to say:

“And to those who say, ‘we always build our roads too small’ we can only point out that at some of the planning enquires those who object to the new road say that our traffic forecasts are excessive, and that improvements to existing roads would be enough. Fortunately the planning inspectors and successive Secretaries of State have not accepted that viewpoint.”

We can see the comparison with the high-speed rail network, which I believe is vital for my home city of Leeds and for the growth of Britain.

6.7 pm

Kris Hopkins (Keighley) (Con): I rise to support the Bill. HS2 will link eight of Britain’s 10 largest cities. As a Yorkshire MP, that is not just good news for Leeds and Sheffield, but for the wider economy. My nearest city, Bradford, is intrinsically linked by its economy to Leeds. The key benefits of jobs, increased capacity and shorter journey times will transform the north of England’s ability to contribute to the economy, which is why I am extremely disappointed that the Labour-led leadership on Bradford council has turned its back on this project. I ask them to reconsider. If the great wealth generators of the industrial revolution who transformed our northern cities had the same limited vision for our communities as the Labour party in Bradford, this country would not have achieved the greatness it attained.

As a direct consequence of this investment, two-thirds of the population of the north of England will be within two hours’ reach of London’s markets. Redrawing the economic geography of the nation will bring our cities closer together and contribute to rebalancing growth and opportunity. The growth in jobs could start earlier by starting the build at both ends of the proposed route, and by ensuring that materials and the work force are sourced as much from the north of England as they are from the south. We need that investment in the north of England. We have a huge contribution to make to Britain’s economy, and that will help us to win the global race that the Chancellor talked about earlier today.

Not since the Victorian era has there been this level of investment in our rail infrastructure. I am sure that the businessmen and women who have to stand on trains on the east coast main line at peak times all the way to Doncaster before they can get a seat will vouch for that lack of investment. The imbalance between the economies of the north and the south cannot carry on. The Bill is a key component in bringing about change and I ask my colleagues to support it.

6.9 pm

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): Earlier this year, hundreds of my constituents awoke to find that the value of their homes had been substantially reduced and those who had plans to move discovered that purchasers could no longer get mortgages. That remains the case. The reason was the announcement of the preferred route for HS2—a route that followed none of

the previously published options nor an existing transport corridor. Furthermore, the project will not see a shovel in the ground for 13 years and will only be completed in 20 years, meaning uncertainty and disruption for a generation. It was also a route that, I have been told, can hardly be altered, because it is designed to take ultra-high-speed trains travelling at up to 250 mph and hence must be straight. As a result, it goes through five villages in my constituency and comes very close to others.

I have long advocated sensible investment in rail in the UK. When the previous Government proposed to build new track for the west coast main line across my constituency in order to cut journey times and improve capacity, I supported it, but I believe that HS2 is the wrong solution. The Government have rightly said that a new rail network needs to be designed to increase capacity, rather than speed, so I cannot understand the fixation with speeds of 225 mph to 250 mph, if that means that routes are so inflexible that they cannot follow existing corridors, such as motorways, as many have argued. No railway in Europe travels at that speed. The maximum is 200 mph.

Then there is the question of capacity and demand. I imagined that HS2 had done a lot of detailed work on this point, so I wrote asking for current figures for the utilisation of west coast main line services as well as projected figures to 2035. The answer from HS2 was:

“I am sorry but we do not have information on the current figures of WCML services. The Department of Transport may do.”

Mrs Gillan: Does my hon. Friend agree that the fact that Virgin is starting a major advertising campaign to attract people to travel on the west coast main line means that it can hardly have a capacity problem?

Jeremy Lefroy: I do. The first-class coaches are almost never full. Indeed, I have often seen one person per first-class carriage. It needs to make at least two of them standard class.

I had also imagined that HS2 would be largely used by business travellers, so I was surprised to have the reply from HS2 stating that 70% of journeys on HS2 were expected to be for leisure purposes. I fully recognise the value of leisure travel to the economy, but where is the justification for an ultra-high-speed line, such as that which HS2 seems so determined to build, if 70% of those using it are doing so for leisure?

Andrew Bridgen: Does my hon. Friend recall that the initial estimates of capacity usage for HS1 were overestimated by 30%?

Jeremy Lefroy: Yes, and I fully understand the problems mentioned by some of my hon. Friends. We need to do something about that, but an ultra-high-speed line is not the answer.

I come now to the business case for HS2. There has been a lot of argument about whether it is valid. I am not an expert in these matters, but there are several things that make me sceptical. The first is the apparent lack of knowledge at HS2 about current demand. The second is the surprising fact that HS2 is to be largely a leisure railway rather than a business railway. Since leisure passengers are much more sensitive to price

[Jeremy Lefroy]

than business passengers, especially premium business, I wonder whether this price sensitivity has been fully incorporated into the business case. The third reason is the large question mark over whether this is the right way to help the midlands and the north to develop. Just this week, plans were unveiled for a vast new commercial development at Old Oak common in London at the proposed junction of Cross Rail and HS2. I welcome that, but it underlines the concerns of those who worry that HS2 will simply bring more development into London, possibly at the expense of the midlands, the north and Scotland.

Then there is the business case for the west coast main line after HS2 comes into service. The line will remain an essential part of our national transport infrastructure, so it is essential that its post-2035 business case be at least as strong as that for HS2, but I have not had that case from HS2, despite my asking for it. Given that HS2 is so dependent on leisure traffic, I am concerned about what will be left for the west coast main line. Clearly, there will be an increase in freight and some leisure, commuter and regional services, but will it be sufficient to maintain the line without very substantial subsidy? And if a subsidy will indeed be required, has that been factored into the business case for HS2?

I fully support the comments made by north Staffordshire MPs about the real concern over the connectivity of Stoke-on-Trent, which is one of the top 10 conurbations in the country. I ask the Secretary of State to take that matter very seriously. On compensation, I entirely agree with those who support the idea of a property bond. That must be done. In France, people receive well over the market rate for their property, and everything goes through much faster. Let us be generous, as many Members have suggested.

I have no pleasure in opposing the proposals before us. If this were a Bill to provide for additional capacity in the network by using existing corridors at a sustainable cost and without a fixation on ultra-high-speed trains, I would support it wholeheartedly, but I am afraid that it will achieve none of those things.

6.15 pm

Stuart Andrew (Pudsey) (Con): I certainly welcome the Bill. For too long, we have been trying to move our 21st century population round the country on a transport system that was built by the Victorians. For too long, we have tinkered with the system—at a very expensive rate—to try to improve it, but that only brought disruption and did not solve the problem. We still have a major and pressing capacity problem that is simply not going to go away. It is going to get worse, and we ignore that fact at our peril.

Routes that are crucial to counties, cities and towns such as Yorkshire, Leeds and Pudsey are going to be overwhelmed. We have already heard about the doubling of train journeys in the past 15 years. In 2011, during the morning peak, an average of 4,000 people had to stand as they travelled on the routes into Euston, and 5,000 had to do so on the routes into Birmingham. There are currently 115 passengers for every 100 seats, and the situation is going to get much worse. We need to act now to increase the capacity on our railways. As a

country, we cannot afford to leave the economic future of cities such as Leeds, Manchester and Birmingham to an overcrowded railway that will be almost 200 years old by the time HS2 opens.

If we are going to deal with the problem, why not be ambitious about it? Let us do it properly. Let us not tinker with it; instead, let us get back that Victorian foresight and ambition and make our railways something we can be proud of. The only way we can do that is by building a new line, so let us use the best technology and make it a high-speed line. After all, it is rather embarrassing that Turkey will soon have 1,500 miles of high-speed rail when we have just 67. HS2 will bring us the capacity that we need. It will double the number of seats between Leeds and Birmingham, it will transport the equivalent of the population of Cardiff every day, and it will run up to 18 trains an hour.

Over the years of debate on HS2, those who are against it have said that it will have an impact on the regions that it is trying to serve, and that the money would be better spent on local services. But this is not an either/or; it has to be both and, frankly, it is both. The northern hub is being funded in full, the line between Manchester and Leeds is being electrified, and new stations are opening up all over the place. The core cities are predicting the creation of 400,000 jobs. During the construction phase alone, the project will provide more than 8 million pay packets. HS2 will also link our cities to help them to do business. At the moment, trying to get on a train going from Birmingham to Leeds is a nightmare. Let us see business working together in those two great cities. As we have heard, 70% of the jobs created will be outside London.

We have heard about the costs and the business case, and I shall not repeat those points, but we need to maximise the potential. I welcome the decision to create a taskforce, led by Lord Deighton, to keep this major project on track. He has a great record in this area. We must ensure that British industry and the British work force are ready to deal with these changes. I want the best for my constituents. I want them to benefit from the best opportunities that the country has to offer, just as those in many constituencies in the south have been able to do. We cannot wait; this is urgent. Let's get ambitious.

6.19 pm

James Morris (Halesowen and Rowley Regis) (Con): If Members can agree on anything, it is surely that there is an urgent need to rebalance Britain's economy away from over-reliance on London and the south-east, so that we can harness the full potential of the whole country. For too long, the black country and the wider west midland region were allowed to fall behind while other parts of the economy accelerated. Although the financial services bubble gave the illusion of economic growth, the black country saw relatively little of the benefit. Gross value added in Dudley and Sandwell fell from 88% of the national average in 1997 to just 74% in 2008. Now that our local economy seems to be getting back on track, we need to make sure that the recovery is sustainable, and we need to put in place the infrastructure to make sure that the west midlands is not left behind again. This Bill, and the project it allows for, is absolutely vital for the west midlands economy.

Halesowen and Rowley Regis was at the heart of the industrial revolution. Our communities developed around the transport network of the day, and new links were built to transport our goods around the country. The position of the west midlands at the centre of the motorway network is still a huge advantage for transporting freight, but we need much better transport infrastructure to move people between Britain's great cities. Great cities such as Birmingham and Manchester offer many advantages over the capital, but the reality for many companies is that much of their work will still need to be done in London, and they see the current rail network as an obstacle to effective business rather than as a way of getting from one location to another efficiently.

Most of the focus has been on reducing journey times. Although this will be an important consideration for many businesses, for most of my constituents the key benefit of HS2 will be the increased capacity that the new line will offer. The rail network around the west midlands is quickly approaching bursting point, which would be catastrophic for businesses and for people just needing to travel across the country. The number of people travelling by rail to and from cities in the west midlands is increasing even more quickly than the national trend.

My constituency is served by three mainline railway stations, with regular services to and from Birmingham. Our regional services have to share lines with the inter-city network, severely constraining the ability of either to expand to meet rapidly growing demand. Rail journeys to and from Birmingham have increased by 22% over the past five years, and for Coventry the figure is even higher at 30%.

If there is a clear need for greater capacity across the core of our rail network, surely the only question is what form the extra lines should take—whether we build a new high-speed line across the country or expand the lines we have. Although I can understand why, on a superficial level, it might sound attractive to try to add extra capacity to old lines, this cannot be the best way forward in the long term. We have an ageing rail network, and HS2 would be the first major rail line built outside London for 150 years. During that time, plenty of lines have been taken out of service.

Our economy is relying on a rail network that was largely designed around the needs of the mid-19th century. Given the cost of any expansion in capacity on the scale needed to meet future demand, why on earth would we opt to stick with a technology that would be nearly 200 years old by the time the new service was operational? If we are serious about building an effective rail network, and serious about rebalancing our economy, surely the only way forward is for us to invest in this infrastructure and allow our regional economies to compete and succeed.

6.23 pm

Angie Bray (Ealing Central and Acton) (Con): As is the norm with any major infrastructure project in this country, HS2 has provoked a massive debate and has become something of a national drama. I think it fair to say that Ealing and Acton has not exactly been immune from the debate, and that the project has had a bumpy ride in my patch. With a border to the north more or less marked out by the railway lines pinpointed to be the arteries taking the new trains in and out of London

after they have passed through Old Oak common, it is undeniable that the proposal will have an impact on my constituency.

Residents in north Acton, living right on the boundary between Ealing and Brent where the new Old Oak Common station would be, will be particularly affected by an estimated eight years of construction works. Some will also find themselves potentially living alongside the railway where it comes out from the tunnel. Obviously, it is not easy to allay genuine and legitimate concerns, but, first and foremost, compensation for those whose properties border or lie close to the track must be as generous as it is possible to be.

Secondly, the onus will be on Ealing council and Transport for London to manage the arrangements in a way that keeps disruption to a minimum. I understand that some constituents fear that they will be almost completely trapped, and will be unable even to gain access to local shops or their doctors while the works proceed. That would be simply unacceptable. Alternatives such as extra bus routes around the works will have to be laid on, and effective traffic management will be essential.

Concerns about mayhem around the Hanger Lane gyratory system while the line is being constructed, along with anxieties about the impact of an overground HS2 through parts of north Ealing, prompted a vigorous campaign by local residents who have demanded, at the very least, a tunnel between Old Oak Common and Northolt. Last year I wrote to the Secretary of State supporting their campaign, and I am delighted to say that that option appears to have met with his favour. We look forward to final confirmation.

Nevertheless, as my constituents know—notwithstanding those local impacts and the opposition from campaigners further up the proposed line—I have long been a firm supporter of what I see as an ambitious and timely project. Given that I have campaigned loudly against a third runway at Heathrow and have used the “train not plane” argument, how could I not be? Central to this pledge was the logic that a new high-speed rail link improving north-south connections would dramatically reduce the need for the airlines to lay on so many short-haul domestic flights from some of our northern cities, which take up so much landing space at Heathrow. The HS2 concept, however, has always been more than just a buffer against the immediate third runway threat. It is a project for the future, and a rare example of a Government's demonstrating genuine long-term vision—something that we should be encouraging.

We know that existing services will be full to bursting point by the mid 2020s. We know that the demand is there and that we need to ease the pressure, so why not plan now? Sooner or later we will need the extra capacity, and if we wait for 10 years we will just be doing what we have to do now in a rush. In any case, I have always believed that a country that can be ambitious should be ambitious, and should seek to update its infrastructure in a timely fashion.

High-speed rail makes sense, it will be needed in this country, and the proposals are achievable. I believe that as long as there is generous compensation—and I do mean generous—for all whose lives would be blighted, we should all get behind this project.

[Angie Bray]

6.27 pm

David Mowat (Warrington South) (Con): I support the Bill, but before I say why I support it let me give a number of reasons for not building this railway. We should not build it just because we have less high-speed track than any other country in the world. We could be right and those countries could be wrong, so that is not a good reason. We should not build it because the business case for HS1 to move to St Pancras was predicated on access to the north. We should not build it on environmental and carbon-related grounds: I think that those are rather difficult to justify, at a time when most electricity continues to be produced from fossil fuels. We should not even build it to try to rebalance infrastructure spending, which over the last decade has been 10 times higher per head in London and the south-east than in the north-west, and more than 10 times higher than in the north-east.

We should proceed with this project if, and only if, three conditions exist: a robust business case, clear transformational benefits, and affordability in cash-flow terms, at about £2 billion a year. That £2 billion a year needs to kick in as Crossrail finishes, and I think that that is quite achievable. I cannot go into the business case in a great deal of detail, other than to say that the benefit-cost ratio remains higher than 2—about 2.5 for the full Y network—and is predicated principally on capacity arguments. The number of passengers on the west coast main line has been increasing at a rate of 5% a year for the last 15 years. This business case assumes an increase of only 1.6%, which is quite conservative.

As for transformational benefits, some Members have said today that the northern cities could do better if they just invested in broadband, while others have said that northern cities do not understand that HS2 will cause all the jobs to be sucked into London. All that I can say to that is that the northern chambers of commerce do not agree. They have estimated that in the north-west it will produce some 40,000 extra jobs and £8 billion of incremental benefits, while KMCG's Green Gauge report estimates that there will be about 50,000 extra jobs.

I want to make a number of observations about the project. First, on the timing, 2032 is a long time ahead, and I am a little concerned that there is going to be a gap of over a decade before it goes to Birmingham and Manchester. That is a decade in which the northern cities will be put at a disadvantage—although prosperity will not, of course, stop in Manchester and Birmingham. I do not fully understand why we are not able to do more in the north earlier, in terms of the timing of the investment.

It is important that the northern cities are linked not only to London but to Brussels and Paris. I do not fully understand the issues around the linkage and all that goes with that, but to do this project and not allow that to happen would be wrong.

I also want to comment on a number of councils. We heard about Bradford no longer supporting the project, and I have heard Warrington council say it no longer supports it, because there is no station on its patch. Either this project has transformational benefits for the region and all of us in that region benefit, or it does not.

My constituents in Warrington work in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and elsewhere. What matters to them is that we go some way towards fixing the north-south divide and getting prosperity much more evenly spread across the entire country.

Finally, let me say that I commend this Bill and that I hope the House supports it tonight.

6.30 pm

Mr William Cash (Stone) (Con): I oppose this Bill on national and local grounds. I pay tribute to the people of Stone, Swynnerton, Whitmore and Madeley for the meetings we have had to discuss these matters, and I also pay tribute to the Country Land and Business Association and Stop HS2 for the back-up they have given at these meetings and in consideration of all these matters.

I oppose the Bill for many reasons. The route will cut a swathe right the way through my constituency from top to bottom. I also agree very much with the comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) and my neighbour and good friend the hon. Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy). I do not need to repeat their points. They have made them forcefully and so have many others, and they are right.

The reality is that my constituents gain no benefit from this whatever. As has rightly been said, it is all pain and no gain. The unfairness of the current arrangements is so gross that it has to be rectified; there is a complete failure to understand that in the 21st century we must have a proper compensation arrangement if this Bill is to go through, as many predict.

I do not believe the comments of the Public Accounts Committee can be in any way disputed, and as for the question of the amount of money involved, that is the biggest white elephant of all time. As has been noted, the amount has already gone up to £50 billion-plus, and I will not be surprised if it is £75 billion by the time this is finished. The reality is that this is a very expensive operation that is blighting people's homes already in a way that is completely unfair, and it deserves to be discarded.

On the question of compensation, the arrangements favour the acquirer so much against the claimant, and they do not even say how the compensation is to be calculated. As for the exceptional hardship scheme, three quarters of the applications have been rejected, as the Minister knows, and compensation is available only through a discretionary scheme.

Mrs Gillan: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is nothing in this Bill that either pushes forward any compensation scheme or stops the Government continuing to pay compensation, and what we really want is the new consultation on compensation, which I hope the Department will launch as soon as tomorrow or the next day?

Mr Cash: I could not agree more. The fact is that the current arrangements for compensation are wholly inadequate to deal with this unique—and, I believe, appalling—scheme.

We are also now pressing for a property bond scheme, which would underwrite the property values where this

project has an adverse impact. That needs to be set up. Members will know that it is fear of the unknown that has the greatest impact on the property market. A property bond scheme would create stability in the market, and the idea has already been propagated by the BAA and Central Railway. The ideas are out there, and amendments will doubtless be tabled in Committee to show how such a scheme could work in practice; the argument can be made in more detail then.

As far as I am aware, this scheme has no support whatsoever in my constituency. I have held many meetings in packed rooms and overflowing halls. At the end of them, I have asked, "Does anybody agree with the proposed scheme?" Only one person, who I think was from HS2 Ltd himself, said yes. The amount of very sensible opposition to the scheme is amazing.

The west coast main line is a very good service. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford hit the nail on the head: it is available and can be improved. Extensions can be made to Euston to improve the availability of the service.

The bottom line is that the whole scheme should be rejected. I shall vote against it with absolute determination tonight, and if we lose, we move on to the compensation arrangements. In fairness to the people who have been completely blighted and whose lives have been destroyed, we must have a property bond and proper arrangements. It is disgraceful.

6.36 pm

Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): I rise to speak in favour of the Bill. This is a massively important piece of national infrastructure that will benefit us not just in the immediate decades after its completion, but for probably more than a century. Connecting the great cities of the north and midlands to London and the south-east, and to the continent through the channel tunnel, is an investment in our future. We should look at the benefit not just in ticket sales, but in the business regeneration that will take place across the network.

The Secretary of State described the business situation in Kent, an issue that, as a Kent MP, I should like to touch on. It is impossible to imagine how east Kent can be regenerated without the benefits that High Speed 1 brings. I sit in meetings with the regeneration group that looks at the east Kent regional growth zone, and selling the benefits of High Speed 1 and the lower journey times into London is the single biggest advantage we have. As the Secretary of State pointed out, the HS1 line runs only as far as Ashford into London; the rolling stock running from Folkestone, Dover and Canterbury into Thanet is also a massive source of regeneration.

None of us can know for certain what the future will bring—no more than when, nearly 30 years ago, this House debated the Channel Tunnel Bill. At that point, many Members spoke against it. Some said that we were living in the age of Concorde, and that international rail travel was not the future. The channel tunnel has outlasted Concorde and will be there for many more years to come. Back then, my predecessor, Michael Howard, championed the property blight issue. A compensation scheme was in place, but in fact people's property prices actually went up, not down, as a result of the building of the channel tunnel rail link. People

said at the time that it would be a drain, diverting business investment from the south-east to France, where it would be encouraged. In fact, that gateway is bringing business investment into the UK from France. People said that it would destroy jobs in Kent; in fact, it is creating jobs. As I said earlier, it would be impossible to imagine a job creation strategy for east Kent without the physical infrastructure of the channel tunnel.

In the 1980s, Members said that they did not think there was a case for city-to-city rail travel, and certainly not through the channel tunnel, which would simply reduce journey times across the channel itself. Of course, there is now an enormous market for city-to-city travel: not just from London to Paris and Brussels, but soon opening up into Holland and Germany and to other locations in Europe. My hon. Friend the Member for Northampton South (Mr Binley) pointed out in his very good speech the enormous benefit that rail freight infrastructure gains from investment in high-speed rail, and from the channel tunnel. The potential is enormous and evolving, and it will be the same with High Speed 2. I commend the Bill to the House.

6.39 pm

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): As we have heard today from numerous hon. Members, the railways face an imminent capacity crunch. The lack of capacity is holding back growth and costing the taxpayer, as our existing infrastructure bears an ever heavier burden. Soon, on the west coast main line, the route will effectively be full. For passengers, this means overcrowded peak services, with many commuter trains regularly running at more than 150% capacity. I challenge anyone to use their travel time productively when they do not even have a seat to sit in. We need radical action to break through the logjam and provide additional connections between our major cities. That is why a new line is needed.

HS2 is a project for the country as a whole; it is a new north-south rail line to connect our cities, slash journey times and release additional capacity for freight and passenger services. As a major infrastructure project, it can drive economic growth, attracting additional investment along the route while delivering jobs and skills. We have heard already today about the failure of this Government on infrastructure spending, which was down by nearly 40% in the past year. That makes it even more important that a new line is built, but there must be strong oversight on its delivery.

A number of hon. Members have said that we should improve the infrastructure we already have. Of course, we must continue to invest in our existing network. We have always been clear that projects such as the northern hub must be complementary to a new line, but there are limits to what we can do with our current infrastructure. We have already spent more than £9 billion on the west coast upgrade. Hon. Members representing constituencies along the route will know just how disruptive that process was; indeed, the hon. Member for Milton Keynes South (Iain Stewart) described it as an absolute nightmare. Although that work made essential improvements, it did not provide the additional capacity needed to keep pace with passenger demand. As Network Rail has said:

[Lilian Greenwood]

“The lack of capacity will become even more acute beyond 2024 as demand continues to grow. The most effective and best value for money way to create additional capacity will be through building a new line.”

We must not look at passenger growth in isolation. The freight sector has enjoyed a decade of continual growth, but with limited additional paths available, there is a risk that freight operators will have to be turned away in the future. Any Government serious about climate change will want a growing rail freight sector to help reduce carbon emissions and congestion on our motorways. But the challenges facing freight underline the danger of treading water instead of delivering a new line.

We also have to consider the improvements that can be made to passenger services. As a constituency MP, I know how overcrowded and slow the services between Nottingham and Birmingham can be, holding back a growing commuter route, and inadequate connections between our core cities are stopping commuter routes from developing at all. It can take more than two hours to travel from Nottingham to Leeds on existing services, but the new line should cut that journey time by two thirds.

A number of hon. Members, including the hon. Member for North West Leicestershire (Andrew Bridgen) and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr Godsiff), have suggested that high-speed rail will only benefit London, but that underplays the growth we have seen in regional traffic. From 2000 to 2010, passenger growth between Manchester and London was 70%, whereas between Manchester and Birmingham it was 105%. In addition, we must not forget that this project was driven forward, in part, by the regions. For example, Centro, the transport authority covering Birmingham, started to make the case for high-speed rail in 2008, before the last Labour Government became committed to the project.

The Government have announced this week a regional growth commission, chaired by Lord Deighton. Ministers must ensure that local authorities have every opportunity to contribute to that review. As my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mrs Ellman) rightly said, the Government must work with local bodies, including transport authorities and local enterprise partnerships, to maximise economic development and the benefits from released capacity. This is an area where the case has not been made strongly enough. So far, local media coverage has been dominated by HS2 Ltd’s suggestions for reductions to existing mainline services. That is a pity, because the released capacity and rolling stock could help enable more local services and even the reversal of some Beeching-era cuts, but Ministers and HS2 Ltd have not made that case. They must do so if the constituents of Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for North East Derbyshire (Natascha Engel) are to be convinced.

That is part of a wider problem. It sometimes feels like the project is being developed in isolation, with little regard for other transport needs. We know that we will not see a decision on a spur to Heathrow until the Davies commission reports, after the next election. We would have liked that decision to be made sooner.

We are also concerned about the day-to-day running of HS2 Ltd, for which Ministers are ultimately responsible.

A station redesign for Euston was announced with no prior warning or consultation. My right hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Frank Dobson) spoke passionately on behalf of his constituents about that point and many others. New tunnels appeared for west London and the east midlands without clear information about how they would impact on the overall cost of the project.

According to the National Audit Office, the Department for Transport and HS2 Ltd need to do more to make the business case for high-speed rail. There has been no information on the cost of tickets. The new line cannot be a rich man’s toy; all fares must be subject to regulation on the same basis as the rest of the network.

We have also not had the commitments we would like on apprenticeships. We have said that an apprenticeship should be created for every £1 million spent, creating 33,000 apprenticeships over the lifetime of the construction project. A similar approach is training a new generation of skilled workers through Crossrail, and Ministers should build on the experience to ensure that apprenticeships and opportunities for young people are delivered as part of the new rail line.

Many right hon. and hon. Members and their constituents have understandable concerns and questions remaining about compensation and I would be grateful if the Minister could tell us when he expects the new consultation on the subject to be announced. We need to make sure that we are getting value for money, especially as we are debating a spending Bill today for a project that has increased its preparatory budget from £773 million in 2010 to more than £900 million today. We will continue to press the Government on these issues in Committee.

Let me recap. There are real questions that Ministers need to address. However, they are questions about how the project is being introduced, not about the need for it. We can meet our capacity challenges only through serious investment, and treading water is not an option.

For too long we ran a 19th century railway on the 20th century principle of “make do and mend”. In an age of rising passenger demand, that is no longer enough. We are not managing decline; we are investing in the future. The proposed line will cover 330 route miles, directly linking most of our major cities and cutting journey times from others. It will improve transport links between England, Scotland and Wales, as my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd South (Susan Elan Jones) pointed out. It will meet or even exceed the standards of the rail infrastructure of our continental competitors. It will be a north-south rail line—one might even call it a one nation rail line.

It would have been better to have introduced a hybrid Bill for the whole route, but at least this preparation or paving Bill does cover both phases. We will support the Bill as we want the project to succeed, and we will hold the Government to account as we go into Committee.

6.48 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Mr Simon Burns): This has been an extremely good and well-informed debate. A significant number of my hon. Friends and other hon. Members have spoken in support of High Speed 2 and this paving Bill, and a

number, including a number of my right hon. and hon. Friends, have expressed their concerns and lack of support.

I want to begin in a slightly unusual way by congratulating the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Garston and Halewood (Maria Eagle), and the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood), on taking the view in the national interest that they will support the Bill tonight, as they supported it when they were in government. For that consistency, I congratulate and thank them.

We heard a number of excellent speeches. I thought the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins) was particularly relevant and interesting, because his constituency has the experience of High Speed 1. I also enjoyed the robust contribution made by my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton South (Mr Binley), who is clearly a keen and enthusiastic supporter of the project.

I say to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan), my hon. Friend the Member for North West Leicestershire (Andrew Bridgen) and others who oppose the Bill and who have the preferred or proposed route going through their constituency that I understand what they are going through. I have considerable sympathy for them as constituency MPs and I admire they way in which they are rightly fighting for the interests of their constituents, but ultimately I believe that the national interest must come first, although we must do all we can to alleviate any problems that have been highlighted.

Andrew Bridgen: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Burns: I am sorry, but no. I have very little time and a lot to say to reply to the debate.

In the comments made both by those who support the Bill and by those who oppose it, there was a common theme: we have to sort out the issue of compensation. I agree. We accepted the High Court's decision in the only one of the 10 judicial reviews that we did not win that we should reconsult. That consultation on a comprehensive compensation scheme will begin shortly, and I can say to my hon. Friend the Member for South Northamptonshire (Andrea Leadsom) and others that the options to be considered will include a property bond.

My hon. Friends the Members for Tewkesbury (Mr Robertson) and for The Cotswolds (Geoffrey Clifton-Brown) asked that we say once again what the costs are. I will give those figures to the House now. For phase 1, it is £21.4 billion in 2011 prices, and for phase 2, it is £21.2 billion, making a total of £42.6 billion, which includes a contingency of £14.4 billion. The cost of rolling stock is £7.5 billion, of which £1.7 billion is the contingency fund.

The debate has laid bare the fact that everybody wants the benefits that high-speed rail is set to deliver—new jobs, growth and prosperity for our country—but there are understandably some questions and concerns about how we realise those benefits. Those concerns are not unlike those that surrounded the construction of many of the now indispensable parts of our nation's transport infrastructure, such as the M25, the Jubilee line extension to Canary Wharf and High Speed 1 itself. High Speed 2 is not a scheme being built for the future based on the

travel behaviours of the past. We stand firm in our belief that High Speed 2 is the right choice for Britain in the 21st century, just as the railways were the right choice for Britain in the 19th century. Amazingly, back then, those opposed to the railway claimed that it would terrify country folk, turn cows' milk sour, stop hens from laying and lead to an invasion of town folk into the country; and that travelling at speeds of more than 25 mph would cause the engines to combust and the passengers to disintegrate.

The doubts of today are the only true hindrance to realising our vision and the benefits it will deliver, and I am sure that future generations will look back at these doubts in the same way as we look at the doubts of those opposed to railways in the 19th century—and, ironically and using a shorter time scale, the doubts that the people of Kent had in the 1980s and '90s, which they now totally reject. One of my hon. Friends mentioned that Maidstone successfully avoided having a station, which went to Ebbsfleet instead, and Maidstone is now begging to have a station because the town is losing out on the regeneration that a station delivers.

High Speed 2 is a vision that we have to realise. Over the past decade, about half of economic growth has been concentrated in London and the surrounding regions. While High Speed 2 will shrink the distance between our great cities, the vision for High Speed 2 is to extend the benefits that it will deliver far beyond the actual network. We estimate that over 70% of jobs created by High Speed 2 will be outside London. High Speed 2 will redress the imbalance felt acutely by millions of people in different parts of the country. Britain cannot afford to burden the economies of great cities such as Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham with an overcrowded railway that will be almost 200 years old by the time that High Speed 2 opens and which has no spare capacity.

It is time that Britain—the country that invented the railway—raised its aspirations and ambitions by building that world-class, high-speed rail network. I am confident that the House will recognise the core objective of High Speed 2 to create an engine for growth that will unlock massive potential and opportunities for UK cities such as Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Sheffield and others along the route. It will link eight of Britain's 10 largest cities, serving one in five of the UK population. People will be able to travel from Edinburgh to London and back in the time that it takes to drive one way. The network will be fully integrated with the nation's airports, with stations serving Manchester and Birmingham directly, an option for a spur to Heathrow, and short connections to East Midlands airport from Toton station, which is halfway between Derby and Nottingham. That will radically redraw the economic geography of the nation, bringing our cities closer together and rebalancing growth and opportunities. In doing so, High Speed 2 will rewrite the economic fortunes of this country.

It is imperative that we do not delay the project, and the expenditure powers that we are seeking in the Bill will allow us to move forward with this ambitious investment in infrastructure. I have to say to right hon. and hon. Members that dithering is not an option if we want to maximise the economic potential of the country. By building High Speed 2, we will demonstrate that Britain still has the ambition and vision to build world-class infrastructure to support a world-beating economy. For those who do not believe that there will be acute

[Mr Simon Burns]

regeneration around the stations and depots, I suggest that they go to Japan to see what has happened in places such as Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya, where there has been massive regeneration, with shops, leisure activities, hotels and businesses, not simply in the immediate vicinity of the stations but beyond in the wider community.

We have to move forward to show that we still have ambition. At its heart, that is what HS2 is all about: jobs and growth—jobs and growth for this generation; jobs and growth for future generations. That is the legacy that the House is being asked to support today—a legacy that will support this nation's zeal for hard work and its determination to succeed. We must have the courage and conviction to make bold decisions. We must be bold now, and it is for that reason that I urge right hon. and hon. Members to support Second Reading and to reject the amendment.

Question put. That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 37, Noes 325.

Division No. 35]

[6.59 pm

AYES

Baker, Steve	Leadsom, Andrea
Baron, Mr John	Lefroy, Jeremy
Bridgen, Andrew	Lewis, Dr Julian
Byles, Dan	Llwyd, rh Mr Elfyn
Campbell, Mr Ronnie	Loughton, Tim
Cash, Mr William	Nuttall, Mr David
Corbyn, Jeremy	Parish, Neil
Cryer, John	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Cunningham, Mr Jim	Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Davies, Philip	Russell, Sir Bob
Dobson, rh Frank	Sheerman, Mr Barry
Drax, Richard	Skinner, Mr Dennis
Edwards, Jonathan	Smith, rh Mr Andrew
Engel, Natascha	Turner, Mr Andrew
Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl	Tyrie, Mr Andrew
Godsiff, Mr Roger	White, Chris
Gray, Mr James	Williams, Hywel
Hoey, Kate	
Hollobone, Mr Philip	
Holloway, Mr Adam	

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs Anne Main and
Kelvin Hopkins

NOES

Afriyie, Adam	Beresford, Sir Paul
Aldous, Peter	Berry, Jake
Allen, Mr Graham	Betts, Mr Clive
Andrew, Stuart	Bingham, Andrew
Arbuthnot, rh Mr James	Binley, Mr Brian
Austin, Ian	Birtwistle, Gordon
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Blackman-Woods, Roberta
Bain, Mr William	Blackwood, Nicola
Baker, Norman	Blenkinsop, Tom
Baldwin, Harriett	Blomfield, Paul
Barclay, Stephen	Blunt, Mr Crispin
Barker, rh Gregory	Boles, Nick
Barwell, Gavin	Brady, Mr Graham
Bayley, Hugh	Brake, rh Tom
Bebb, Guto	Bray, Angie
Beckett, rh Margaret	Brazier, Mr Julian
Begg, Dame Anne	Brine, Steve
Bellingham, Mr Henry	Brokenshire, James
Benn, rh Hilary	Brown, Lyn
Benyon, Richard	Brown, Mr Russell
	Bruce, rh Sir Malcolm

Buckland, Mr Robert	Goldsmith, Zac
Burden, Richard	Goodwill, Mr Robert
Burley, Mr Aidan	Gove, rh Michael
Burns, Conor	Graham, Richard
Burns, rh Mr Simon	Grant, Mrs Helen
Burrowes, Mr David	Grayling, rh Chris
Burstow, rh Paul	Greatrex, Tom
Burt, Lorely	Green, rh Damian
Cable, rh Vince	Green, Kate
Cairns, Alun	Greening, rh Justine
Campbell, Mr Alan	Greenwood, Lillian
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Griffith, Nia
Champion, Sarah	Gummer, Ben
Chishti, Rehman	Gyimah, Mr Sam
Clark, Katy	Halfon, Robert
Clarke, rh Mr Tom	Hames, Duncan
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Hamilton, Mr David
Coaker, Vernon	Hammond, Stephen
Coffey, Dr Thérèse	Hands, Greg
Collins, Damian	Hanson, rh Mr David
Colvile, Oliver	Harrington, Richard
Cooper, Rosie	Harris, Rebecca
Cox, Mr Geoffrey	Hart, Simon
Crabb, Stephen	Harvey, Sir Nick
Crausby, Mr David	Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
Crouch, Tracey	Hayes, rh Mr John
Cunningham, Alex	Heald, Oliver
Curran, Margaret	Healey, rh John
Dakin, Nic	Heath, Mr David
Davey, rh Mr Edward	Hemming, John
Davies, Glyn	Henderson, Gordon
de Bois, Nick	Hendry, Charles
Dinenage, Caroline	Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Herbert, rh Nick
Docherty, Thomas	Hilling, Julie
Dorrell, rh Mr Stephen	Hinds, Damian
Doyle, Gemma	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Hollingbery, George
Dromey, Jack	Hopkins, Kris
Duddridge, James	Horwood, Martin
Duncan, rh Mr Alan	Howarth, rh Mr George
Dunne, Mr Philip	Howarth, Sir Gerald
Eagle, Ms Angela	Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Eagle, Maria	Huppert, Dr Julian
Ellis, Michael	Jackson, Glenda
Ellison, Jane	James, Margot
Ellman, Mrs Louise	Jamieson, Cathy
Ellwood, Mr Tobias	Javid, Sajid
Elphicke, Charlie	Johnson, Diana
Eustice, George	Johnson, Joseph
Evans, Graham	Jones, Andrew
Evennett, Mr David	Jones, rh Mr David
Fallon, rh Michael	Jones, Graham
Farron, Tim	Jones, Mr Marcus
Field, rh Mr Frank	Jones, Susan Elan
Fitzpatrick, Jim	Jowell, rh Dame Tessa
Flelo, Robert	Kawczynski, Daniel
Foster, rh Mr Don	Kirby, Simon
Freer, Mike	Knight, rh Mr Greg
Fuller, Richard	Kwarteng, Kwasi
Gapes, Mike	Lamb, Norman
Garnier, Sir Edward	Lammy, rh Mr David
Garnier, Mark	Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
Gauke, Mr David	Latham, Pauline
George, Andrew	Laws, rh Mr David
Gibb, Mr Nick	Lazarowicz, Mark
Gilbert, Stephen	Lee, Jessica
Gilmore, Sheila	Lee, Dr Phillip
Glass, Pat	Leech, Mr John
Glen, John	Leslie, Charlotte
Goggins, rh Paul	Letwin, rh Mr Oliver

Lewis, Brandon
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Long, Naomi
 Lord, Jonathan
 Lucas, Ian
 Luff, Peter
 Lumley, Karen
 MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maude, rh Mr Francis
 Maynard, Paul
 McCabe, Steve
 McCann, Mr Michael
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
 Menzies, Mark
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moore, rh Michael
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, Nicky
 Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Mulholland, Greg
 Mundell, rh David
 Munn, Meg
 Munt, Tessa
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, Sheryll
 Nash, Pamela
 Newmark, Mr Brooks
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Ottaway, Richard
 Owen, Albert
 Paice, rh Sir James
 Patel, Priti
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perkins, Toby
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pugh, John
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Reckless, Mark
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob
 Reeve, Simon
 Reid, Mr Alan
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rifkind, rh Sir Malcolm
 Robathan, rh Mr
 Andrew
 Robertson, Angus
 Robertson, rh Hugh
 Robertson, John
 Rogerson, Dan
 Rosindell, Andrew

Rudd, Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandys, Laura
 Scott, Mr Lee
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Slaughter, Mr Andy
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Sir Robert
 Soames, rh Nicholas
 Soubry, Anna
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stanley, rh Sir John
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Mr Graham
 Stunell, rh Sir Andrew
 Sturdy, Julian
 Swales, Ian
 Swayne, rh Mr
 Desmond
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Tami, Mark
 Teather, Sarah
 Thurso, John
 Timpson, Mr Edward
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tredinnick, David
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vaz, rh Keith
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Ward, Mr David
 Watson, Mr Tom
 Weatherley, Mike
 Weir, Mr Mike
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Williams, Mr Mark
 Williams, Roger
 Williams, Stephen
 Williamson, Gavin
 Willott, Jenny
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
 Wishart, Pete
 Wright, David
 Wright, Mr Iain
 Wright, Simon
 Young, rh Sir George
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mark Hunter and

Karen Bradley

Question accordingly negated.

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

The House divided: Ayes 330, Noes 27.

Division No. 36]

[7.12 pm

AYES

Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allen, Mr Graham
 Andrew, Stuart
 Arbutnot, rh Mr
 James
 Austin, Ian
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bain, Mr William
 Baker, Norman
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, Stephen
 Barker, rh Gregory
 Barwell, Gavin
 Bayley, Hugh
 Bebb, Guto
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begg, Dame Anne
 Bellingham, Mr Henry
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Benyon, Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Bingham, Andrew
 Binley, Mr Brian
 Birtwistle, Gordon
 Blackman-Woods,
 Roberta
 Blackwood, Nicola
 Blenkinsop, Tom
 Blomfield, Paul
 Blunt, Mr Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bradley, Karen
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Brake, rh Tom
 Bray, Angie
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, James
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, Mr Russell
 Bruce, rh Sir Malcolm
 Buckland, Mr Robert
 Burden, Richard
 Burley, Mr Aidan
 Burns, Conor
 Burns, rh Mr Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burstow, rh Paul
 Burt, Lorely
 Cable, rh Vince
 Cairns, Alun
 Campbell, Mr Alan
 Carmichael, rh Mr
 Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Chishti, Rehman
 Clark, Katy

Clarke, rh Mr Tom
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colville, Oliver
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cox, Mr Geoffrey
 Crabb, Stephen
 Crausby, Mr David
 Crouch, Tracey
 Cryer, John
 Cunningham, Alex
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Mr Edward
 Davies, Glyn
 de Bois, Nick
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Thomas
 Dorrell, rh Mr Stephen
 Doyle, Gemma
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Dromey, Jack
 Duddridge, James
 Duncan, rh Mr Alan
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellison, Jane
 Ellman, Mrs Louise
 Ellwood, Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Graham
 Evens, Mr David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Michael
 Farron, Tim
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Ffello, Robert
 Foster, rh Mr Don
 Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Gapes, Mike
 Garnier, Sir Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 George, Andrew
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Gilbert, Stephen
 Gilmore, Sheila
 Glass, Pat
 Glen, John
 Goggins, rh Paul
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard

Grant, Mrs Helen
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Greatrex, Tom
 Green, rh Damian
 Green, Kate
 Greening, rh Justine
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Griffith, Nia
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gummer, Ben
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Halfon, Robert
 Hames, Duncan
 Hamilton, Mr David
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hands, Greg
 Hanson, rh Mr David
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Harvey, Sir Nick
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, Oliver
 Healey, rh John
 Heath, Mr David
 Hemming, John
 Hendry, Charles
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hilling, Julie
 Hinds, Damian
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollingbery, George
 Hopkins, Kris
 Horwood, Martin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Howarth, Sir Gerald
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Huppert, Dr Julian
 Jackson, Glenda
 James, Margot
 Jamieson, Cathy
 Javid, Sajid
 Johnson, Diana
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Graham
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Jowell, rh Dame Tessa
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kirby, Simon
 Knight, rh Mr Greg
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamb, Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Latham, Pauline
 Lavery, Ian
 Laws, rh Mr David
 Lazarowicz, Mark
 Lee, Jessica
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leech, Mr John
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Long, Naomi
 Lord, Jonathan

Lucas, Ian
 Luff, Peter
 Lumley, Karen
 MacNeil, Mr Angus
 Brendan
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maude, rh Mr Francis
 Maynard, Paul
 McCabe, Steve
 McCann, Mr Michael
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
 Menzies, Mark
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, Anne
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moore, rh Michael
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, Nicky
 Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Mulholland, Greg
 Mundell, rh David
 Munn, Meg
 Munt, Tessa
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, Sheryll
 Nash, Pamela
 Newmark, Mr Brooks
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Onwurah, Chi
 Opperman, Guy
 Ottaway, Richard
 Owen, Albert
 Paice, rh Sir James
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perkins, Toby
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pugh, John
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Raynsford, rh Mr
 Nick
 Reckless, Mark
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob
 Reeve, Simon
 Reid, Mr Alan
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rifkind, rh Sir Malcolm
 Robathan, rh Mr
 Andrew
 Robertson, Angus
 Robertson, rh Hugh
 Robertson, John
 Rogerson, Dan
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, Amber

Rutley, David
 Sandys, Laura
 Scott, Mr Lee
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Slaughter, Mr Andy
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Sir Robert
 Soames, rh Nicholas
 Soubry, Anna
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stanley, rh Sir John
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Stride, Mel
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Mr Graham
 Stunell, rh Sir
 Andrew
 Sturdy, Julian
 Swales, Ian
 Swayne, rh Mr
 Desmond
 Tami, Mark
 Teather, Sarah
 Thornton, Mike
 Thurso, John
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Timpson, Mr Edward
 Tomlinson, Justin

Tredinnick, David
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Ward, Mr David
 Watson, Mr Tom
 Weatherley, Mike
 Weir, Mr Mike
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr
 John
 Williams, Mr Mark
 Williams, Roger
 Williams, Stephen
 Williamson, Gavin
 Willott, Jenny
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Winterton, rh Ms
 Rosie
 Wishart, Pete
 Wright, David
 Wright, Mr Iain
 Wright, Simon
 Young, rh Sir George
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr Robert Syms and
Mark Hunter

NOES

Baker, Steve
 Baron, Mr John
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Byles, Dan
 Cash, Mr William
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Davies, Philip
 Dobson, rh Frank
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Engel, Natascha
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Hoey, Kate
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Mr Adam
 Leadsom, Andrea

Lefroy, Jeremy
 Lewis, Dr Julian
 Llywd, rh Mr Elfyn
 Nuttall, Mr David
 Pincher, Christopher
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Russell, Sir Bob
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 White, Chris
 Williams, Hywel

Tellers for the Noes:
Mrs Anne Main and
Kelvin Hopkins

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con):
 On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your advice on where the £10 billion of extra funding, which was announced for HS2, has come from. The House has divided on important matters without being aware of whether the extra £10 billion will come out of existing budgets—meaning the curtailment of existing projects—the deficit or the comprehensive spending review. I was

keen to ask the Minister about that while he was at the Dispatch Box, but as you saw, Mr Speaker, he was keen not to answer my question.

Mr Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. I will deal with his second point first and his first point second. On his second point, I am sure he will appreciate that this is not a matter for the Chair. Some Ministers, when delivering winding-up speeches, are comfortable with taking interventions, depending on time considerations and other matters. Other Ministers decline to do so and are absolutely within their rights, so this is not a matter for the Chair. He may wish to pursue this matter in conversations with Ministers, and it is proper for him to do so. On the other point, that will come out in the course of debate over a sustained period. The hon. Gentleman will doubtless represent his constituents assiduously on the matter. We will leave it there, and we are grateful to the hon. Gentleman.

HIGH SPEED RAIL (PREPARATION) BILL (PROGRAMME)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83A(7)),

That the following provisions shall apply to the High Speed Rail (Preparation) Bill:

Committal

- (1) The Bill shall be committed to a Public Bill Committee.

Proceedings in Public Bill Committee

(2) Proceedings in the Public Bill Committee shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion on Thursday 18 July 2013.

(3) The Public Bill Committee shall have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it meets.

Consideration and Third Reading

(4) Proceedings on Consideration shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour before the moment of interruption on the day on which those proceedings are commenced.

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

(6) Standing Order No. 83B (Programming committees) shall not apply to proceedings on Consideration and Third Reading.

Other proceedings

(7) Any other proceedings on the Bill (including any proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments or on any further messages from the Lords) may be programmed.—(*Mr Syms.*)

Question agreed to.

HIGH SPEED RAIL (PREPARATION) BILL (MONEY)

Queen's recommendation signified.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a)),

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the High Speed Rail (Preparation) Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of expenditure incurred by the Secretary of State under or by virtue of the Act.—(*Mr Syms.*)

Question agreed to.

Hybrid Bill Procedure

AMENDMENT OF PRIVATE BUSINESS STANDING ORDERS

7.26 pm

The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Andrew Lansley): I beg to move,

That the following Standing Order (Private Business) be made:
224A. "Comments on environmental statement

(1) This order applies to any government bill in relation to which the Examiner decides Standing Orders 4 to 68 are applicable and in relation to which an environmental statement is required to be deposited under Standing Order 27A.

(2) In this order:

(a) "the relevant Minister" means the Minister of the Crown with responsibility for the bill;

(b) "the environmental statement" means the environmental information originally

deposited by the relevant Minister in relation to the bill for the purpose of Standing Order 27A;

(c) "supplementary environmental information" means any additional environmental information deposited by the relevant Minister, after the deposit of the environmental statement, to supplement that statement for the purpose of meeting the requirements of any EU Directive relating to environmental impact assessment.

(3) The notice published under Standing Order 10 in relation to the bill shall state that any person who wishes to make comments on the environmental statement should send them to the relevant Minister in such manner and on or before such date as shall be specified by the relevant Minister in the notice, that date being no earlier than the 56th day after the first publication of the notice.

(4) For the purpose of Standing Order 224 paragraph (3) shall be treated as one of the Standing Orders compliance with which must be examined by the Examiner.

(5) The relevant Minister shall, in such form as may be specified by the Examiner, publish and deposit in the Private Bill Office any comments received by him in accordance with this order and shall also submit those comments to the independent assessor appointed under paragraph (6) below. The relevant Minister shall deposit a certificate in the Private Bill Office setting out the date on which all comments have been received by the independent assessor.

(6) (a) If the bill originated in this House and if comments are received on the

environmental statement in accordance with this order:

i. a report shall be prepared by an independent assessor summarising the issues

raised by those comments;

ii. the Examiner shall appoint the independent assessor within the period for commenting on the environmental statement prescribed by paragraph (3) above;

iii. the assessor shall be instructed to prepare the report within such period as the Examiner shall specify, the end of that period being no earlier than the 28th day after the date certified by the relevant Minister, in accordance with paragraph (5) above, as the date on which the assessor received all of the comments from the relevant Minister;

iv. before specifying a period in accordance with sub-sub-paragraph (iii) above, the Examiner shall consult the relevant Minister on the length of this period;

v. the Examiner shall submit the report of the assessor to the House.

(b) If a report is submitted to the House in accordance with sub-paragraph (a)(v) above, the Examiner has leave to submit the report of the assessor to the House of Lords.

(7) If paragraph (6) above is applied, the bill shall not receive a second reading until at least 14 days after the report of the independent assessor on the comments on the environmental statement has been submitted to the House.

(8) If any supplementary environmental information is deposited in relation to the bill:

(a) it shall be prefaced with a statement that the information is being deposited as supplementary information under this order;

(b) the requirements of Standing Order 27A in relation to the deposit of copies of the environmental statement shall apply to the supplementary environmental information;

(c) copies of the supplementary environmental information shall be made available for inspection and sale at the offices prescribed by Standing Order 27A(6);

(d) notice shall be published in accordance with Standing Order 10 (save in respect of dates) above stating that any person who wishes to make comments on the supplementary environmental information should send them to the relevant Minister in such manner and within such period as may be specified in the notice, the end of that period being no earlier than the 42nd day after the date of the first publication of the notice;

(e) paragraphs (5) and (6) above shall have effect in relation to any comments received on any supplementary environmental information deposited in this House as they apply to comments received on the environmental statement and irrespective of the bill's House of origin;

(f) the examiner shall examine and report to the House whether or not paragraphs (8)(a) to (d) have been complied with and Standing Order 224 shall apply to that examination.

(g) the bill shall not receive a third reading in this House or, if supplementary environmental information has been submitted before second reading, second reading in this House until at least 14 days after the assessor's report on the comments on the supplementary environmental information has been submitted to the House.

(9) At third reading of the bill the relevant Minister shall set out:

(a) the main reasons and considerations upon which Parliament is invited to give consent to the project to be authorised by the bill;

(b) the main measures to avoid, reduce and, if possible, offset the major adverse effects of the project.

A written statement setting out this information shall be laid before this House not less than 7 days before third reading.

(10) The costs of the assessor and also the costs of the process of appointing an assessor, incurred by the House by virtue of paragraphs (6) and (8)(e) above, shall be reimbursed by the government.

(11) For the avoidance of doubt, any supplementary environmental information accompanying an amendment to a bill which, if the bill were a private bill, would require a petition for an additional provision shall be subject to paragraph (8) above and not paragraph (3) or (7) above".

Mr Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

That, in respect of any bill relating to High Speed 2 that is read the first time in Session 2013-14 and to which the standing orders relating to private business are found by the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills to apply, it shall be sufficient compliance with:

(a) any requirement under those standing orders for a document to be deposited or delivered at, or sent to, an office of a government department, body or person if it is deposited or delivered at, sent to or otherwise made accessible at that office in electronic form;

(b) any requirement under those standing orders for a document to be deposited with an officer if it is deposited with or delivered, sent to or otherwise made accessible to that officer in electronic form;

(c) any requirement under those standing orders for a document to be made available for inspection at a prescribed office, or to permit a document to be inspected, if it is made available for inspection at that office, or is permitted to be inspected, in electronic form;

(d) the requirement under Standing Order 27(4) or 36(3) relating to private business to permit a person to make copies of a document or extracts from it, if there is provided to that person, on request and within a reasonable time, copies of so much of it as the person may reasonably require and such copies may, if the person so agrees, be provided in electronic form;

(e) the requirement under Standing Order 27(4) relating to private business for a memorial to be made on every document deposited under that Standing Order, if the memorial is made on a separate document;

(f) any requirement under Standing Order 4A(1), 27A(6) or 224A(8) relating to private business to make a document available for sale at prescribed offices, if it is made available for sale at an office in London.

That this Order shall not affect any requirement under those standing orders to deposit any document at, or deliver any document to, the Private Bill Office or the Vote Office.

That any reference in those standing orders to a document which is deposited, lodged, delivered or sent under those standing orders includes a reference to a document which is so deposited, delivered or sent in electronic form.

That any reference to a document in this order includes a reference to any bill, plan, section, book of reference, ordnance map, environmental or other statement or estimate.

Mr Lansley: As the House heard during the previous debate, the Government are introducing a hybrid Bill to Parliament later this year to allow consideration of whether the powers to construct, operate and maintain the HS2 scheme should be granted. Given the significance of this decision it will be clear to the House that it is essential that Parliament has the means in place to support effective decision making in relation to the Bill. However, it has been a while since the last hybrid Bill and some of the rules governing this process are now out of date. Therefore, the motions I am moving today will update this parliamentary procedure. If I may, I will explain them to the House. I believe that the House will not find them objectionable.

On the motion for electronic deposit, the House may be aware that, along with the HS2 hybrid Bill later this year, we will provide Parliament with the environmental statement. This will set out the likely significant environmental effects of the scheme and put forward proposals for alleviating them. For a project of this magnitude, there is a considerable level of detail involved. We expect the statement to be up to 50,000 pages long. It is of course important that communities can easily find out what the impact will be on their local area. However, current Standing Orders require us to deposit a hard copy of that document to every local authority area along the line of route. It is estimated that each document would weigh up to 1 tonne in that form. In this day and age, that is inconvenient for the communities involved and wasteful of Government resources. That is why our first motion allows for the electronic deposit of bill documentation for the HS2 hybrid Bill. That will make it easier for communities across the line of route to find the information most relevant to their area without having to work through an enormous document. It will also make it easier for local authorities, including parish councils, to meet their obligations to make the information available for public inspection.

It should also be noted that this is a permissive power. It does not require documents to be deposited in electronic format only. HS2 Ltd is clear that if a deposit location wants all the documents in hard copy, they can have them in hard copy. In all cases, HS2 Ltd will make

available the key documents in hard copy, such as the Bill and the non-technical summary of the environmental statement.

Frank Dobson (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): I welcome the right hon. Gentleman's clarification, because several people have raised with me the possible difficulties with the large maps, which, without sophisticated IT gear, can be difficult to reproduce. If HS2 will still be obliged to provide large maps in solid form, I will be pleased with the reassurance he has given.

Mr Lansley: The right hon. Gentleman raises a sensible point. For most people with access to electronic equipment, navigating large documents is perfectly straightforward. In fact, it is probably easier to navigate documents of this length and complexity electronically than in hard copy. Not least, of course, it affords people the opportunity to focus on a local area or to do things such as word searches. I can confirm, however, that reasonable requests for hard copies of maps and section drawings will be met. These could be requested either from local authorities, which will be provided with hard copies for inspection, or directly from HS2 Ltd, which will provide A3 copies. It should further be noted that copies of all maps and sections will be available for inspection in both Houses. I hope that gives the right hon. Gentleman the assurance he was looking for.

If a deposit location would like documents in electronic format, but does not have the equipment to make them available to the community, HS2 Ltd has committed to providing that equipment at its own expense. This is a wholly sensible modernisation of Standing Order requirements, which were originally conceived in the 19th century, and is about making it easier for people to engage with the hybrid Bill process and therefore ensuring the most effective decision making by Parliament.

The second motion also relates to the environmental statement. It is vital that members of the public be made aware of these environmental effects and have an opportunity to comment. It is also important that the public's views are shared with Parliament before it makes a decision on the principle of the Bill. That is why our proposed changes to Standing Orders will incorporate a formal consultation period for the environmental statement between introduction and Second Reading of the hybrid Bill. Although this follows the precedent of the Crossrail Act 2008, by enshrining this consultation in Standing Orders, we will improve the transparency and certainty of the hybrid Bill procedure.

It should also be noted that the lack of a guaranteed consultation process has been raised in the courts. It is important that we are clear that the proceedings of the House should not be subject, as a consequence of that lack of clarity, to interference from the European Courts.

Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): I certainly approve of the electronic tabling, because it strikes horror into my heart to think that there are at least 50,000 pages to the environmental statement, and we will need some way of navigating it, but what assurances can my right hon. Friend give me that HS2 Ltd will comply exactly with the Standing Orders? Surely, he needs to examine the time scale he has put into these amended Standing Orders, because 56 days is not enough time to examine 50,000 pages, minimum, of an environmental statement. It is only eight weeks.

Mr Lansley: On my right hon. Friend's first point, these are the requirements of the Standing Orders in relation to hybrid Bills, and the promoters of a hybrid Bill, and participants in that process, will be required to comply with them; otherwise, the quality of consideration will be put at risk. They will have to behave in a way that is consistent with what the House and the examiners of the Bill require.

I will come directly to the second point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) made. The new Standing Order requires the appointment of an assessor to prepare a summary of the public's comments. The independence of the assessor will be assured, because they will be appointed by Parliament and will report directly to it. That summary will make it easier for Members to appreciate and represent the views of the public when debating the principle of the hybrid Bill.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham has just pointed out, the length of the consultation period is set in the Standing Order at 56 days. To give that some context, the equivalent consultation period for projects pursued under the Planning Act 2008 can be as short as 28 days. That legislation covers projects of national significance such as new nuclear power stations, which are not intrinsically unlike HS2, given the level of debate that they can create and the significance of their environmental impact.

Frank Dobson: I recognise that I am getting into obscurantist territory with this point. I understand that the examiner of the hybrid Bill will be an Officer of the House, and that the assessor will be appointed by that Officer of the House and not by the House itself, which has, after all, demonstrated this evening that it is party to this matter.

Mr Lansley: As far as I understand it, that is true. The examiner will appoint the assessor, and the assessor will report directly to Parliament. That appointment is not in the gift of the Government. The independence of the assessor is intrinsic to the process, and the role of the assessor is to summarise the views presented during the consultation. The assessor will use their technical expertise to present the environmental assessment issues in a form that Parliament can readily engage with. This is a parliamentary process; the assessor will be appointed by Parliament, not by the Government.

Mrs Gillan: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way again. This is an opportunity for us to probe and to find out exactly what this measure means. What remuneration will be paid to the assessor? Will they be remunerated by the House? Will there be any opportunity for Members to query, adjust, amend or request a revision of the report that the assessor puts forward to enable MPs better to understand the complexity of the environmental statement?

Mr Lansley: On my right hon. Friend's first point, I simply do not know what the remuneration arrangements are, but I will gladly write to her with that information. It is possible that the assessor will be paid by the Government, but as their appointment is not in the gift of the Government, I do not think that will impinge on their independence at all. As far as I am aware—I will certainly correct this if I am wrong—it will not be possible for anyone to have an impact on the assessor's

report. It will be the job of the appointed assessor to use their technical expertise to deliver the best possible representation of the public's views, as reported to the consultation, in order to enable the House and the hybrid Bill Committee to engage fully with the process. The report will be made available before Second Reading.

I was talking about the length of time being made available for the consultation period. It is worth noting that the consultation to which the new Standing Order relates will follow the consultation on the draft environmental statement that is currently taking place—it is running from 16 May to 11 July. So there will be two opportunities for the public to make their views on the environmental statement known. Taken together, that supports the view that 56 days is an appropriate period of consultation.

Mrs Gillan: I think there is a misunderstanding about the consultation on the draft environmental statement. That consultation did not have to be carried out, but it is being carried out by HS2 Ltd. The consultation on the environmental statement that will appear at the same time as the hybrid Bill has to be carried out by the Government, and not by HS2 Ltd. I do not know what weight will be given to the previous consultation; indeed, it does not actually have to be considered at all.

Mr Lansley: I think it is true to say that the draft consultation taking place now is not part of the formal processes, but that does not mean that the public will not have a significant opportunity to make their views known. Having the draft environmental statement as the subject of consultation now directly relates to my right hon. Friend's point—that 56 days, the eight-week consultation period, does not come in, as it were, in relation to an environmental statement that has not been prefigured by the consultation on the draft. In any case, if those responding to the draft consultation feel strongly about those issues, they should make their views known in the consultation required under the Standing Order.

For the sake of clarity, I was right that the Government are responsible for the remuneration of the assessor, but the amount of remuneration will be the product of a procurement process for the necessary expertise. I hope that is accurate and completes that thought. I hope that, notwithstanding the relative obscurity of these matters, the House will—[*Interruption.*] Does the right hon. Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Frank Dobson) want to intervene again?

Frank Dobson: Yes, I do, before the right hon. Gentleman sits down. It is not my intention to ask obscurantist questions, but it is my understanding that in the Appeal Court hearings—the Government won most cases and lost one—an undertaking was given, in the case that was lost, that the environmental assessment would look at all the alternatives to HS2, including different routes and also air, road and other alternatives. Will he confirm that that is the case?

Mr Lansley: I had better enter the same caveat as I have on one or two other occasions: if I find I am in any sense wrong, I will correct what I say. My understanding is that the environmental statement that is the subject of this Standing Order is an environmental statement relating to the route proposed in the hybrid Bill. It is not an

environmental statement that relates to a range of other options. But I will take advice, and if I am wrong I will correct that for the right hon. Gentleman.

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): Will the Leader of the House confirm that the particular matter with which we are dealing tonight refers only to the environmental statement, and if so, how will other matters be dealt with? Secondly, in view of what he has just said, if we are dealing with environmental matters that relate only to the particular Bill that contains the particular route, how will alternative representations about the route be dealt with?

Mr Lansley: My hon. Friend will have heard me just say that the Standing Order relates to the processes of the consultation on the environmental statement—it does not change the other processes affecting the hybrid Bill—so the rest of the Standing Orders relating to consideration of the hybrid Bill are, to that extent, unchanged. I will double check, but I think it is transparent that the environmental statement must of necessity relate to the hybrid Bill that is the subject of consideration by the hybrid Bill Committee. To what extent it needs, of necessity, to go beyond the precise considerations of the route, I do not know. [*Interruption.*] I am advised that the environmental statement will include reasonable alternatives considered to HS2, as required by the Standing Orders.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab) *rose*—

Mr Lansley: The shadow Leader of the House is going to help us in any case, but I gladly give way to her now.

Ms Eagle: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. A non-technical summary states:

“Strategic alternatives were those that did not involve high speed rail...Route-wide alternatives involved different layouts or operational characteristics for a high speed railway between London and the West Midlands”,

and it states, too, that “local alternatives” also need to be considered.

Mr Lansley: I am grateful to the hon. Lady. In any case, the new Standing Orders do not change the character of the environmental statement that is required. They simply make it plain that we are creating a transparent process whereby consultation must take place between the introduction of the Bill and Second Reading, and everyone must have an opportunity to see the assessment before Second Reading. In that respect, this is a clear improvement on the hybrid Bill process in respect of the prospective HS2 Bill.

I commend both motions to the House.

7.45 pm

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab): I thank the Leader of the House for his explanation of the changes in the Standing Orders for the purposes of this hybrid Bill. He was right to observe that hybrid Bills are rare. We have not had one since we embarked on the Bill that became the Crossrail Act 2008, eight years ago. He was also right to observe that some of the rules governing this procedure are out of date, and could do with a bit of modernisation. I accept that the motions seek to do just that for the purposes of this particular hybrid Bill and no others.

The changes in the Standing Orders are being made first in respect of the electronic deposit of information, and secondly in respect of the process for consulting on the environmental statement, which will form a vital part of consideration of the Bill when it finally appears. I have no objections in principle to either of the changes that the Leader of the House is suggesting, but I should like to probe him a bit about them.

We are told that, in the coming year, a hybrid Bill will be presented to Parliament which will grant the powers that will allow the HS2 scheme to begin. Will the Leader of the House be a little more forthcoming about when we are likely to see it appear, along with the final environmental statement? Will we see it during the current calendar year, or during the current parliamentary Session? Is the Leader of the House confident that, even if the Government are able to publish the Bill in the next year, it will be completed before the next general election? After all, this is a huge and complex undertaking which has generated a great deal of opposition. If it takes as long to produce this Bill as it took to produce the much smaller and less controversial Crossrail Bill, it would not be completed until December 2016 even if we embarked on it today. Given that the Leader of the House schedules House business, it would be interesting to hear from him when we are likely to see the Bill and the environmental statement.

The publication by the Secretary of State for Transport of a draft environmental statement and a design refinement consultation document in May was a welcome development which will assist the consultation process, and we have just made a decision on the initial stages of the High Speed Rail (Preparation) Bill itself, but we still have a long and complex way to go in the hybrid Bill procedure. It makes no sense to undertake a complex consultation procedure on a complex and controversial project such as HS2, only to discover that there are plenty of opportunities for legal action and for further uncertainty or delay because the consultation mechanisms used did not comply with best practice, or indeed—as the Leader of the House hinted—with the EU directive on environmental impact assessments. If the changes outlined by the Leader of the House mean that that risk has been mitigated, I agree that we should support them. Of course it is desirable in principle for those affected to be made aware of the position in a timely fashion, and to have a chance to comment before Parliament makes a decision.

The Leader of the House explained that the HS2 hybrid Bill would be accompanied by an environmental statement. He also revealed that he expected this to run to 50,000 pages. That is the equivalent of 33 copies of Tolstoy’s “War and Peace” rolled into one, although I am sure that it will be a more interesting read. The environmental statement accompanying the Crossrail Bill was only 2,700 pages long. As the Leader of the House noted, once a copy of the statement has been deposited with each of the authorities along the route, as dictated by the current Standing Order, the weight of the documents will be over a tonne, which is apparently the weight of 17 large trees. Opposition Members agree that it is sensible, in this particular case, to make provision for the electronic deposit of the environmental statement. Reassurances were needed, but the Leader of the House very properly supplied them during his speech. I was grateful to the Leader of the House for making it clear that if a deposit location wishes to have the documents

[*Ms Angela Eagle*]

in hard copy, they will be provided by HS2 Ltd, and that the key documents will also be made available in hard copy. I hope that that will provide suitable reassurance that there will be fair access to the documents.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Frank Dobson) has rightly highlighted that some key components of the environmental statement are not well-suited purely to online publication. Detailed diagrams and maps are often less accessible in online form, and I appreciate—as I hope my right hon. Friend does—the fact that the Leader of the House has been able to put on the record that those maps and large documents will be made available in all formats, including in hard copy if that is required. That will ensure that the maps are deposited in libraries and other public buildings along the route and are accessible, so people can check whether they will be affected.

It is also vital that the online publication of the environmental statement is accessible to those who wish to access it. Concerns have been raised in the past about information on both the HS2.org.uk and the data.gov.uk websites being hard to find, and difficult to navigate when located. When the statement is published, it should not be hidden on some obscure corner of the internet. I hope the Leader of the House agrees on that.

We welcome the announcement of a 56-day consultation on the environmental statement—although some speed-reading may be required, as the right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) has said. That is, however, a practical and sensible proposal, although I ask the Leader of the House to ensure that this consultation will not mean that the wider consultation on HS2 will be reduced. I would appreciate the Leader of the House's reassurance on that point.

While we support the proposals in relation to the HS2 hybrid Bill, we need to be cautious about this setting a precedent. While documents should always be published accessibly online, it is crucial that we still aim to publish and deposit hard copies for future, perhaps less complex, Bills.

7.52 pm

Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): I would like answers to all the questions the shadow Leader of the House has so rightly asked about these standing orders and the alterations. This is a particularly tortuous and complex process, and because it so tortuous and complex, it is neither accessible nor transparent to the stakeholders and the people who are affected by it. They must be able to understand what is required of them. I therefore ask the Leader of the House to consider how he is going to produce explanatory notes on this hybrid Bill process and these changes to standing orders, and make them available, particularly to those people who have been part of the consultations and the community forums up and down the line, but also to the environmental organisations, many of whom contain volunteers and others who are not familiar with our practices and procedures here, and who certainly have no idea of how to navigate their way around the hybrid Bill process.

I would like to know the date when the hybrid Bill and the environmental statement will be deposited, because it now appears that we are going to have

50,000-plus pages in this environmental statement, which amounts not so much to 17 large trees, but more to 17 large white elephants, to refer to the symbol that has been adopted by many of the anti-HS2 groups up and down the line. Making that date known will enable organisations throughout the country—many of which have very scarce resources or rely on voluntary contributions—to plan how to deal with this better. I am worried that moving to electronic tabling for something as large as this may cause technical problems. What checks will be made on the IT systems of local authorities up and down the line where these documents will be deposited, to establish that those systems can take these documents and people can navigate them with ease? It is all very well talking about making documents available electronically; when I was looking at the Department for Transport's business statement today on the No. 10 website, it was almost impossible to navigate or download it in a timely fashion. That business plan was not very long, but if that is the standard the Government set for the ease of navigating documents, it does not reflect well on their IT systems. We need to know that full checks have been made of those systems, and that they can take the documents in question.

I do not want to prolong the debate and I will not seek to divide the House on this issue—these are Standing Orders—but I would like two reassurances. First, if a significant number of the environmental organisations that will need to engage in this process ask for an extension to the 56-day deadline, I want the Leader of the House to undertake at least to listen to them and to consider an extension.

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): The shadow Leader of the House told us that the environmental statement for Crossrail extended to some 2,500 pages. This statement will extend to some 50,000 pages. Does my right hon. Friend really think that 56 days is a practical amount of time in which to examine that amount of material?

Mrs Gillan: No, and that is why I am asking the Leader of the House whether, after taking advice from organisations that need to examine the document in detail, he will consider extending the deadline, or whether it would be possible to change the Standing Orders to that end. A standard consultation period, as under the last Government, was deemed to be 12 weeks. The Government have concertinaed it and seem to be adopting an eight-week standard, which is not satisfactory when we are dealing with something as precious as an area of outstanding natural beauty such as the Chiltern hills. Many details will need to be examined once the statement is forthcoming, and I would like to know what the various possibilities are.

At a time when we are cutting budgets and expecting local authorities and other organisations to cut back in the interests of paying down the debt left to us by the last Labour Government, what funds will be available to our local authorities to maintain and make available these documents through electronic means? There may have to be extra IT maintenance and people on duty. I need to be able to reassure my own local authorities that they will not be out of pocket as a result of something imposed on them by central Government.

I shall leave it there and look forward to hearing the Leader of the House's response.

7.58 pm

Mr Lansley: I am grateful to the shadow Leader of the House, the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle), and to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) for their contributions to this short debate.

In answer to the hon. Lady's question, the Government intend to introduce the Bill by the end of this year. *[Interruption.]* My apologies—yes, the calendar year. On the question of further consideration and the progress of legislation, particularly where a hybrid Bill is concerned, these are matters for the House, but we intend to secure Royal Assent by the end of this Parliament.

I apologise for not clarifying earlier that the change to Standing Orders applies to all hybrid Bills, so it would apply to any future one in the same way. That is good because, of course, one issue we want to set out is that there is transparent clarity about the process, and we are entirely consistent with any European requirements in relation to consultation on the environmental statement. The motion on electronic deposit relates to this Bill and if such a thing were required in relation to a future Bill, a further motion would be required in order to make that permissive power available.

As for what my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham said, I will not reiterate the points I made about the length of consultation and the fact of the availability of the draft environmental statement for consultation now, in addition to the Standing Order requirements for a consultation later on. Taken together, when we make the comparison with the consultations required for other major projects under planning legislation, we see that this is an entirely appropriate period of consultation. She makes a good point about ensuring that those engaging with this process can do so effectively. As was the case with Crossrail, hybrid Bill information papers will outline the process. I know, as the House authorities will know very well, that the House will provide advice on petitionings.

My right hon. Friend also asked me about the costs for local authorities. We have made it clear that HS2 Ltd will cover IT costs for local authorities. The requirement on public availability is a long-standing one that this amendment does not change. The new Standing Orders before the House do not change that requirement in relation to local authorities, but, as I say, it has been clear throughout that the IT costs for local authorities will be covered by HS2 Ltd. I hope that that helps to clarify a few of the points raised in the debate, and I continue to commend the motions to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

ELECTRONIC DEPOSIT OF DOCUMENTS (HIGH SPEED 2)

Motion made and Question put forthwith (Order of 24 June),

That, in respect of any bill relating to High Speed 2 that is read the first time in Session 2013-14 and to which the standing orders relating to private business are found by the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills to apply, it shall be sufficient compliance with:

(a) any requirement under those standing orders for a document to be deposited or delivered at, or sent to, an office of a government department, body or person if it is deposited or delivered at, sent to or otherwise made accessible at that office in electronic form;

(b) any requirement under those standing orders for a document to be deposited with an officer if it is deposited with or delivered, sent or otherwise made accessible to that officer in electronic form;

(c) any requirement under those standing orders for a document to be made available for inspection at a prescribed office, or to permit a document to be inspected, if it is made available for inspection at that office, or is permitted to be inspected, in electronic form;

(d) the requirement under Standing Order 27(4) or 36(3) relating to private business to permit a person to make copies of a document or extracts from it, if there is provided to that person, on request and within a reasonable time, copies of so much of it as the person may reasonably require and such copies may, if the person so agrees, be provided in electronic form;

(e) the requirement under Standing Order 27(4) relating to private business for a memorial to be made on every document deposited under that Standing Order, if the memorial is made on a separate document;

(f) any requirement under Standing Order 4A(1), 27A(6) or 224A(8) relating to private business to make a document available for sale at prescribed offices, if it is made available for sale at an office in London.

That this Order shall not affect any requirement under those standing orders to deposit any document at, or deliver any document to, the Private Bill Office or the Vote Office.

That any reference in those standing orders to a document which is deposited, lodged, delivered or sent under those standing orders includes a reference to a document which is so deposited, delivered or sent in electronic form.

That any reference to a document in this order includes a reference to any bill, plan, section, book of reference, ordnance map, environmental or other statement or estimate.—(*Mr Syms.*)

Question agreed to.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

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

CRIMINAL LAW, NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 (Extension of duration of non-jury trial provisions) Order 2013, which was laid before this House on 8 May, be approved.—(*Mr Syms.*)

Question agreed to.

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

POLICE, NORTHERN IRELAND

That the Justice and Security (Northern Ireland) Act 2007 (Code of Practice) Order 2013 (S.I., 2013, No. 1128), dated 14 May 2013, a copy of which was laid before this House on 14 May, be approved.—(*Mr Syms.*)

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Skateboarding Southbank

8.2 pm

Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): I have great pleasure in delivering to Parliament and presenting a petition of 40,000 signatures in support of retaining the skateboarding area in the Southbank Centre in my constituency, just

[Kate Hoey]

across the river. A number of groups have been collecting signatures, and the Save Southbank Skate Park group presented this petition to me and the right hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Simon Hughes) last week. Since then, there has been another petition of 20,000 signatures, which I have not yet been able to get together to present.

This is a culturally and historically important area of the south bank. The Southbank Centre has some very new plans, which everybody wants to see happening, except that it has not engaged with and involved the skateboarders, and it wants them to move to an area which would not be one that they had built up themselves. The centre wants to have its restaurants where the skateboarders are, and many people feel that the restaurants could be where it wants to take the skateboarders. Whatever the situation is, my petition is very clear: some 40,000 people, and many more, want to retain skateboarding in the south bank. May I also say that it is good to see the Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr Vaizey), who has responsibility for the arts, in his place.

The petition states:

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Humble Petition of users and fans of the Undercroft skateboard area,

Sheweth,

That it has been the home to British skaters and riders for over 40 years but is threatened by development.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House take all steps to urge the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to ensure that the Southbank Centre preserves this facility in its development plans.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[P001189]

Lindisfarne Gospels

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Nicky Morgan.)

8.4 pm

Roberta Blackman-Woods (City of Durham) (Lab): I thank Mr Speaker for granting this debate, which is particularly time-sensitive. It is good to be able to have the debate in advance of the Lindisfarne Gospels' return to Durham.

Let me start by explaining why there is so much excitement in the north-east and Durham, where the Gospels are to be exhibited, about the temporary return of the Lindisfarne Gospels to our region. The book is simply a stunning masterpiece of early mediaeval European book painting and the beautifully illustrated manuscript represents the pinnacle of achievement of Anglo-Saxon Northumbrian art at the end of the seventh century.

The Gospels book was made on the holy island of Lindisfarne and was probably written between St Cuthbert's death in 687 AD and the death of Eadfrith, Bishop of Lindisfarne, who was identified as the artist and scribe of the book by Aldred, the provost of the monastic community of St Cuthbert at Chester-le-Street. A recent study suggested a date for the Gospels of between 710 and 720 AD.

The making of the book required time, dedication and the invention of new tools and materials. With no modern technology at his disposal, Eadfrith is credited with inventing some of his own gadgets to help. Professor Michelle Brown, an expert in mediaeval manuscript studies at the University of London's schools of advanced study, stated that Eadfrith

“was a technical innovator who invented the pencil and the light box in order to achieve his complex artistic and social vision”.

The book is the oldest surviving translation of the gospels into the English language, but it is worth recognising that the Lindisfarne Gospels' intricate and symbolic artwork helped convey its message to those who could not read. The Gospels were created at a time of great change when Britain was a land of many cultures that were coming together into an emerging national identity. The manuscript is inspired by all the different peoples who lived in these islands at the time: Britons, Picts, Celts and Anglo-Saxons, along with those of Mediterranean and middle-eastern cultures.

Another extraordinary aspect of the Gospels is that unlike most early mediaeval books this one has come to us in almost perfect condition. That is, frankly, remarkable, considering that it was written about 1,300 years ago and the eventful journey it has been on ever since.

The first Viking raid on Britain struck Lindisfarne in 793 AD. After nearly 100 years of continuing raids, the monastic community abandoned Lindisfarne in 875, taking with them the body of St Cuthbert, the Gospels and other important relics. The Lindisfarne community is believed to have travelled around for seven years before eventually settling at the priory at Chester-le-Street, where they stayed until 995. They then moved to Durham priory with the relics of St Cuthbert, after the dead saint revealed to one of the monks where he wanted his new resting place to be.

In 1069, the Lindisfarne Gospels spent a short time back at Lindisfarne to escape the devastating raid on the north by William the Conqueror. The book was

then returned to Durham. In 1104, St Cuthbert's body and other monastic treasures from Lindisfarne were moved to the splendid new cathedral at Durham. However, in 1536 the dissolution of the monasteries was ordered by Henry VIII. The priories of Lindisfarne and Durham were broken up and the Gospels were believed to have been seized by the King's commissioners.

By the early 17th century, the Lindisfarne Gospels were owned by Sir Robert Cotton. Cotton's heirs presented the book to the nation and it became part of the founding collections of the British Museum in 1753. In 1973, the Lindisfarne Gospels became part of the British Library, their current permanent resting place.

This is only the fifth time the Gospels have been loaned since coming into the hands of the British Museum and later the British Library. Except for a museum evacuation during world war two, all the loans were for major library and museum tours undertaken within the past 50 years: at the Royal Academy in 1961, in Durham cathedral in 1987, and at the Laing art gallery in Newcastle in 1996 and 2000. It took nearly two years of negotiations, planning, organisation and effort to bring the Gospels to the region on the last two visits. On the first day of the exhibition, almost 3,000 people came along to see the Gospels, which demonstrates huge interest from the region.

What has happened since the last visit? A condition survey by the British Library in 2004 suggested that it might be difficult to move the Gospels again, but the findings of the survey were far from conclusive. There followed a fervent campaign, led first by the Northumbrian Association—I take the opportunity to thank the late John Danby for his work; he is much missed—and by my hon. Friends the former Member for Houghton and Washington East, Fraser Kemp, Baroness Quin, the former Member for Stockton South, Dari Taylor, my hon. Friends the current Members for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson) and for North Durham (Mr Jones), and me.

I first raised the question of what was to happen to the Gospels when I was elected in 2005 and put down an early-day motion on the subject. I then wrote to key agencies, including the British Library, Durham cathedral and museum services. We constantly badgered the British Library to consider a permanent move for the Gospels to the north-east, and if that was not possible we called for a temporary move. We also lobbied our Government on the matter, and the then culture Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Tottenham (Mr Lammy), intervened on our behalf. It was difficult, but that lobbying persuaded the British Library to commission an independent expert review into the future of the Gospels in 2006. In 2009, the panel reported back, recommending that, with great care, the books could be loaned for three months every seven years.

Mrs Mary Glindon (North Tyneside) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this important debate. She will be aware that the fabulous collection of Roman gold and silver known as the Backworth hoard is in the north-east for the first time in 200 years, on loan from the British Museum. Does she agree that such exhibitions and the fact that the Lindisfarne Gospels will be allowed to come to us every seven years shows that our region has the skills, expertise and knowledge to host our most treasured national items?

Roberta Blackman-Woods: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I will talk about what skills the region has to support the Gospels.

The review set out the conditions and criteria that would need to be met for the Gospels to be loaned out, to preserve the quality and condition of the book. It was agreed in 2009 by the British Library and the Association of North East Councils that Durham would be the first place the Gospels visited under the new arrangements. It took some time and forbearance, but we are all pleased that all the partners exhibiting the Gospels in the north-east for three months from this weekend, especially Durham university and Durham cathedral, managed to persuade the British Library that suitable conditions in the north-east could be created to house the Gospels adequately.

The exhibition has been made possible by the close partnership working between the British Library, Durham cathedral, Durham county council and Durham university, as well as the long-standing and continued support from parliamentarians. Together with the Lindisfarne Gospels, the British Library is lending five other precious manuscripts for the exhibition, including the 7th century St Cuthbert Gospel. These manuscripts and artefacts have not been seen together since the Reformation, and they will be exhibited in the newly refurbished Wolfson gallery in the Palace Green library of the University of Durham. The university is to be commended for the simply amazing space it has created to show the Gospels.

The British Library has worked closely with the university and the cathedral to ensure that the Palace Green library meets the requirements for lending the Lindisfarne Gospels for exhibition display, and that that complies with the report by the panel of independent experts. The exhibition is the centrepiece of the festival around the Lindisfarne Gospels, and we hope that it will attract many people to the history and heritage of the region, as well as the Gospels themselves. To that end, I am grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for providing a grant of £487,000 to Durham university.

Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing the debate, and may I register on behalf of Government Members the total support of the whole House for the campaign that she and many others have conducted for many years? Does she agree that this is a good example of the north-east working together for something that we all treasure and that there is no finer tourism opportunity this summer?

Roberta Blackman-Woods: I agree entirely, and it is excellent that we have been able to achieve cross-party support to bring the Gospels back to the region on temporary loan. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention.

I thank the Heritage Lottery Fund for its grant, which has helped the university to run an outreach project alongside the exhibition. The manuscript is one of the most important books in the British Library's collection, but it is also a treasure of world culture, and it is a symbol of our region's proud past and the cultural legacy that it has created for the nation. That was recognised by the Prime Minister, who when visiting Northern Ireland in 2011 described the Lindisfarne Gospels as "a British national treasure".

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the hon. Lady for bringing this important matter to the House for consideration. She, the Prime Minister, many others in the House and I have called the Gospels a national treasure because they are one of the most important pieces of informative history in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Does she agree that such is the historical importance of the Lindisfarne Gospels and the interest that they create across the whole of the United Kingdom that opportunities should be given to all regions, including to Northern Ireland, to see them?

Roberta Blackman-Woods: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. I agree: it would be wonderful for the people of Northern Ireland to have the opportunity to see the Lindisfarne Gospels and other important historical texts in the region too.

Bearing in mind the Prime Minister's comments, I should be grateful if the Minister said whether his Department will continue to support the loan of the Gospels to the north-east region on a regular basis, and whether the Government will encourage the Heritage Lottery Fund to give access funding to the Gospels exhibition so that not only schools but everyone attending the exhibition can view the Gospels free of charge, just as tourists and others can do in the British Library. I believe that that is particularly important, given that the north-east is the country's poorest region. Having to pay a charge to see the Gospels does not seem to be entirely fair. It is fantastic, however, that the British Library has agreed to lend the Lindisfarne Gospels to Durham this summer so that they can be displayed in the north-east and many people in the region and elsewhere will have an opportunity to see them.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): I apologise for being late for the debate. As my hon. Friend has no doubt mentioned, the last time that the Gospels came to the north-east they came to the Laing art gallery in Newcastle. Does she agree that enthusiasm for their return and the campaign waged by many Members for that return shows the value that the north-east places not only our cultural heritage but on the arts more broadly?

Roberta Blackman-Woods: Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right.

8.19 pm

Ian Lavery (Wansbeck) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham (Roberta Blackman-Woods) on bringing this important debate to the Floor of the House. Like my hon. Friend, I am delighted to see the return of the Lindisfarne Gospels nearly to their rightful home. I say "nearly" tongue in cheek, because really the Gospels belong to the beautiful island, Holy island, in Northumberland.

The Gospels were made on the holy island of Lindisfarne in Northumbria. The book was probably written at some time between St Cuthbert's death in 687 and the death in 721 of Eadfrith, bishop of Lindisfarne, who was identified as the artist and the scribe of the book. The Gospels' last visit, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah) correctly pointed out, was a tremendous success. It was in 2000,

and on the first day the Gospels attracted almost 3,000 people, which was fantastic. I hope that that will be repeated or even surpassed when the Gospels come to Durham later this year.

I feel the need to raise a couple of points with regard to artefacts including the Gospels, their accessibility to people throughout the country, and fairness. The first point was touched on by my hon. Friend the Member for City of Durham when she said how difficult it was to arrange even a temporary loan of the Gospels. For many years the British Library flatly refused to allow any temporary loan of such a valuable asset to the north-east. That upset many people in our region. The people in the north-east see the Gospels as theirs and were offended by the attitude of the British Library.

Given that these treasures belong to the people of the whole country, there should be a much greater requirement on the national museums to loan artefacts such as the Gospels to regions such as the north-east. Museums do loan some artefacts and materials, but they are generally stuff, as they see it, of lesser importance. They make people jump through hoops and over hurdles in order to secure the loan of artefacts such as the gospels, even on a temporary basis. The British Library should not expect people to travel from the likes of the north-east to London to see these artefacts. It should bear in mind the distance and the cost, and the priority of people who want to see them. We have world-class museums in the north-east region, and facilities such as Woodhorn museum in my constituency—a first-class museum that is perfectly capable of housing artefacts such as the Gospels.

My second point is a simple one. Why are the national museums in London? There are a few outposts, such as York, but generally the national museums are in London. Again, I emphasise that they are inaccessible to many of the people whom I represent and many in my region. We should be looking at outposts up and down the country. The comprehensive spending review today could spell dangerous times and possibly even the end for many museums throughout the country. Rather than seeking funds to extend or refurbish the London sites, why do the national museums not create new outposts, possibly even within existing museums, to ensure that people across the nation can see the treasures that they want to see, and experience what other people are experiencing? Why cannot the British Library, for example, establish a base in Northumberland or Durham where items such as the Gospels could be displayed without leaving the Library's care?

We are delighted to celebrate the Gospels' return to the north-east and also the exhibition that accompanies them, which has provided inspiration for a number of local groups to engage with their cultural heritage. Without being too negative, I simply say that we should make sure that these cultural artefacts are accessible to people up and down the country, regardless of how much they have in their back pocket.

8.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Mr Edward Vaizey): It is a pleasure to respond to the debate, which was secured by the hon. Member for City of Durham (Roberta Blackman-Woods) and has been so ably contributed to by the hon. Member

for Wansbeck (Ian Lavery) and other Members who intervened. The debate is about the best way to display the Lindisfarne Gospels and the work that has gone into ensuring that they are displayed regularly in the north-east.

Let me begin by taking up the challenge set out by the hon. Member for Wansbeck on the need for our national museums to work more closely with organisations and museums outside London. Having spent this morning debating the future of the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester, which is part of the Science Museum Group, and having spent most of last week debating the future of the National Media Museum in Bradford, which is also part of the Science Museum Group, I can only say that I wholly concur with the sentiments he expressed. We need to do much more with our national museums to ensure that the regions are not seen as somehow second class, that national museums, wherever they are located, are on an equal footing with those in London, and that the quality and expertise that exist in national museums outside London and our major regional museums are as good as any to be found in London.

I certainly hear the hon. Gentleman's point about having to jump through hoops and hope that we can continue to encourage and work with our national museums to share much more of the national collections around the country, because they are national collections and deserve to be seen by everyone across the United Kingdom. His point was well made. I think that the north-east—I might be inviting an intervention on this point—is enjoying a bit of a renaissance. For example, I was delighted by the recent decision to save the Zurbarán paintings and by the moves to turn the bishop's palace in Bishop Auckland into a major cultural destination site.

Roberta Blackman-Woods: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Vaizey: I knew that would prompt an intervention.

Roberta Blackman-Woods: In praising the north-east and the wonderful facilities we have for exhibiting and conserving documents such as the Lindisfarne Gospels, it was remiss of me not to invite the Minister to visit Durham and see the exhibition himself.

Mr Vaizey: In preparing for the debate, the thought did occur to me: "How on earth can I resist if an invitation is made?" As someone who occasionally spends his summer holidays in Newcastle, I would be only too happy to visit the Gospels displayed in Durham cathedral and also to go to Lindisfarne, with a suitable escort—the hon. Member for Wansbeck clearly thinks that if he keeps his head down he will not have to come with me.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for City of Durham for her campaigning. She acknowledged in her remarks the work done by the noble Baroness Quin when she was a Member of this House. I was delighted to hear that she is pleased with the current arrangements, but that does not mean that she will not continue to push for better arrangements from her perspective. It is important to stress that the British Library operates at arm's length from the Government, but as the hon. Lady indicated, it is not unheard of for Arts Ministers

occasionally to engage in what today is known as the nudge agenda in order to encourage our national institutions to do the right thing.

I could wax lyrical in the time remaining about the importance of the Lindisfarne Gospels. They are one of the world's great treasures. They help us interpret Britain in a time of change. They are known the world over. Indeed, I was speaking only this afternoon with a friend visiting from New Jersey who is a great fan of the Gospels. It is worth remembering that in this age of digital technology, we have the chance to share the beauty of the Lindisfarne Gospels with not just the United Kingdom but the whole world, particularly through the British Library's "turning pages" technology.

Mrs Glindon *rose*—

Mr Vaizey: I do not know whether it is the mention of New Jersey or technology that has prompted the hon. Lady's intervention; I shall wait and see.

Mrs Glindon: My intervention is about the Minister's mention of sharing the Lindisfarne Gospels the world over. Given that they have such massive heritage importance to the north-east and the world, is it not a shame that people will be charged to see them when they are on display in the north-east?

Mr Vaizey: I note the hon. Lady's point, but I am delighted that schoolchildren will get the opportunity to see the Lindisfarne Gospels for free and that the Government have maintained their policy of free access to the national museums. It may be difficult at this stage to allow free access to the Gospels, but given that we are now on a seven-year cycle, perhaps my successor could look at the issue in 2020.

The key point about the seven-year cycle is that the Lindisfarne Gospels are part of the national collection and of international significance. As the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) said, many other parts of the United Kingdom would welcome the opportunity to see them. The British Library should maintain ownership and curatorial control of the gospels, so that other parts of the country may see them in future.

As the hon. Member for City of Durham pointed out, we have made great progress. Since the Lindisfarne Gospels came into the national collection in 1753, they have been removed only five times. They were evacuated during world war two and subsequently moved as far as the Royal Academy for display. The three other times since then have also been when they have been displayed—once in Durham and twice in the Laing art gallery in Newcastle. Now, of course, they are going back to Durham.

The page openings that will be on display in Durham are the same that would have been on display had the gospels been exhibited in the British Library in London. Different generations of people from across the north-east region will be able to appreciate the artistry, craftsmanship and beauty of these unique national treasures.

As the hon. Lady pointed out, this is the first time in about 400 years that the key relics from St Cuthbert's grave, including St Cuthbert's Gospel, St Cuthbert's cross, St Cuthbert's travelling altar and the Durham Gospels, will be displayed together. They will be in place for three months. I am delighted that the Heritage

[Mr Vaizey]

Lottery Fund has found almost half a million pounds to enable the display to take place. I have absolutely no doubt that these extraordinary treasures will attract tens of thousands of people from the north-east and around the world. I look forward to making the trip up to the north-east myself.

The hon. Lady gave a detailed exposition of the journey of the Lindisfarne Gospels. It is worth recording

in this Chamber that in the early 17th century they were held in stewardship by a parliamentary Clerk. How things have changed—in the 17th century, a parliamentary Clerk held the beautiful artefacts that are the Lindisfarne Gospels, while tonight the parliamentary Clerk is holding a petition to save the skateboard in the south bank.

Question put and agreed to.

8.34 pm

House adjourned.

Deferred Division

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING

That the draft Town and Country Planning (Fees for Applications, Deemed Applications, Requests and Site Visits) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which were laid before this House on 20 May, be approved.

The House divided: Ayes 281, Noes 185.

Division No. 34]

AYES

Aldous, Peter	Dinenage, Caroline	Hollingbery, George	Ottaway, Richard
Amess, Mr David	Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Hopkins, Kris	Paice, rh Sir James
Andrew, Stuart	Doyle-Price, Jackie	Horwood, Martin	Parish, Neil
Arbuthnot, rh Mr James	Duddridge, James	Howarth, Sir Gerald	Patel, Priti
Baker, Steve	Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain	Hughes, rh Simon	Penning, Mike
Baldry, Sir Tony	Dunne, Mr Philip	Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy	Penrose, John
Baldwin, Harriett	Ellis, Michael	Hunter, Mark	Percy, Andrew
Barclay, Stephen	Ellison, Jane	Huppert, Dr Julian	Phillips, Stephen
Baron, Mr John	Ellwood, Mr Tobias	Hurd, Mr Nick	Pickles, rh Mr Eric
Barwell, Gavin	Elphicke, Charlie	James, Margot	Pincher, Christopher
Bebb, Guto	Eustice, George	Javid, Sajid	Prisk, Mr Mark
Bellingham, Mr Henry	Evans, Graham	Jenkin, Mr Bernard	Pritchard, Mark
Benyon, Richard	Evennett, Mr David	Johnson, Joseph	Pugh, John
Berry, Jake	Fabricant, Michael	Jones, Andrew	Raab, Mr Dominic
Bingham, Andrew	Fallon, rh Michael	Jones, rh Mr David	Reckless, Mark
Binley, Mr Brian	Farron, Tim	Jones, Mr Marcus	Redwood, rh Mr John
Birtwistle, Gordon	Field, Mark	Kawczynski, Daniel	Rees-Mogg, Jacob
Blunt, Mr Crispin	Foster, rh Mr Don	Kelly, Chris	Reevell, Simon
Boles, Nick	Freer, Mike	Kirby, Simon	Reid, Mr Alan
Bradley, Karen	Fuller, Richard	Knight, rh Mr Greg	Rifkind, rh Sir Malcolm
Brady, Mr Graham	Garnier, Sir Edward	Kwarteng, Kwasi	Robathan, rh Mr Andrew
Brake, rh Tom	Garnier, Mark	Lamb, Norman	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Bray, Angie	Gauke, Mr David	Lancaster, Mark	Rogerson, Dan
Brazier, Mr Julian	George, Andrew	Lansley, rh Mr Andrew	Rosindell, Andrew
Bridgen, Andrew	Gibb, Mr Nick	Latham, Pauline	Rudd, Amber
Brine, Steve	Gilbert, Stephen	Laws, rh Mr David	Ruffley, Mr David
Brokenshire, James	Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl	Leadsom, Andrea	Russell, Sir Bob
Brooke, Annette	Glen, John	Lee, Jessica	Rutley, David
Bruce, Fiona	Goodwill, Mr Robert	Lee, Dr Phillip	Sanders, Mr Adrian
Buckland, Mr Robert	Gove, rh Michael	Leech, Mr John	Sandys, Laura
Burley, Mr Aidan	Graham, Richard	Lefroy, Jeremy	Scott, Mr Lee
Burns, Conor	Grant, Mrs Helen	Leslie, Charlotte	Selous, Andrew
Burns, rh Mr Simon	Gray, Mr James	Letwin, rh Mr Oliver	Shapps, rh Grant
Burrowes, Mr David	Grayling, rh Chris	Lewis, Dr Julian	Sharma, Alok
Burstow, rh Paul	Green, rh Damian	Lilley, rh Mr Peter	Shelbrooke, Alec
Burt, Alistair	Greening, rh Justine	Lloyd, Stephen	Shepherd, Sir Richard
Burt, Lorely	Grieve, rh Mr Dominic	Loughton, Tim	Skidmore, Chris
Bytes, Dan	Griffiths, Andrew	Luff, Peter	Smith, Henry
Cable, rh Vince	Gummer, Ben	Lumley, Karen	Smith, Julian
Cairns, Alun	Gyimah, Mr Sam	Macleod, Mary	Smith, Sir Robert
Cameron, rh Mr David	Halfon, Robert	Maude, rh Mr Francis	Soubry, Anna
Campbell, rh Sir Menzies	Hames, Duncan	May, rh Mrs Theresa	Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Hammond, rh Mr Philip	Maynard, Paul	Spencer, Mr Mark
Carmichael, Neil	Hammond, Stephen	McCartney, Jason	Stanley, rh Sir John
Carswell, Mr Douglas	Hancock, Matthew	McCartney, Karl	Stephenson, Andrew
Cash, Mr William	Hands, Greg	McIntosh, Miss Anne	Stevenson, John
Chishti, Rehman	Harrington, Richard	McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick	Stewart, Bob
Clegg, rh Mr Nick	Harris, Rebecca	McVey, Esther	Stewart, Iain
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Hart, Simon	Menzies, Mark	Streeter, Mr Gary
Coffey, Dr Thérèse	Harvey, Sir Nick	Metcalfe, Stephen	Stride, Mel
Collins, Damian	Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan	Miller, rh Maria	Stuart, Mr Graham
Colville, Oliver	Heald, Oliver	Mills, Nigel	Stunell, rh Sir Andrew
Cox, Mr Geoffrey	Heath, Mr David	Milton, Anne	Sturdy, Julian
Crabb, Stephen	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew	Swales, Ian
Crouch, Tracey	Hemming, John	Moore, rh Michael	Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
Davey, rh Mr Edward	Henderson, Gordon	Mordaunt, Penny	Swinson, Jo
Davies, Glyn	Hendry, Charles	Morgan, Nicky	Syms, Mr Robert
Davis, rh Mr David	Herbert, rh Nick	Morris, Anne Marie	Tapsell, rh Sir Peter
de Bois, Nick	Hinds, Damian	Morris, James	Teather, Sarah
		Mosley, Stephen	Thornton, Mike
		Mulholland, Greg	Thurso, John
		Munt, Tessa	Timpson, Mr Edward
		Murray, Sheryll	Tomlinson, Justin
		Newmark, Mr Brooks	Tredinnick, David
		Newton, Sarah	Turner, Mr Andrew
		Nokes, Caroline	Tyrie, Mr Andrew
		Norman, Jesse	Uppal, Paul
		Nuttall, Mr David	Vaizey, Mr Edward
		O'Brien, rh Mr Stephen	Vara, Mr Shailesh
		Offord, Dr Matthew	Vickers, Martin
		Ollerenshaw, Eric	Walker, Mr Robin
		Opperman, Guy	Wallace, Mr Ben

Ward, Mr David
Weatherley, Mike
Webb, Steve
Wharton, James
Wheeler, Heather
White, Chris
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Willetts, rh Mr David

Williams, Mr Mark
Williams, Roger
Williamson, Gavin
Willott, Jenny
Wilson, Mr Rob
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Wright, Simon
Young, rh Sir George
Zahawi, Nadhim

Havard, Mr Dai
Healey, rh John
Hermon, Lady
Hillier, Meg
Hilling, Julie
Hodge, rh Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hopkins, Kelvin
Howarth, rh Mr George
Irranca-Davies, Huw
James, Mrs Sián C.
Jamieson, Cathy
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Alan
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Graham
Jones, Helen
Jones, Susan Elan
Jowell, rh Dame Tessa
Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, rh Sadiq
Lazarowicz, Mark
Leslie, Chris
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Long, Naomi
Lucas, Caroline
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Mann, John
Marsden, Mr Gordon
McCabe, Steve
McCann, Mr Michael
McClymont, Gregg
McDonagh, Siobhain
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McGovern, Jim
McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
McKechin, Ann
McKenzie, Mr Iain
McKinnell, Catherine
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Miller, Andrew
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Morden, Jessica
Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
Morris, Grahame M.
(*Easington*)

Munn, Meg
Murphy, rh Paul
Murray, Ian
Nash, Pamela
O'Donnell, Fiona
Onwurah, Chi
Owen, Albert
Paisley, Ian
Pearce, Teresa
Perkins, Toby
Phillipson, Bridget
Pound, Stephen
Reynolds, Jonathan
Robertson, John
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rotheram, Steve
Roy, Mr Frank
Roy, Lindsay
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, rh Dame Joan
Sarwar, Anas
Sawford, Andy
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Simpson, David
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Mr Andy
Smith, Nick
Smith, Owen
Spellar, rh Mr John
Stringer, Graham
Stuart, Ms Gisela
Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
Tami, Mark
Timms, rh Stephen
Turner, Karl
Twigg, Derek
Twigg, Stephen
Umunna, Mr Chuka
Vaz, Valerie
Walley, Joan
Watts, Mr Dave
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Williamson, Chris
Wilson, Phil
Winnick, Mr David
Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
Wright, David
Wright, Mr Iain

NOES

Abrahams, Debbie
Alexander, Heidi
Anderson, Mr David
Ashworth, Jonathan
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bain, Mr William
Banks, Gordon
Barron, rh Mr Kevin
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begg, Dame Anne
Benn, rh Hilary
Berger, Luciana
Betts, Mr Clive
Blackman-Woods, Roberta
Blenkinsop, Tom
Blomfield, Paul
Blunkett, rh Mr David
Brennan, Kevin
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Brown, Mr Russell
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burnham, rh Andy
Campbell, Mr Alan
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Caton, Martin
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Jenny
Clark, Katy
Clarke, rh Mr Tom
Coaker, Vernon
Coffey, Ann
Cooper, Rosie
Corbyn, Jeremy
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Cryer, John
Cunningham, Alex

Cunningham, Mr Jim
Cunningham, Sir Tony
Dakin, Nic
Danczuk, Simon
Darling, rh Mr Alistair
David, Wayne
Davidson, Mr Ian
Davies, Geraint
De Piero, Gloria
Denham, rh Mr John
Docherty, Thomas
Donohoe, Mr Brian H.
Doran, Mr Frank
Doyle, Gemma
Dromey, Jack
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Engel, Natascha
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Flello, Robert
Flint, rh Caroline
Francis, Dr Hywel
Gapes, Mike
Glass, Pat
Goggins, rh Paul
Goodman, Helen
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lilian
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Hain, rh Mr Peter
Hamilton, Mr David
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanson, rh Mr David
Harris, Mr Tom

Johnson, Diana
Jones, Graham
Jones, Helen
Jones, Susan Elan
Jowell, rh Dame Tessa
Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, rh Sadiq
Lazarowicz, Mark
Leslie, Chris
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Long, Naomi
Lucas, Caroline
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Mann, John
Marsden, Mr Gordon
McCabe, Steve
McCann, Mr Michael
McClymont, Gregg
McDonagh, Siobhain
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McGovern, Jim
McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
McKechin, Ann
McKenzie, Mr Iain
McKinnell, Catherine
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Miller, Andrew
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Morden, Jessica
Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
Morris, Grahame M.
(*Easington*)

Question accordingly agreed to.

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 26 June 2013

[MR GRAHAM BRADY *in the Chair*]

Museum of Science and Industry

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the sitting be now adjourned.—(Karen Bradley.)

9.30 am

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Brady.

Let me set the context for this morning's debate. The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester—MOSI, as it is affectionately known—is part of the Science Museum Group, which consists of five museums: MOSI; the Science Museum in London; the National Media Museum in Bradford; the National Railway Museum in York; and the National Railway Museum in Shildon, County Durham. The SMG has an international reputation. Collectively, its museums attract more than 5 million visitors every year—mainly school groups, but also individuals and families. I certainly remember taking my daughters to MOSI when they were little. I also remember my mum taking me to the Science Museum in London; that really brought science to life for me, and it was one reason why I ended up taking biochemistry and physiology as my first degree.

MOSI became part of the SMG in 2012. It is feared that today's comprehensive spending review will announce a further 10% funding cut for the group, on top of the 25% real-terms cuts it has suffered over the last spending period. My hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell), who cannot be here today, because she is on maternity leave, has campaigned doggedly on this issue; she even visited MOSI last weekend with her family—they start young in the Powell household. She has determined that, in 2011-12, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport grant to MOSI fell to £3.9 million from £4.88 million the previous year.

The SMG felt that if that was to be the level of the funding cut for 2015-16, the only option would be to close one of its museums outside London and to scale back provision in London. The ratio of taxpayer to commercial funding in the SMG's existing funding model is approximately 60:40, and reversing—in fact, more than reversing—that relationship in such a relatively short period threatens the SMG's viability. I appreciate that, in the light of the high-profile campaign to save MOSI, which has support from, among others, fellow Oldhamer Professor Brian Cox, the Minister seemed to have a change of heart last week, and the threat to our regional museums has been lifted, but I would be grateful if he could confirm that in his closing remarks.

As past and current leaders of the museums said in a letter to a national newspaper last week, the SMG museums not only hold collections of international significance, but are vital to their host cities, providing cultural, educational and economic benefits across their regions. The economic importance of Manchester's science and innovation base cannot be overestimated, and it is confined not just to the city centre. Greater Manchester

is one of the fastest growing city regions in Europe, generating £47 billion of gross value added each year, and accounting for 40% of GVA for north-west England.

That recent growth has been driven by knowledge-intensive and high-growth firms. Manchester has been at the forefront of scientific development since the industrial revolution of the 19th century. Inventions such as Samuel Crompton's spinning wheel, which was exploited by Richard Arkwright, helped to establish Manchester as the centre of the global textile industry. More recently, a small-scale experimental machine—nicknamed "Baby"—created by Alan Turing was the first stored-program computer to run a program, and it was the forerunner of the modern computer.

There are many other famous Manchester scientists I could talk about, but I will mention just a few. They include John Dalton, who did work around atomic theory; Ernest Rutherford, the physicist; and Tom Kilburn and Freddie Williams, who commercialised Alan Turing's work. Of course, the first commercial railway in the world also ran from Manchester to Liverpool, and MOSI is located on the site of the old Liverpool Road station.

Today is no different. With our excellent universities and the development, for example, of a regional science centre for 16 to 18-year-olds, in my constituency, Manchester is once again being seen as a world-class centre for research—a status reinforced by the Nobel prize-winning discovery of graphene. The translation from research to the commercialisation of such discoveries is aided by Manchester's science parks. As we have seen with the development of industrial hubs, such as the digital sector in silicon valley, in California, the closer research and development are to industry, and the closer the links between them, the greater the opportunities for the growth of new, innovative knowledge-based industries.

Manchester has a world-class biotech cluster, and the digital, creative and information and communications technology sectors are growing faster than those anywhere else in the UK, outside London. The country's second-largest media hub is based at MediaCityUK.

Those are our new industries. From those developments, our 21st-century manufacturing base will grow. MOSI is part of that. It showcases the city region's economic and scientific strengths, as well as their development potential, promoting science, technology, engineering and mathematics and inspiring the next generation of scientists, engineers and mathematicians.

Hugh Bayley (York Central) (Lab): I strongly support the case my hon. Friend is making. Of course, I have an interest in this issue because the National Railway Museum is based in my constituency. She has, several times, made the important link between the museums and exciting the public—especially young people—about science. She has also mentioned the museums' contribution to a science-based economy. The National Railway Museum has established a rail academy, which is basically a training school in craft skills for the railways. Will she join me in asking the Department to provide enough money not only to keep the museums' doors open, but to ensure that the collections are properly conserved, added to and explained to the public?

Debbie Abrahams: I am grateful for that intervention, and I wholeheartedly support what my hon. Friend says. We must see our museums not as archaic, but as

[*Debbie Abrahams*]

part of inspiring the next generation, and we must see the potential that has for our economic growth and the regeneration of our regions.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate, which is important to all of us, including you, Mr Brady. Does she agree that museums also need to be resourced to carry out outreach into communities that might be less willing and able to come through the museums' doors? We would be very sorry if we lost the good work museums in Greater Manchester have done to reach out to disadvantaged communities.

Debbie Abrahams *rose*—

Mr Graham Brady (in the Chair): Order. Before the hon. Lady replies, I should clarify one point for the record, since my status as a Greater Manchester Member of Parliament has been mentioned. While I may have my own strong views outside the Chamber, my only view for these 90 minutes is that we should have orderly debate.

Debbie Abrahams: Thank you, Mr Brady. I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention, and I wholeheartedly agree with her. Outreach work is one of the things MOSI is doing. The potential threat to the work done in our schools is a real issue.

The museum hosts a range of high-profile events promoting science and innovation. They include the Manchester science festival, which, in 2012, included MOSI's first citizen science project—Turing's Sunflowers. The project drew participants from 13 countries and generated the largest ever data set investigating Alan Turing's hypothesis about the mathematical patterns in sunflowers—we will all know about that, and we will be discussing it over tea later. There is also the FutureEverything art exhibition and conference—a ground-breaking mix of cutting-edge digital technology, art and music. Those are the types of programmes MOSI puts on, and they are so accessible for such a wide range of groups.

MOSI also runs tailored programmes for schools and colleges, reaching 75,000 young people a year. Through MOSI's science, technology, engineering and mathematics network contract, high-quality, innovative projects are delivered to volunteers and schools. Over the past year, the STEM ambassador programme has placed ambassadors in 140 schools in Greater Manchester, working with 450 teachers and providing at least 100,000 instances of engagement with pupils in face-to-face activity.

Of course, we must not forget the under-six programme, which allows the children of my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central and others to explore and find out first hand about the magic of science.

I am looking forward to visiting the exhibition on the brain that is coming to MOSI next month.

Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making excellent points, and I congratulate her on securing the debate. In our debate last week, we focused on the point that the funding

threat to a much loved museum is a matter of huge concern to people in the region who work in science and engineering, such as the astrophysicist Tim O'Brien. He has said that he has no doubt that places such as the museum make our future scientists. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is vital to our future productivity, as well as providing excellent learning outside the classroom?

Debbie Abrahams: I totally agree with my hon. Friend. The activities and exhibitions can inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers, as I have mentioned.

We must not forget that MOSI also directly makes a key contribution to the region's economic prosperity. A recent study of its economic impact shows both direct and indirect impacts. It is one of the top two visitor attractions in Greater Manchester and generates a direct gross value added benefit of more than £7 million as an employer and through procurement, but there is also nearly £28 million in off-site expenditure, generating a GVA of £8 million. MOSI's development plans have the potential to increase those impacts.

As I have mentioned, after the 25% real funding cut in the last spending round, there is the prospect of a further 10% cut in the comprehensive spending review this afternoon, and the SMG has made it clear that if that happens a tipping point will have been reached and activity will have to be cut dramatically. That will include the closure of one of its regional museums. SMG has proposed a different approach. It has suggested, for example, moving the group from the responsibility of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and protecting the current funding level for both revenue and capital. That would provide a foundation on which the group would seek further major revenue and capital investment from the private sector. I should be grateful if the Minister commented on those proposals, as well as confirming that the CSR does not threaten MOSI or the free access to museums introduced by the Labour Government. To introduce such a threat would, as my hon. Friends have said, be myopic, to say the least, and bring into question the Government's commitment to fairness, growth and the regions.

I am immensely proud of Manchester's contribution to the world's science knowledge base. Through our entrepreneurs and industrialists, the applications of that knowledge have changed how we live. MOSI not only inspires future generations to become the new Geim, Novoselov, Turing or Dalton, but, as curator of those achievements, protects our cultural heritage and contributes to our cultural identity. That is something that we should honour and celebrate, not destroy.

9.43 am

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Mr Brady. I accept your strictures imposed earlier—you are certainly independent—but you are also a Greater Manchester MP, and it is always pleasing to see one of those reach the heights of chairing Westminster Hall debates.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (*Debbie Abrahams*) on securing this important debate. I first visited the then Greater Manchester Museum of Science and Industry in 1983, shortly after it moved to the historic Liverpool Road station site, in Castlefield. The museum visit was with

3rd Denton (Wilton street) cubs, and I remember being mesmerised as a 9-year-old boy by the big engines, the turbines, the wheels, the pistons, the smell of the smoke and the steam. It was really alluring and gave me a lasting interest in science, technology and innovation.

Over the years, the museum has grown, first encompassing the neighbouring Manchester Air and Space Museum and then gradually filling the whole of the Liverpool Road station site. For those who do not know, the Liverpool Road station is the terminus of the Liverpool and Manchester railway, which opened in 1830, and the museum buildings are therefore those of the world's first passenger railway station, here in Manchester—or rather there in Manchester, since we are in London, England's second city.

Other Manchester firsts housed in the museum include, as my hon. Friend said, Baby, the first programmable computer, which is so large it would probably fill this Chamber, but is about as powerful as a pocket calculator. Nevertheless, it is a Manchester first. There are also Rolls-Royce cars. Of course, it was in Manchester that Mr Rolls met Mr Royce and founded the company that continues to produce those cars. The huge emphasis on science is fitting, in the city where the atom was first split. The museum commemorates king cotton: Manchester is of course Cottonopolis, because cotton was the industry that the city's wealth was built on. However, it also recognises the downside to rapid, uncontrollable growth—particularly the cholera epidemics of the 19th century, with the campaign for clean water and proper sanitation. There is even an opportunity—I do not know whether you have done this, Mr Brady—to walk through a reconstruction of a Victorian sewer, with the smells included.

The Museum of Science and Industry, better known as MOSI to its regulars over the years, is a much loved local museum, and I have fond childhood memories of it. One of the best Christmas presents that I ever had was when I was 12. My grandad's friend was a friend of the museum, and he bought me membership, so I, too, became a friend of the museum. Back then, people had to pay to get into museums, but a perk with the friend membership badge was to get in free, so I spent many a good time there. More recently, I have enjoyed taking my children there. I think that such experiences are the reason that Mancunians would consider it a tragedy for the museum to close; that is why we breathed a collective sigh of relief when Ministers assured us, last week, that that would not happen.

Not only is MOSI hugely popular with visitors in the north-west and across the north of England; it is also an iconic national museum. We should not be tempted to call it a regional museum, because it is not. It is a national museum based in the regions, and we should emphasise that. It has uniquely interesting sections about the history of the industrial revolution and has helped to garner the inventiveness of our science base in the north-west. That scientific base is not just a thing of the past. As my hon. Friend mentioned, graphene is a modern Manchester invention and an example of the important role that science has always had, and will continue to have, in the economy of Greater Manchester and the north-west of England.

It is therefore a matter of some concern that in the past few months sources inside the museum's parent company, the Science Museum Group, have claimed

that the future of MOSI is under threat because of funding problems. As a result of the previous Labour Government's move to give free access to important national collections, visitor numbers at MOSI have shot up. Last year, the museum welcomed more than 800,000 visitors, and it is rightly regarded as a major national centre for industrial heritage and innovation.

It is beyond argument that MOSI is a vital part of Manchester and that it provides cultural, educational and economic benefit throughout the region. It is an invaluable part of the local and regional economy, attracting tourists and prestige, and, as we heard from my hon. Friend, it supports many jobs. Surely, there is a wider principle that the benefits of tax revenue gathered nationally should be spread, so that everyone across the country can benefit from them.

Everyone pays taxes, so surely there is a case for the benefits of tax revenue to be spread as far as possible around the country. That has been demonstrated by the BBC, with the excellent move of a large part of its operation from London to Salford, spreading more of its economic impact outside the M25. Surely, our national museums should operate on the same principle. Everyone should have access to our national collections—a point firmly made by my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Hugh Bayley).

Kate Green: My apologies, Mr Brady; I would not for one moment impugn your independence, but it is a great pleasure for us all to see you in the Chair this morning.

Will my hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to the Imperial War Museum, which of course has located the Imperial War Museum North in my constituency? It is a national museum in the regions, and it is very well visited and much loved.

Andrew Gwynne: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Imperial War Museum North is another national museum based in the regions that is bringing into Trafford wharfside, and into an iconic building at that, visitors who probably would never have seen those collections in the Imperial War Museum in London. We enjoyed a visit a couple of years ago to see the "Horrible Histories" exhibition, which my kids found absolutely fascinating. We should continue to trumpet the benefits of having national museums and collections in the regions, so that we all may benefit from learning from our past and looking towards our future.

The speculation about MOSI's future was met by uproar from residents across Greater Manchester and the north of England. As we can see from the number of colleagues here today, the speculation has been met by real concern from most Greater Manchester politicians. The suggestion that MOSI would be affected by the Science Museum Group's problems led me to write to the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. In my letter, I outlined that the acclaimed opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympics included a stunning segment on Britain's development into the global industrial power that it is today. Danny Boyle is rightly lauded for portraying the history of Britain not just as a succession of monarchs, but as a land built by proud working men and women.

Life during the industrial revolution may not have been pleasant for some—indeed, it almost certainly was not—but surely it is just plain wrong to allow access to

[*Andrew Gwynne*]

that history to be lost. I pay tribute to all those involved in MOSI's development from the early days in 1969, when the then North Western Museum of Science and Industry opened in a temporary venue on Grosvenor street. It was later linked to the university of Manchester institute of science and technology, and then through the superb vision and drive of the former Greater Manchester council, which was instrumental in moving the museum and developing it on its current site, the museum turned into what it is today. The museum, along with the transformation of the county's once polluted river valleys, is probably the former Greater Manchester council's best lasting legacy. I thank the many volunteers and friends of the museum who have worked hard to keep things ticking over in the good years and the bad.

People in Manchester and across the north-west, and indeed across the country, are incredibly proud of our free museums, so it is of some small comfort to hear the DCMS announcement on the funding settlement for 2015-16, as no museums should close. Clearly, like MOSI, we await confirmation of the actual details of the funding package, and until those details are received, we cannot be certain of the structural deficit that MOSI will face or of which options will have to be considered. Opposition Members certainly hope that the Government's culture funding cuts will not result in the closure or downgrading of this outstanding Manchester institution or of parts of it.

There are a number of concerns about the Science Museum Group and MOSI that I would like the Minister to address. Whatever financial problems are facing the Science Museum Group, particularly the London Science Museum, most of my colleagues here today would agree that they should not affect MOSI.

Of course there remains the question of what to do with the structural deficit. The Science Museum Group is currently £2 million in the red, which is projected to go up to £4 million, and potentially even to £6 million, depending on the CSR announcement today. Recent figures show that between 2010-11 and 2014-15 Government funding for the Science Museum Group, including MOSI, has been cut by 25% in real terms. So far, the Science Museum Group has undertaken a number of cost-cutting initiatives, including redundancies across the entire organisation, to try to make the necessary savings. Although it now seems that there will be only a 5% cut to the Science Museum Group's budget, not the 10% cut that was envisaged, it will still have a significant impact on the budgets and savings that will have to be found.

Mr John Leech (Manchester, Withington) (LD): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) on securing this debate.

The Minister's announcement that the cut will be only 5%, rather than 10%, is very welcome, but it will clearly have an impact on the long-term financing of the Science Museum Group and, in our case, MOSI. Surely, we ought to be considering constructive ways to bridge that gap. Some 5 million people visited the museums last year, and the budget deficit is likely to be in the region of £4 million, which is the equivalent of

80p per visitor over 12 months. I am not suggesting for one second that we ought to be charging entry, but surely we ought to be able to generate more money from those 5 million people who are going through the doors, as well as generating more money, particularly in Manchester, from sponsorship by large businesses such as the airport. From Manchester's perspective, that would be seen as businesses supporting our local museum.

Andrew Gwynne: I absolutely would not support anything that might lead to the introduction of charges at MOSI, because I think that would be a very retrograde step. Where I agree with the hon. Gentleman is on the need for a longer-term vision for the museum, whether that is through charitable giving or through greater sponsorship. I am cautious about the airport, which is not a cash cow for every funding cut in Greater Manchester. Indeed, the Manchester Airports Group already contributes greatly towards the arts in Greater Manchester, most notably through its sponsorship of the Hallé orchestra. I am not sure that the Manchester Airports Group can for ever write blank cheques to fill every funding cut that comes Manchester's way.

Barbara Keeley: My hon. Friend is making a great case, and I support what he says about charging. I note that a parent from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) started the Facebook group "Save The Museum of Science And Industry Manchester." In her appeal, she made this specific point:

"It is one of the few places left...suitable for everyone from babies to older people."

She makes the important point that, because the museum is free

"this means that it is accessible to everyone, not just those who can afford to go on expensive days out."

Does my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne) agree with her? In these days of cuts and austerity, when families are suffering and wages are going backwards, we must think of having such days out. Young people can learn a lot from a free day out, particularly one with their family.

Andrew Gwynne: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Not only is the museum free, it is fun. That is why people want to keep going back. MOSI is a hands-on museum. There are not lots of exhibits in glass cases; there are lots of things that people can touch, feel, do and play with, which can spark imagination. MOSI is a great fun day out for children and adults of all ages. We must develop a clear vision of what the museum wants to do in the future.

Hugh Bayley: On charges, the National Railway Museum has been part of the Science Museum Group since its inception and it is instructive to consider what happened there. When charges were introduced, the number of visitors fell to 300,000; when charges were removed in a number of stages by the previous Labour Government, attendances rose again and are now at the 1 million mark. When a museum does not impose entry charges, people pay much more in the cafeteria and the shop. There are marketing opportunities for museums, which are stronger and better if they remain free and open to the public.

Andrew Gwynne: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Total visits to MOSI in 1997 numbered 235,000. In 2011-12, they peaked at 818,000. That shows the benefit of free access to collections at our national museums in the region.

On visitor satisfaction, 99% would recommend MOSI. Not only is it accessible to all, it is obviously enjoyed by all but the miserly 1% who clearly do not think it is a good day out. Who would dream of 99% visitor recommendations? In 2012-13, 63% of visitors to MOSI were families and 10% educational groups. Only 27% were general admissions of independent adults. I am sure that it is exactly the same in York. Our national museums benefit families who are struggling to make ends meet in the cost-of-living squeeze by giving them a free, fun day out on their doorstep in central Manchester, York or Bradford.

I press the Minister to give firmer reassurances about the future of MOSI. Surely, we must make the case for national museums across Britain, not simply focus on the ones based in the capital city. As we have heard, MOSI is a world-class museum. Surely, we should fight to protect a cultural asset not just for the north of England or for Greater Manchester, but for Britain as a whole.

10.2 am

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) on securing this debate. As ever, she reminds us that all those cold, chilly evenings canvassing in the Saddleworth snow for a by-election were worth every minute, because of the role that she plays in championing our area. It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Mr Brady. I must ask your indulgence and that of Front-Bench Members; I may not be able to stay for the whole debate, due to my Wednesday responsibilities for Prime Minister's questions, to which we are all looking forward today.

Along with many of the Members here today, I spoke about MOSI in last week's Opposition day debate. The passion in the Chamber that day demonstrated the strength of feeling about the preservation of one of our most treasured cultural institutions. I will not repeat that speech—it is a particularly good one, if anyone has not had the chance to read it—but I will summarise it by saying that for me, MOSI is the soul of our city.

I received a huge response to that speech. Many people e-mailed me to tell me that reading it made them want to go visit MOSI. It made me want to visit MOSI as well, but the duties of a Member of Parliament during summer and spring weekends meant that I could not get there this weekend. However, my wife and daughter visited MOSI this Monday. I rang them on Monday evening and spoke to my two-year-old daughter, who is usually obsessed with iPads and other modern technology. She had been captivated by a typewriter and a rotary-dial telephone.

Kate Green: My hon. Friend highlights how important it is for girls as well as boys to be able to enjoy the experience of visiting MOSI. We have a huge wish for more girls and young women to enter science and technology careers. MOSI can be a good early introduction for them.

Jonathan Reynolds: I absolutely agree. I mentioned in my speech last week that I take Bess to MOSI and tell her about invention and how she can be an engineer because of the opportunities available. One can see a flicker of inspiration in children's eyes. It is fantastic for boys and girls, and it is a particularly good way to illustrate to people the kinds of career and opportunity that everyone should be able to follow.

MOSI also illustrates how far contemporary technology has come and gives people a sense not only of where we were in the past but of where we are now. I welcome what the Minister said last week to guarantee its survival. To be honest, though, I think that most people are bewildered that there should ever have been any doubt about the future of such an important asset. MOSI is particularly important to my constituents and me, and the questions about its future highlight the struggle for survival and the worry of many museums throughout the country. It is great to see my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Hugh Bayley) here making those points too.

Government figures released earlier this year show that local authority funding for museums fell by 11% in 2011-12. As local government grants make up half of all public funding to the arts, that is particularly alarming. If the cuts to local government announced today are the 10% reported, given that things are already at breaking point, there must be doubt about the long-term survival of some of our most treasured national museums. It illustrates how big and painful the cost is of this Government's failure to get the economy going over the past three years.

Barbara Keeley: My hon. Friend is supporting and extending the case that we are making for MOSI. He is right to highlight the role played by local government. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackley and Broughton (Graham Stringer), who was instrumental in establishing the museum. Manchester city council bought part of the site for £1. When I was a Trafford councillor, Trafford also established the Imperial War Museum. Salford council has taken the risk of buying the docks to establish the Lowry. If not for that, our cultural heritage in Manchester would not exist as it currently does. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds) agree about the importance of local government? Those who cut local government are pulling the rug from underneath our city council leaders and other leaders in Greater Manchester, who may not be able to do such things in future.

Jonathan Reynolds: I could not agree more. As an MP and a former councillor, I always say that local government should be just that—not local administration, but local government. The legacy that we can point to in Greater Manchester, and some of the exciting work that we are doing for the future, is a strong sign of that, but I worry that soon councils will be able to do nothing but try to deliver their statutory responsibilities, because there will not be enough funding to go around.

Julie Hilling (Bolton West) (Lab): To follow on from that point, it is not just about our national museums in the regions. It is also about places such as Bolton Museum and other museums in our various towns that have been supported largely by local authorities over

[Julie Hilling]

the years. They are crucial to young people's understanding, and particularly their involvement in science and technology, as well as to expanding their views of the world and their heritage.

Jonathan Reynolds: I agree. They are so important to us that given the financial situation, I think that we will have to consider different ways of funding them in the long term to guarantee their existence. However, I echo the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne): I am completely opposed to bringing back charging to enter museums. Free museum access has been an outstanding success, and there should be consensus that it must always continue.

I have done a little bit of research in advance of this debate. As the Minister knows, the Opposition are always here to help with constructive suggestions about this Government's problems. It appears to me that increasingly, a lot of institutions are turning to the internet to supplement their funding. A range of organisations from start-up businesses to non-profit organisations, and even councils, are turning to what is known as crowd funding as a cheap, easy and accessible way to raise funds. Clearly, crowd funding is no silver bullet, but I am glad that our shadow Culture, Media and Sport team has said that it will examine what opportunities it might present.

Two of the world's most famous museums have used crowd funding successfully to raise money to buy specific pieces or fund exhibits. The Smithsonian in Washington, for example, is looking for \$125,000 to put on the world's first exhibition of yogic art. To be honest, I have no idea what that is, but it sounds extremely exciting. Similarly, the Louvre runs an annual crowd-funding campaign known as "Everyone's a Patron" to ask members of the public to help purchase particular pieces of art. Since the campaign started in 2010, it has funded the purchase of "The Three Graces" and a collection known as "The Treasures of Cairo", and this year it raised €800,000 to complete a set of 13th-century ivory figures, which now form the only complete set anywhere in the world. Given the huge amount of public support generated by the campaign to save MOSI, maybe we could harness some of it to bring our people even closer and get them more involved in MOSI's future to secure its long-term success.

Clearly, that funding model would not solve every problem, but I wonder whether there is a role for the Government to support such campaigns. It could be a way for the Government to support not just museums but a whole range of the arts, start-up businesses or practically any other project that we could imagine.

I again thank my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth for securing the debate. I also thank my constituents for the way in which they have got behind the campaign, the *Manchester Evening News* for its leading role in the campaign to save MOSI and the Minister in anticipation of what I am sure will be his reassurance. In my speech last week, I said that it would be unconscionable if we ever lost MOSI, and I stand by that entirely; I am grateful for the platform given to us as Members of Parliament for Greater Manchester to assist in some way in the campaign.

10.10 am

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Brady.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) on securing the debate on the future funding of the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester. She has clearly articulated the relevance and importance of MOSI in Manchester, and I am sure that people throughout the country share her passion for this award-winning museum. It has real historical, scientific and educational value.

We have had a good debate, with several useful contributions. We should mention my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell), although she is not present today. She has been an articulate and determined campaigner for MOSI, so it is right to place recognition of her work on the record.

My hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne) mentioned his first visit to the museum while still in the Cub Scouts in 1983. He spoke with passion about the scientific and industrial heritage of Greater Manchester. He rightly pointed out that MOSI is a national museum that is based in the regions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds) again stated his strong support for MOSI. He said that it was part of the soul of Manchester, and he rightly pointed out the important role of local government in supporting our cultural heritage, a theme to which I shall return.

We had some useful interventions from my hon. Friends the Members for York Central (Hugh Bayley), for Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley), for Stretford and Urmston (Kate Green) and for Bolton West (Julie Hilling), and from the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr Leech).

Today's contributions and those made in recent weeks as part of the wider debate are testimony to the importance of culture and heritage throughout the country. Last week's Opposition debate, with contributions from Members of all parties, illustrated clearly the economic, social and educational worth of culture, in addition to its intrinsic value. Significantly, we received assurances that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport will remain in its existing form, as well as assurances from the Minister, which we accept in good faith, that the Science Museum in London should not have to close, and nor should the National Railway Museums in York and Shildon, the National Media Museum in Bradford or MOSI in Manchester.

Last week, I also asked the Minister to confirm whether the same assurances applied to the National Coal Mining Museum in Wakefield, which is also funded through the Science Museum. I would be grateful if he clarified today whether he is able to extend his recent assurances to include the National Coal Mining Museum. Such assurances would be most welcome and greatly appreciated.

In spite of the Minister's recent and welcome assurances, I am sure that all Members agree that the devil will be in the detail. As I am sure the Minister acknowledges, our museums face challenging times, which is why we must continue to emphasise just how important culture and heritage are to our society. More needs to be done to secure the long-term financial stability of our museums.

If we do not do something, the accumulated loss of income could seriously damage our culture and heritage sector.

My hon. Friend the Member for York Central last week described our museums as

“like fantastic flowers in a garden”—[*Official Report*, 19 June 2013; Vol. 564, c. 960.]

and said that we must “keep feeding their roots”. I agree with him. Museums inspire and educate while they entertain; beyond that, they are of course of important economic value. More than 4 million people visited one of the Science Museum Group institutions last year, attracting tourists from inside and outside the UK to places that they might not normally visit, and benefiting local economies, even where museum entry is free.

MOSI is a prime example of the importance of universal access to museums, and it is an integral part of Manchester’s cultural offer. During the industrial revolution, Manchester was at the centre of the textile industry in this country, and MOSI celebrates that history and the city’s technological development. MOSI provides an estimated £8 million in gross value added to the local economy and attracts more than 800,000 visitors each year, including more than 100,000 school visitors.

Andrew Gwynne: Is it not important to recognise as well that MOSI is an integral part of the Castlefield urban heritage park in Manchester city centre? The park is also the home of Manchester’s Roman fort, Mamucium, the birthplace of the city, and the site of the Bridgewater and Rochdale canals, which brought coal into the city to fuel the industrial revolution.

Dan Jarvis: My hon. Friend is right to point out that MOSI is part of a wider collection of cultural and heritage offers in Greater Manchester. In the near future, I hope to have the opportunity to go and see some of the incredibly important cultural and heritage institutions in that part of our country.

It is also important to highlight MOSI’s work in education, which is instrumental in inspiring young people to consider careers in science and industry, fields that are crucial to our country’s future scientific innovation. As already mentioned, since 2009, MOSI has hosted science, technology, engineering and mathematics ambassadors in schools. The museum provides valuable scientific inspiration to the young people of Greater Manchester and much further afield.

A great supporter of museums as a platform to motivate and educate, Professor Brian Cox, has stated recently:

“Knowledge and inspiration are classless.”

I agree, and, even more so, that access to the institutions that provide such knowledge and inspiration should be classless, too.

It is right that society should invest in museums. They are of real social benefit, but we must help them to develop practical, dynamic and innovative ways to ensure the future success of such organisations. That must include funding. The hon. Member for Manchester, Withington discussed that in his intervention today and in his speech last week, and my hon. Friend the Member for Stalybridge and Hyde mentioned crowd funding and other potential sources of revenue. Museums and government, national and local, need to look at innovative ways of securing funding for museums such as MOSI.

Private and public funding are not mutually exclusive, and much can be gained from the diversity of multiple funding streams, as our cultural sector already shows. In difficult economic times, however, DCMS, local government, the Arts Council and the museums themselves must focus on creating an innovative offer, one that will sustain our museums not only for now, but for the next generation. Museums have done great work in recent years to reinvent themselves, integrating new technology, new experiences and attracting new audiences.

Andrew Gwynne: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the need to look for alternative sources of funding, but does he agree that it would be a retrograde step to revert to some form of charging at museums such as MOSI, even at a level of 80p, as suggested by the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr Leech)?

Dan Jarvis: I assure my hon. Friend that I completely agree that it is not in our interest—the interests of museums and of the people we represent—to go back to what were, frankly, the bad old days, when only those people who could afford it went to our museums. That is why it is vital for us to campaign to safeguard the right of all people, and of young people in particular, to be able to visit those incredibly important cultural and heritage sites. I believe that the Minister agrees, though I would be grateful for his assurances. I completely agree with my hon. Friend that the introduction of free entry to museums was a significant achievement that we should never row back from.

It is important that museums look innovatively at what they can offer the public. They have done great work on that in recent years and have integrated new technology and new experiences to reach out to new audiences. They must work in a wider and stronger network of partnerships with other cultural and educational bodies, such as libraries, schools, colleges, universities, and arts and community centres. They also need to work with the people who visit them and those who do not yet do so—the 50% of the country that did not go to a museum or gallery last year.

Museums help create a sense of history, a sense of community and a sense of place by preserving our culture and as a visible sign of our civic pride and social values. That is why maintaining and developing our regional museums should be a priority for any Government. In that context, I would like to take the opportunity to ask the Minister an important question that I have asked him before, and which I asked the Secretary of State during parliamentary questions last Thursday. In these challenging economic times, what work is the Department for Communities and Local Government doing with the Arts Council and local authorities in the regions to support the arts, culture and heritage? I would be grateful for a response when he winds up the debate.

Artistic and scientific brilliance can flourish anywhere, but talents need to be honed and people need to be inspired. That can happen only if people are given the opportunity to experience and explore their own history and culture. This week, a new Lowry exhibition opens at Tate Britain and displays some of the distinctive northern industrial landscapes that the Stretford-born artist painted over his lifetime.

Jonathan Reynolds: Lowry may have been Stretford born but, as my hon. Friend may know, for a substantial portion of his life, he lived in Mottram in my constituency. We are extremely proud of him.

Dan Jarvis: My hon. Friend is right to be extremely proud and I am grateful for his important clarification. He will agree that we need to ensure that the next generation of children has every opportunity to succeed. It will never be acceptable to tell a child that they were born in the wrong decade, and that is why a new museum will open tomorrow in my constituency. Experience Barnsley will enable visitors to discover the history of our town through local perspectives. Such initiatives can help ensure that each person's potential is fulfilled, and that no future L.S. Lowry, Barbara Hepworth, Marie Curie or Stephen Hawking is missed because they did not have cultural and educational opportunities near where they grew up.

Protecting free entry to our museums and securing the future of our regional museums should be a priority. Equal access to museums should be a right for all, not a privilege for the few. That is why the Labour Government ensured that entry to museums and galleries would be free for all. In the 10 years following the introduction of that policy, visitor numbers have more than doubled to 18 million a year. We must continue to encourage people to visit these wonderful institutions.

Our museums are essential to people all over the UK—socially, educationally and economically. To continue to thrive, they must continue to reinvent themselves, drawing new crowds through their doors. They must work with national and local government and others to develop innovative methods of funding. Our museums can continue to go from strength to strength and our society with them. We must help make that happen.

10.24 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Mr Edward Vaizey): I am pleased, Mr Brady, to speak under your chairmanship in this important debate. As many hon. Members have said, it is a huge honour to be presided over by a Greater Manchester MP and chairman of the 1922 committee. You are the shop steward of our Back Benchers, which adds to the lustre of your chairmanship this morning.

Many hon. Members have talked about the impact of the Museum of Science and Industry on their lives and those of their constituents. Before I go into the detail of some of the excellent contributions, it may be worth pointing out that my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire Moorlands (Karen Bradley), who was here this morning as the Whip, told me before the debate started that there is a photograph of her aunt, Connie Varty in the museum, taken when she was a young woman working as an engineer for Beyer Peacock & Co. Almost everyone has had some impact from the wonderful museum.

I shall begin in the traditional but no less heartfelt way of thanking the hon. Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth (Debbie Abrahams) on securing this debate on the future funding of the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester. I welcome her contribution and those of the hon. Members for Denton and Reddish

(Andrew Gwynne), for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds) and for Barnsley Central (Dan Jarvis), all of whom are concerned about the museum's future.

There has been a strong reaction in the last three weeks to reports that the museum may be in danger, and it is clear how much it is valued. I will use my contribution to scotch the rumours that have swirled around. First, the Museum of Science and Industry is in no danger of closing, nor are the museums in York or Bradford. At lunchtime, I will meet the chairman and directors of the Science Museum Group to discuss the future. I have made the point in many debates that we cannot be complacent. The challenge—I will come to this in a moment—is not simply to keep the museums open but, as was echoed in many of the contributions to the debate, to ensure that they are enhanced and improved to sustain their future for many years to come.

I come to the “scotching the rumour” section of my speech. A few weeks ago, someone—I do not know who—tweeted that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport would be abolished as part of the comprehensive spending review. I want to scotch that rumour. The Department is a metaphor and an adornment to the Government. We have moved to better offices, and they cost £2 million a year less than previously. One gets more for less with DCMS. We are also delivering the main growth programme for the Government by rolling out superfast broadband.

Rumour No. 2 concerns the introduction of charging for our national museums. I was berated in no less an august journal than *The Spectator* for a mildly flippant remark saying that when tourists visited out museums free, we would fleece them in the cafes afterwards. The hon. Member for York Central (Hugh Bayley) said that more elegantly, and the point was well made that visitor numbers have doubled at the Museum of Science and Industry, and many visitors who enter free spend money within the museum. The commercial case is that charging would enable museums to raise revenue, but they would lose a significant amount of income from cafes, shops and other areas where visitors spend money. It is not a zero-sum game, and charging would not simply increase revenue by the amount charged. That is the commercial reason for introducing charging, but I accept the moral case that museums are national collections that should be open to the public free for all.

Andrew Gwynne: I am grateful for the Minister's clarification and greatly reassured. Do I take it that he completely rules out the suggestion of his hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington that people should perhaps pay 80p to visit MOSI in future?

Mr Vaizey: I do not want to enter a row between the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish and my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr Leech). I have made the Government's policy as clear as possible.

I turn to rumour No. 3. There is no intention of transferring the Science Museum Group to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, but I certainly welcome that Department's interest and think there is an opportunity for a deeper and more profound partnership between the two Departments in supporting the Science Museum Group. There is no mystery to the fact that the Minister for Universities and Science is a huge admirer

of the Science Museum Group, and he recognises that it is without doubt the most formidable attraction for young people in drawing them into the world of science. It is therefore important, for a Government who take science seriously and want to increase the number of young people who choose careers in science, to clearly support the Science Museum Group's education work. I will be holding discussions with BIS to see what support it wishes to bring to the organisation.

On rumour No. 4, I scotch any suggestion that we would allow the National Coal Mining Museum to close. That is certainly not our position, and it, too, will remain open. The point of bringing the Museum of Science and Industry and the National Coal Mining Museum within the Science Museum Group was to enhance their offer.

An important point of principle to get across—I thought of this when I was hearing the excellent contributions by the hon. Members for Oldham East and Saddleworth, for Denton and Reddish, for Stalybridge and Hyde and for Barnsley Central—is that we have to get out of the mindset that somehow the regional museums are second class, or that the national museums in the regions are somehow second class to the national museums in London. In principle, if a museum had to close, there is no reason why the London branch of the national museum should not be on the same page. It is really important to say that the museums in York, Bradford and Manchester have as much status and right to survive and thrive as the museums in London.

As has been pointed out time and again, the visitor numbers and attractions at MOSI are second to none. The museum is home to many important buildings from our industrial heritage, and it is uniquely placed to explore the meeting of science and industry and the beginnings of the modern world—the industrial revolution, of course, started in Manchester—in a way that has meaning locally, nationally and internationally. It promotes the best of new technology and curates the Manchester science festival and the FutureEverything conference and exhibition, which I visited last year and experienced a groundbreaking mix of cutting-edge digital technology, art and music. MOSI is at the forefront of science education. It delivers innovative projects and a high-quality service for schools and volunteers through the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Network—STEMNET.

Since MOSI joined the Science Museum Group, investment has been made in the public programme and events, in improving the retail and catering offer and in attracting visitor donations. SMG's long-standing relationship with the Wellcome Collection has also established a new relationship with MOSI that will culminate in the opening of a special exhibition next month.

I hope that I have left hon. Members in no doubt as to my personal support for the museum in Manchester, but I have to thank the director of the Science Museum Group. Since he made his concerns known on my birthday, on 5 June, I have had a meeting with MPs from Bradford and an Adjournment debate, and many contributions were made during the arts debate in the main Chamber. We now have the Westminster Hall debate, and I am still looking forward to my special

appearance in front of the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport, so he has certainly helped me fill my time and build up valuable experience in parliamentary debating.

To summarise what has happened, on 17 June, I met the hon. Members representing the Bradford areas, and my hon. Friends the Members for Keighley (Kris Hopkins) and for Shipley (Philip Davies), as well as the director of the Science Museum Group, in advance of the Adjournment debate held by the hon. Member for Bradford West (George Galloway). We had a productive discussion and agreed that a working group representing the Science Museum Group, local MPs and Bradford council should come together to look at securing a sustainable future for the National Media Museum. That has now become known as the five-year plan. During the Opposition day debate on the arts and creative industries on 19 June, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport also made it clear that the reduction in resource funding for national museums in 2015-16 would be held at 5%.

There is also an important additional development that will affect the Science Museum Group positively. Recognising the unique business model of the national museums and their innovative approach to generating income, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has offered new measures that will make it easier for the museums to manage their budgets independently and reduce administrative burdens. That will include an exceptional power for the sector to borrow up to £40 million a year from the Government; authorisation to invest in non-grant income; access to reserve funds, so that museums have the flexibility to spend donations that they receive; the freedom to set pay, to attract the best expertise; and exemption from Government procurement policy, so that museums can make their own choices about key contracts.

As I think most hon. Members would agree, that is a significant step forward and something that the national museums have long campaigned for. Combined with the favourable funding settlement, it is clear that there is no reason why the Science Museum Group should close any museum based on a lack of funding. The new administrative and financial freedoms will also boost income generation and create a more dynamic operating model.

As hon. Members will appreciate, the outcome of the spending review will shortly determine the Government's capital support for the national museums, so I cannot speculate on that at this point. However, I can mention the support for capital improvements provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the DCMS Wolfson Fund and the Catalyst match-funding schemes, which we have established with the Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

During the Adjournment debate last week, I paid tribute to the constructive way in which hon. Members representing Bradford, Manchester and York have worked with me and the Science Museum Group to forge a sustainable future for the regional museums. I would like to thank them again for their continued commitment to that endeavour. Looking ahead, we will continue to work with the Science Museum Group, as it examines a range of options across its operation to increase the income that it generates from exhibitions, events and

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corporate sponsorship. We will also look at potential partnerships at regional level, both public and private, working with local government, education and business.

Andrew Gwynne: I do not think the Minister appreciates just how lucky he is. He has visited the Museum of Science and Industry at Liverpool Road station, and he might not be aware that an earlier Member of Parliament was not so fortunate. The Liverpool Member of Parliament, William Huskisson, was killed at the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester railway, when he was run over by Stephenson's Rocket, which is a fate that, thankfully, the Minister avoided.

Mr Vaizey: I went on a replica of Stephenson's Rocket when I made the visit. It is well known that the first railway fatality involved a Member of Parliament, which may still resonate through the ages.

I pay tribute to the way in which hon. Members have approached the issue. The hon. Member for Barnsley Central has also contributed significantly to the debate. He and I sparred with each other at last week's debate, and I probably got slightly carried away—I am not used to debating in a full Chamber, so it was a novel experience for me. It was an interesting debate, and the Labour party is making a powerful case for the importance of supporting arts and culture in the regions.

There was a slight paradox—I felt, obviously, being biased—in that Member after Member got up and talked about how well culture was doing in their constituency, so we are not having an arts emergency, but the issue is worth looking at. That is why I am pleased, for example, that the Arts Council has, under this Government, looked seriously at how it supports arts and culture in the regions using lottery money, which we increased.

As hon. Members know, we significantly raised the proportion of lottery funding going to the arts. An additional £100 million is going to the arts every year under this Government. Some of that money has been used to significantly increase the amount of funding available for touring, so national arts organisations have the opportunity to tour their work around the country. The Arts Council has also set up what it calls the creative people and places fund—off the top of my head, it is worth about £30 million—which is designed to support arts and culture in areas that are, to use the jargon, under-represented in terms of arts and culture, where perhaps the quality of offers that one might find in other parts of the country are not available.

The issue is serious and important, and I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Oldham East and Saddleworth for raising it, but I hope that she will also acknowledge that a lot of work is being done to ensure that all parts of the country benefit from our arts and culture. We will listen to any further suggestions that she or other hon. Members may have.

10.40 am

Sitting suspended.

Non-geographic Telephone Numbers

11 am

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Brady. I am pleased to have the opportunity to debate this important issue. The matter is of concern to many people—all our constituents, I think. It is a complex and controversial issue, but the term “non-geographic phone numbers” generally covers numbers that start with 08, 0845, 087, 09 and 118, and which are used for everything from contacting Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to voting on TV shows.

All the evidence shows that people find the numbers extremely confusing and expensive. The so-called freephone 0800 numbers are guaranteed to be free only when phoned from a land-line—they are not always free from mobile phones—and it is people on low and fixed incomes who are undoubtedly hardest hit. Poorer people often do not have the security of a land-line, and they are unable to get contracts.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing the debate. He rightly says that 0800 numbers are free only from a land-line. Does he agree that the warning signal, or the acknowledgment that it could be very costly to use such numbers from a mobile, is often in such a tiny—almost insignificant—font size, either on the screen or in newspaper print, as to be illegible, particularly for elderly people?

Richard Burden: The hon. Gentleman makes a very good point. It is important that the information is clearer, but perhaps what is more important—and this is the case I will advance today—is ensuring that the calls are free rather than just pretending to be free for certain people.

As I was saying, people on low and fixed incomes do not have access to land-lines, and they probably do not have access to contract mobile phones either or, sometimes, to the internet. They rely, therefore, on prepay mobile phones and phone boxes, and as the former have higher call costs than contract phones poorer people end up paying more to use the telephone than those on higher incomes. A study by Save the Children, in fact, found that they could be paying about 22% more.

What is particularly unfair, and this is one of the major subjects of today's debate, is that it is not just businesses and game shows that charge people a fortune; the Government's own use of the numbers is a matter for concern. I have been contacted by constituents who are justifiably irate that ringing essential public services, such as HMRC, results in them having sky-high bills. The answers I have received to parliamentary questions to Departments have revealed not only the shocking scale, but the scope of Government use of high-cost phone numbers. Six out of 10 Government phone lines are high cost. The Home Office, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs all use a high proportion of high-cost phone lines. The Department for Work and Pensions alone has 200-plus 0845 numbers. Vulnerable people are being charged rip-off rates for contacting essential services, including pension, work and welfare services—when talking to Jobcentre Plus, the Pensions Advisory Service, about disability living

allowance and attendance allowance, and so on. The waiting times for the services can be long, and that drives up bills even further.

The 0845 and 087 revenue-sharing numbers are the major culprits. Calling the numbers can cost anything up to 41p a minute, and a service charge is included, which is paid to the Government. I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey) is here today because he has done some very important work on what he has rightly termed a telephone tax, and the National Audit Office is also looking into the scandal. It is simply beyond belief that people calling taxpayer-funded phone lines are taxed again. Some Departments have been making money, and phone companies are clearly making a fortune. It is illogical and unfair, and it cannot continue. The use of revenue-sharing numbers by the Government and all associated public agencies must stop, and it must stop now.

John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): I welcome the success that my hon. Friend has had in securing the debate, and also the fact that he is campaigning hard on the matter, as am I. It is important to expose the rip-off rates that some people have to pay to access essential public services and information.

My hon. Friend mentions the revenue sharing, which is part of the deal for 084 numbers. Both he and I have tabled parliamentary questions, and I have had seven Departments say to me that they do not get any financial or non-financial benefit from the lines. That, however, contradicts what Ofcom believes to be the case, and I have, therefore, had to write to those seven Departments. Does my hon. Friend agree that, as a follow-up to the debate, something the Minister might usefully do is ensure that attention is drawn to other Departments that use the numbers but do not appear to know that they should be gaining a financial benefit—at a cost to many of the poorest, who pay the extra charges?

Richard Burden: My hon. Friend makes a very good point, and it is true that many Departments, or the people who make the decisions, did not know that they were making money out of the numbers. They assumed that something starting with 08 was free, just like the 0800 numbers. It is important that that message gets across. There are one or two Departments that, when they found out, were fairly horrified and said that they would change. The key thing, therefore, is that they make that change quickly.

I suggest that revenue sharing is particularly unfair, but that it is part of a wider picture. Calling any public service on a geographic or a non-geographic number means that people with very little money—those with prepay mobile phones—get bills they simply cannot afford. That covers accessing central Government services and those of other public bodies, agencies and local authorities and, until very recently, even GP surgeries. I was made aware of the case of a homeless family in my constituency who clearly did not have a land-line or a contract phone, and were trying to reach Birmingham city council a couple of years ago. They were kept hanging on for ages, just trying to find out if they had any chance of getting a home. How can we seriously expect people calling a homelessness helpline to maintain regular direct debits or have been able to negotiate

cheap phone tariffs? We need clear criteria for all public services—in central and local government—if we are to overcome the problems.

I sought to have this debate because there is a chance for the Government to change, and to initiate change. I understand that, in July, Ofcom will make clear recommendations for simplifying the system. It will make 0800 numbers free for all, including from mobile phones and, going back to the point that the hon. Member for East Londonderry (Mr Campbell) made, it will ensure that the costs of calling 084 and 087 numbers are clear. It will also encourage greater use of 03 numbers, which are priced the same as the traditional 01 and 02 geographic numbers, and they will not have a revenue-sharing element.

Of relevance here is article 21 of the EU consumer rights directive. An amendment to the directive, which could stop businesses using a service charge when consumers call under certain circumstances, is under consideration, and more work needs to be done on that. I therefore ask the Minister: will the Government continue to charge what has been rightly termed a telephone tax when they begin to regulate businesses in that regard?

There is already best practice in some Departments. HMRC has been one of the worst culprits, but it has now rightly responded to the Public Accounts Committee's recommendations and is switching to 03 numbers, which will save many people a fortune. That must be linked to the more recent PAC recommendation for improving waiting times so that people are not left in a queue for hours.

We need more clarity and co-ordination, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth and Dearne said. That is not a new idea; it has been on the agenda since 2006, when Sir David Varney called for change in his Cabinet Office report, "Service transformation." He called for clear public sector telephone number strategies that would end confusion and provide a better service to people, as well as a better deal for the taxpayer. Seven years on, Ofcom is now providing the Government with a framework to achieve that.

I have some questions that I hope the Minister will be able to answer. First, does the Minister agree with me—and, I am sure, countless members of the public, and campaigners, such as the fair telecoms campaign, which has done a great deal of work—that it is fundamentally wrong to place a service charge or, to put it another way, a telephone tax on calls to phone lines that are already funded from taxation? If so, what is the Government's time scale to end its use across all Departments and agencies?

Secondly, what progress has been made on implementing the recommendations on contact centres in Sir David Varney's "Service transformation" report, which was taken over by the Cabinet Office's Contact Council? The report called for an exploration of the scope for single access numbers for all non-emergency public services, which would provide complementary support for the 999 service; more urgently, for the implementation of a clear public sector numbering and tariffing strategy using the 03 number range; and for the establishment of a set of cross-Government benchmarks, such as calls answered per minute, to improve the performance of public sector call centres.

If no progress on implementing those recommendations has been made since the abolition of the Contact Council, will the Government now take the opportunity provided

[Richard Burden]

by Ofcom's consultation and its results to establish a whole of Government solution? Such a solution would need to be clear and comprehensive, and it would need to make access to all public sector services less confusing and more cost-effective for the taxpayer. It would end the use of revenue sharing—the telephone tax—and establish clear numbering criteria for different services, with essential services using freephone for all 0800 numbers and all other services using 03 numbers.

Thirdly, will the Government enforce Ofcom's recommendations that the costs of revenue-sharing numbers must be declared, which goes back to my right hon. Friend's point? What is Ministers' time scale for such an implementation? Ofcom has outlined an implementation period of 18 months from when the recommendations are published, which means organisations would not have to declare their charges until at least 2015. We know the costs, and we know that many people are currently confused about the price of the numbers, so why delay? The Cabinet Office should issue directions to enforce transparency now, and I invite the Minister to agree with me.

The success of the gov.uk website—it provides one point of access for all Departments and public bodies—demonstrates that better Government co-ordination in communications can be done simply and effectively. As face-to-face services are cut back—not all of us think that that is a good thing—and more people are directed online and on to the telephone, it is important that the Government do not ignore those sections of the population that find it difficult to access the internet and do not have access to contract phones or land-lines. We know that they are the people most likely to need the Government's help and advice.

Finally, we need to ensure that people's contact with the Government or local government is not just that of being transferred from one Department to another, while watching their phone bills go up and up as they hang on the line. As the Government introduce huge changes to the benefits system, with universal credit and so on, we know that there are likely to be very big increases in the number of inquiries. That underlines the fact that we need an efficient system, which recognises that people calling Government advice lines have complex concerns and problems that need to be dealt with sensitively and effectively.

The idea of today's debate is to invite the Government to seize this opportunity drastically to improve public services and end the scandal of rip-off rates that hit the most vulnerable in their time of need. I invite the Minister and the Government to take up that opportunity.

11.15 am

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Mr Nick Hurd): It is an enormous pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Brady, for the first time, at least in this Chamber.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden) not only on securing the debate, but on how he presented his argument. I extend those congratulations to the right hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne (John Healey), because they have together done an excellent job. They have taken a forensic approach to using the parliamentary question

process to expose some, frankly, awkward and inconvenient truths about a system that, as Ofcom has said, clearly does not work for anyone at the moment. It is quite right to raise that substantive issue.

The right hon. Gentleman, who was a distinguished Minister, will recognise that I feel, in coming to this for the first time, that this is one of those situations in which Departments have been allowed to do their own thing, without very much effective co-ordination from the centre, over many years and during different Governments. We have reached the point at which we have to acknowledge that the current system does not work for anyone. Ofcom was quite right to make that point, and it is also right that the National Audit Office should look at the issue. My congratulations are therefore quite genuine.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield mentioned that the Cabinet Office previously had a role, but it has not been directly involved in recent years. We are now reviewing whether there is a case for central control to play a more proactive role. The reason for that is straightforward: we see ourselves as champions, first, of transparency across Government—there is a failure of transparency here—and secondly, of the taxpayer in ensuring that those who supply services to the Government and the public deliver best value.

Through the Efficiency and Reform Group, we take great pride in ensuring that historical contractual arrangements with large corporates are much less cosy than they were. I refer the right hon. Gentleman and the hon. Gentleman to its recently published report, which demonstrates that, through a much more rigorous and robust process, we saved the taxpayer £10 billion last year—this is serious money—by doing things that we consider to make hard commercial sense but had not been applied. For both those reasons—as champions of transparency and of driving a hard deal with the taxpayer and the public—we are taking an increasing interest in this area.

The timing of the debate is slightly awkward in the sense that we are all waiting for the NAO report. As a former Minister, the right hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne will know that Ministers sometimes read a brief that is not quite what they want to have to say, and this is one of those moments. Having looked at what is happening, I sense that there is frankly a substantial problem, as I have said. It is not just about the cost, which is real and of course massively relevant at a time when our constituents are very stretched; there are also big issues around complexity and transparency, and the system does not work.

There is clearly a real problem, but I see some encouraging signs of movement and transition. It probably needs to go further and faster, but there is clearly movement in some areas. One area is around transparency, which matters a lot because it is the great disinfectant. The Ofcom policy proposals are all about simplifying the matter and making it less complex and more transparent. Responding to those proposals is now under way.

I also see progress in the action taken by Departments to reduce costs. The hon. Gentleman did not mention this, but we should recognise that HMRC, which is a hugely important Department in the context of this debate, has already moved two of its helplines, the tax credit and Welsh language helplines, from 0845 numbers to 03 prefix numbers to reduce the cost to callers. It is also committed to moving all of its personal tax, expenses

and benefits helplines to 03 numbers by the end of the summer, which was welcomed by the Public Accounts Committee and the voluntary sector in particular. Clearly, there has been movement both on transparency and to reduce costs.

Another area, which was mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, is about reducing the need for the public to use the phone in engaging with the Government. He makes a fundamental point that we will always be in a situation in which a proportion of the population will not be online or comfortable with being online and will need what we call in our clunky Government language “assisted digital”. The Government will shortly announce plans to invest taxpayers’ money in a radical, ambitious process to go digital by default, which will ensure that no one is left behind and which should transform the experience of dealing with Government—online as often as possible and practicable. We all know the benefits of online communication, and success on that mission will mean that we reduce the need for people to use the telephone and be exposed to some of the vagaries, complexities and costs that we are debating here now. It is important for that to be registered, because the Government digital strategy, which was published last November, sets out how we intend to redesign digital services to make them straightforward and convenient so that all who can use them will choose to do so while those who cannot are not excluded. That channel shift, as we call it, will result in a reduction in the use of call centres, telephones, post and in-person centres, thereby reducing the problem of higher non-geographic phone charging, which is the subject of this debate.

John Healey: I am grateful to the Minister for the way in which he is responding to this debate. I am intervening before he returns to his brief, because his response so far has been genuine, open and welcome. He recognises that there is a significant problem, which is very welcome. He says that the Government are now reviewing the area, which is also welcome. He talks about a problem of timing. May I perhaps help him with that? The NAO has indeed now agreed to carry out a cross-Government review of the use of non-geographic numbers, some of which have these rip-off rates. The Comptroller and Auditor General tells me that he expects that report to be completed next month, in July, so the Minister may not have to wait long before he considers action. I invite him to tell the Chamber how he intends, from the centre of Government, to respond to that NAO report and the findings that it may have?

Mr Hurd: I am grateful to the Opposition for any offer of help, but I approach such offers with some wariness, and my instinct was right on that one. The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that the NAO report is imminent; I do not have an exact date, but July seems to be the month. My awkwardness comes from trying to give the hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Gentleman as robust a response as they would like. None the less, we must wait for that report and its recommendations to see to what degree they encourage a higher level of central co-ordination and control, which both Members are instinctively calling for.

We will also have to wait to see whether the NAO gives the Cabinet Office some sense of mandate to play a more proactive role in this exercise, which is a move

towards not just greater rigour and transparency, but a great deal of commercial awareness when it comes to conversations with the suppliers of services, who, as the hon. Gentleman has said, might have benefited disproportionately in the past with regard to the charges that they have effectively made to the public. The point that I was labouring is that we now have a real body of experience that is saving billions of pounds of taxpayers’ money in negotiating and renegotiating, often in flight, these contracts with suppliers to ensure that the taxpayer gets a better deal.

What I am asking of hon. Members is patience. Let us see the NAO report and what signals it sends in terms of the deficiencies of the current system and the need for a bit more central control, and then the Cabinet Office will respond. We are now a great deal more interested in this subject than in the past because we recognise that the system is not working for anyone. I just hope that I can reassure the hon. Gentleman and the right hon. Gentleman on that.

Richard Burden: Like my right hon. Friend, I am sure that the Minister is being absolutely genuine in what he is saying. We are waiting for the NAO report and the Ofcom recommendations, both of which will be published in July. I completely understand that the Minister needs to wait for them. There will be complex negotiations with suppliers. There is one thing on which I should like to push him a little further. On behalf of the user of services, the public, would it not be reasonable to say that there are certain principles here to which we aspire? The first is that an essential public service should be free to the public. Secondly, phone lines should be as cheap as they can be for other Government services. The obvious way of doing that is using something like the 03 numbers. How we get to those points could be the subject of detailed discussions, but, presumably, we should be able to agree that if the call is essential, it should be free, and if it is non-essential, it should be as cheap as it can be.

Mr Hurd: If we are trying to create a culture of greater simplification, transparency and trust, principles are important in terms of bringing people together, communicating and building that trust. Some Departments need to think through quite carefully the implications of some of the changes that the hon. Gentleman is proposing. For example, if they cannot make a particular charge for a service, they have to consider how they can continue to provide it. It is reasonable to build into the process some time for them to think through that carefully, because, presumably, the services are valued by the people using them. The principles of transparency and of keeping it simple and as cheap as possible are ones that we endorse, along with the commitment to try, as far as we can, to move people to a situation where most of this stuff is done online. We also want to make sure that all the services that we provide to people who are not online and who are not comfortable with that—we hope the number of those will be smaller—are as easy to navigate as possible.

The hon. Gentleman usefully made the point—we know this from our own constituencies—that it drives the public nuts to be transferred around the system, not get answers and be kept waiting. A large part of what we do as MPs is to try to disentangle such things. The

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onus is on us to try to make that process of engaging with Government as easy as possible, because we know that, on too many occasions, it is far too difficult.

In conclusion, the hon. Gentleman has raised a substantial point. It is something that the Cabinet Office is taking increasingly seriously. We are waiting for the NAO report. We see encouraging signs of transition towards greater transparency, and a desire to reduce costs and the need for telephony services. We also recognise that there is value that we can add in ensuring that the taxpayer is not ripped off.

11.29 am

Sitting suspended.

Beef Cattle and Sheep (Carbon Footprint)

[ANNETTE BROOKE *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): It is a great pleasure, Mrs Brooke, to serve under your chairmanship this afternoon. I thank Mr Speaker for granting this timely debate on the report on the carbon footprint of the cattle and sheep sector by the all-party parliamentary group on beef and lamb.

I also thank my fellow committee members, especially the hon. Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Roger Williams), my right hon. Friend the Member for South East Cambridgeshire (Sir James Paice) and my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire (Bill Wiggin) for attending the oral evidence sessions that we held as part of our four-month long inquiry and for their assistance in compiling the report.

The all-party group wanted to examine the methodologies currently used to calculate the carbon footprint of the sector in the UK and globally and how the data are used to inform the measures being taken to reduce emissions.

The report, which we launched in Parliament earlier this month, found that more robust scientific data and a standard model to measure carbon sequestration were needed to help the beef and lamb sector meet the twin challenges of sustainable food production and of reducing the environmental impact. It also found that the positive environmental impact of grazing livestock must be taken into account when trying to mitigate the sector's carbon footprint.

Our inquiry found that a large number of models are used to assess the carbon footprint. Professor Nigel Scollan of Waitrose told the group at the evidence session that 16 methodologies for measuring the carbon footprint of livestock have been developed since 2007 alone. The PAS 2050 model, which was developed by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Carbon Trust and the British Standards Institute, is the standard model used by DEFRA. However, in the evidence session, the independent Committee on Climate Change, which acts as an advisory body to the Government, stated that its accepted method for calculating production emissions is set out by an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

There is a clear lack of consensus or consistency, which raises two crucial points. First, there is a lack of consensus on how to measure livestock emissions. Secondly, any debate going on at an international level is not based on comparable data. For example, in England, the footprint of beef cattle, according to the PAS 2050 used by DEFRA was 12.65 kg carbon dioxide equivalent per kilogramme of live weight and for sheep it was 11.86 kg.

Ms Margaret Ritchie (South Down) (SDLP): Is the hon. Gentleman aware of the research that has been carried out in Northern Ireland? The greenhouse gas implementation partnership seems to agree with him that there is still a body of research yet to be carried out. The Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute in Belfast, which is working with DEFRA and the department of

agriculture and fisheries for Scotland, says as part of that research that the ongoing challenges of the inclement weather present a problem.

Annette Brooke (in the Chair): Thank you for that. We will keep interventions a little shorter in future.

Neil Parish: The hon. Lady is right, because climatic conditions will make a difference. The amount of time that an animal takes to finish grazing to become fat also makes a difference, as does the time taken to finish an animal for meat production. All such things have to be taken into consideration. Of course there are a number of ways to measure carbon.

Mr Mark Spencer (Sherwood) (Con): In my hon. Friend's calculations, will he make reference to the transportation of meat once it has been processed through an abattoir? For example, moving beef from South America to Europe using aviation fuel enormously increases the carbon footprint.

Neil Parish: Indeed. When we import meat from South America, Australia or New Zealand, we should take into account the length of time that it takes to get here, especially if it comes by air. Of course, if it comes by sea, it is argued that the carbon footprint is not as large, but it is there none the less. That is why local home-produced food that travels very little distance to the abattoir and that is grazed nicely on good permanent pasture must be of great benefit to all the United Kingdom.

Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con): I applaud both the fact that we are having this debate and the work that my hon. Friend and his committee have done. Does he agree that, while this is a legitimate debate for us to have, our fundamental job in the House is to stand up and support our beef and sheep farmers?

Neil Parish: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. The purpose of this inquiry and report is to look at the benefits of producing grass-fed beef and lamb, to keep sustainable grass pasture and to produce very good meat. We would not necessarily want or be able to plough such land, and a huge amount of carbon is captured within the soil. We took some evidence that showed that over years of permanent pasture the carbon actually increases, so there are many good reasons for producing this high-quality beef and lamb.

I will, if I may, continue with my contribution. The footprint of sheep, according to the PAS 2050, is 11.86 kg CO₂ equivalent per kilogramme of live weight. The comparative figures for Wales were 7.51 kg CO₂ equivalent per kilogramme of live weight and 8.6 kg CO₂ equivalent per kilogramme of live weight.

As that has demonstrated, even within a country, there is significant variation in the statistics and no way to determine whether they were driven by different efficiencies or by different ways of producing data. That makes any form of comparative assessment of carbon footprint challenging and poses major difficulties for policy formulation. There is no international consensus on sequestration—the process by which carbon dioxide is removed from the atmosphere by pasture land through a process of absorption and deposition in the soil, which acts as a carbon sink. In essence, that is a natural form of carbon capture and storage.

The importance of including carbon sequestration is highlighted by Mr Bill Grayson, a producer who gave evidence to the inquiry. He ran four models on his farm's emissions. The PAS 2050 model, which does not include sequestration, concluded that his farm was a net emitter. The other three methods, which include sequestration, put his farm as a net absorber of carbon. Evidently such significant differences make sensible policy development almost impossible.

Mr Spencer: My hon. Friend is being very generous with his time. I hope that he recognises that we need to view this matter globally. It makes no sense to allow UK farmers to plant trees and remove land from beef production to then allow South American farmers to tear up rain forests to produce beef and to ship it around the world, so that it sits on supermarket shelves next to UK-produced beef.

Neil Parish: My hon. Friend raises another important issue. I have visited Brazil, where people are ploughing up a lot of the savannah and planting soya bean and sugar beet and driving cattle towards the rain forests and allowing them to partly destroy the rain forests before people cut down the trees. So it is absolutely essential that we produce in this country high-quality beef and lamb, so that we do not need as many imports; that is absolutely clear. I will go on to talk a little more about those examples shortly.

I want to highlight the methodology used to produce the figures. Achieving consistency in the figures used should be viewed as one of the top priorities for the industry and the Government, who should work in partnership. We urge Ministers and officials at DEFRA to accelerate work at both the EU level and with international bodies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation, to seek global consensus in an agreed methodology.

For example, if we compare the impact of livestock in the UK and in France using nationally-produced data, our producers will be hugely disadvantaged because French data will include sequestration. It is not very often that I ask a Minister to look at a French system, but on this occasion I will. We urge him to look into this issue as a priority and—if we are to see greater co-operation between nations in our effort to respond to environmental and food challenges—to migrate to the model accepted in France. If the Government do not view this as a viable course of action, they need to make a robust case to say why not. The disparity built into the status quo is no longer acceptable in a global debate, because we debate carbon across the whole world and we need to measure it in a similar way.

The report also highlighted other weaknesses in the current life-cycle analysis in the model that DEFRA uses, in addition to its exclusion of sequestration. It is well documented and understood that grazing livestock plays a major role in the management of our landscape; I think that all hon. Members from all parties in the House would recognise that. That view is supported by the English National Park Authorities Association and Natural England, which rightly point out that the landscape value generated by upland farming has an economic benefit to the area, owing to the tourism and business revenue extracted, and that grassland management is important to maximise upland areas' efficiency as a carbon sink.

Glyn Davies (Montgomeryshire) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for allowing me to intervene, and I do so only to ask him to agree that that issue is particularly relevant to Wales. There is almost no cereal growing in Wales that is worth talking about; in Wales, farming is almost wholly livestock farming. Livestock farming in Wales is so important that it completely dominates the agricultural scene there.

Neil Parish: My hon. Friend refers to the amount of permanent pasture in Wales. Much of the land may well be too steep to be ploughed, and from an environmental point of view, we would not want to plough it. I do not wish to over-labour this point, but if we are not going to graze livestock on that pasture, what are we actually going to do to manage that land successfully? So livestock farming is not only important from an aesthetic point of view; it produces great meat and it does a great service for the landscape. So I very much agree with him. Parts of the west country and the north of England likewise have much permanent pasture.

Huw Irranca-Davies (Ogmore) (Lab): May I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to something that he might find interesting, which is the reintroduction of the little-known Welsh White beef cattle up on the Plynlimon hills with the Wildlife Trusts? The reason that those cattle have been reintroduced in those areas, which are vital for holding carbon emissions in peat bogs, is that they trample the right sort of way—better than sheep—in that environment and they eat the right sort of vegetation to keep the biodiversity right as well. So the Welsh White cattle are doing a good job up there.

Neil Parish: The shadow Minister raises an interesting issue about not only carbon sequestration but the management of grassland, but not only Welsh White cattle are important in that regard; there is an argument that sheep do not do the same job on certain pasture land as suckler cows and beef cattle do. That is perhaps the subject for a debate for another time, but it is relevant to the fact that, if we are to have good-quality grassland, we need the right type of stock to graze it.

The inquiry found that no current methodology exists to include this factor in an assessment of carbon footprint, despite the fact the loss of hedgerows and pasture land, for example, would evidently impact on the amount of carbon removed from the air. Of course, more carbon would also be emitted if that pasture land were to be destroyed.

Grazing livestock, particularly on uplands, makes a valuable contribution to biodiversity and the preservation of ecosystems. For example, hedgerows provide wonderful habitats for many species that are vital for the diversity of fauna and flora. As numerous witnesses pointed out, it is important to bear that in mind when considering the overall environmental impact of agriculture. Quantifying the carbon value of biodiversity is incredibly difficult and is not something that life-cycle analysis takes into account. The evidence suggests that it will be a major challenge to find an agreed way of quantifying this benefit in the short or medium term. This exposes the weaknesses of simply looking at carbon footprint as a measure of environmental impact, and we urge the Minister to consider this point.

George Eustice (Camborne and Redruth) (Con): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. Like me, he was a farmer before first entering the House and as farmers we are used to getting the blame for a lot of things. There are certainly environmental consequences to certain farming practices, but does he share my disbelief that farmers are in the dock for—of all things—causing climate change and being responsible for it, given that we all know that the real problems with carbon come from the transport sector, energy generation and general industrialisation rather than from farming?

Neil Parish: My hon. Friend and I should probably both declare an interest; I should certainly do so as I am a farmer, and proud to be so. He is absolutely right, because what we have with methane gas from ruminants in particular is a very natural gas. It may come out perhaps too much for people's liking, but it is very much there. We are taking lower-quality proteins—I had better be careful what I say—and developing them into high-quality meat. Therefore, the animal is doing a great deal of good, and I want to balance the amount of methane gas that the animals might produce compared with the amount of carbon that is kept in the land. I repeat the fact that if we do not keep that land as permanent pasture and plough it up, we will release an awful lot of carbon.

Farmers feel that the real basis of livestock farming is almost under threat. The whole idea of this report is perhaps to try to flag up in advance where the world might go in a few years' time, and that scenario is what I am particularly keen to avoid. People need to know the benefits of livestock farming.

I will move on to the next paragraph of the report. Food security is one of the most pressing issues for Governments across the world. By 2050, the global population is estimated to reach 9 billion, and food production will need to increase to meet growing demand. However, that has to be achieved using the existing agricultural land, while making more efficient use of water and mitigating the existing and future impact of farming on the environment.

The challenge is no less great on the home front, with the UK population set to increase by 10 million in the next quarter of a century alone and after the percentage of agricultural land in the UK fell from 39% in 1989 to some 25% in 2009. This means maximising the value of available land, by getting the best possible outcomes in terms of food production. British agricultural land comprises many different land types, and not all are suitable for the production of arable crops. This point was eloquently made by the food climate research network in its evidence to the all-party group:

“Not all land can support crop production and the question then arises—what should be done with this poorer quality, more marginal land? Traditionally the answer has been to graze ruminants which then provide us with meat, milk and other outputs. This represents a form of resource efficiency—the land is being used to produce food that would otherwise need to be produced elsewhere”
That is particularly important.

Almost 65% of UK farmland is only suitable for growing grass where sheep and cattle are grazed. We should be utilising this marginal land, which cannot be used for arable crops but can grow good grass and provide good biodiversity and environmental benefits. Beef cattle and sheep play a vital role in food production,

because of their ability to turn non-human food into edible proteins and nutrients. Limiting the role of British livestock will reduce the efficiency with which we use our land for food production and will therefore reduce our ability to be self-sufficient.

These points are often neglected, or at least not adequately considered, by those who advocate meat-free diets. If, for argument's sake, we were all to switch to a diet free of meat, much of our agricultural land would be unfarmed and we would see a considerable drop in the efficiency of our land to food conversion, in addition to the negative impacts on biodiversity, as outlined above.

When the developing world is eating more meat, and choosing to do so, there is a greater need to produce meat across the world. Therefore, Britain should do its fair share of meat production, and grazing both sheep and cattle on grassland is essential, in my view. Grazing cattle and sheep are often given disproportionate blame for carbon emissions from agriculture, and there is not enough recognition among some conservation groups of the role that livestock farming, particularly of grass-fed beef and lamb, plays in storing carbon, protecting biodiversity and utilising marginal land that cannot be used for arable crops.

I thank you for listening to this debate, Mrs Brooke, and open it to colleagues to join in.

2.52 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) for bringing this matter to the Westminster Hall Chamber. Those hon. Members who represent agricultural areas will be aware of the importance of the carbon footprint in relation to beef cattle and sheep. I declare an interest as a farmer, although not a working farmer, and as someone who has lived in the countryside for some 40 years. The land that we have is rented out by adjacent farmers, who look after it well. I have spoken to the Ulster Farmers Union in Northern Ireland, which has given us a bit of a steer—if I may make a pun—and it has, along with the all-party group's recommendations, given us some indication of where we want to go.

I am sure that I am not the only person here who watches adverts for cars with a low carbon footprint, who has read reports by environmentalists regarding our footprint as a country and has even been made aware of issues by children and grandchildren, coming home and telling us what they were taught in school. They tell us things we do not know and seem to have great knowledge and expertise.

It is incumbent on us all to be aware of the world that we live in and to do our best to leave a planet behind which our great-grandchildren can enjoy. One aspect of this is being told that we need to cut down our carbon emissions, otherwise global warming will wreak havoc on our country and our world. One of the main greenhouse gases is methane—we are aware of that—which is produced in large quantities by cattle. Agriculture is responsible for 22% of Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions, but that must be set against the fact that it has moulded landscapes, encourages biodiversity and brings money into the local economy by providing employment. I want to give a farmer's perspective on the issue, and a Northern Ireland perspective as well.

Northern Ireland's greenhouse gas emissions are responsible for 3.5% of the total UK greenhouse gas emissions. However, it is responsible for 7% of the UK's methane and nitrous oxide, because Northern Ireland relies a lot more on agriculture than other parts of the UK. Therefore the carbon footprint is of greater importance for Northern Ireland than for other regions of the UK.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): Regarding the importance for Northern Ireland, does my hon. Friend agree that on this issue, like a number of others, it is important that the Minister, DEFRA and the responsible Departments in Westminster liaise closely with the regions—Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland—to ensure that best practice is adopted by all those concerned, throughout the UK, in trying to tackle a serious problem?

Jim Shannon: I thank my hon. Friend for a good intervention. I am confident that the Minister will give us some indication of that—I have no doubt that that will happen—but the regions my hon. Friend mentioned must work together with DEFRA.

As I have often said in this Chamber, agriculture in Northern Ireland is under pressure because it is being strangled by EU regulations. Young farmers go to college and learn new ways, then they come home and cannot afford to implement changes that would be beneficial, due to red tape and regulations. However, that is a debate for another day. European legislation dictates carbon emission reductions, but the support offered is sparse. For example, in some countries carbon sequestration is included, but in our current model it is not included, so our farmers would be at a disadvantage in a global market if a tax were to be imposed.

In the grassland used to graze cattle and sheep, carbon is stored in the soil, as the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton said, therefore less carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere if we farm along those lines. That information could have major repercussions and calls into question our understanding of the carbon footprint of livestock. Although that might be a little bit technical and hard to understand, perhaps, for those who do not have knowledge about the land, it is a serious issue.

It is difficult effectively to evaluate the carbon footprint of raising livestock, because many different variables affect the amount of methane produced, such as the feed system it is raised on, pasture type, rearing time and genetic make-up. People may believe that a meat-free diet is the future because crops have a lower carbon footprint, however far from the truth that may be, but some issues are raised by such a way of life. When land is ploughed, carbon is released that would otherwise have stayed trapped in the carbon sink and that in turn makes it difficult to compare the benefits of growing crops. Furthermore, as the hon. Gentleman mentioned, 65% of UK farmland is suitable only for growing grass and would not be a viable option for growing crops. Some land would have to be in pasture all the time, because it cannot be used otherwise.

Ms Ritchie: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way and congratulate the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) on securing this welcome debate. Is the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon)

[*Ms Ritchie*]

aware of the impact of the cost of fertiliser on crop production and the impact of that on the debate on greenhouse gases?

Jim Shannon: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention. I am aware of that. Certainly, the Ulster Farmers Union and the farmers on the land in the Ards peninsula and mid-Down are all aware of the costs of the fertilisers and their impact on the land and the waters round about Strangford lough and the Irish sea.

If we ceased to graze cattle on these pasture lands, they could not be used to produce more food and the productivity of our land to food conversion would stop. Biodiversity would also be negatively affected. Land used for grazing livestock provides habitats for animals, which creates biodiversity. Biodiversity has a positive impact on the environment, but that is another factor that is not included when calculating carbon footprints. Many factors that need to be considered when calculating carbon footprints are not considered, and that could negatively affect our farming industry here in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Calculating the exact amount by which biodiversity benefits the environment is also difficult. To combat our greenhouse gases, we need more investment in research into farming practices. For example, how big a role does carbon sequestration actually play? We also need to educate our producers to better understand the various issues so that they are able to run their businesses more efficiently.

There is a lot of work to be done. The competitive farming systems team spends a third of its money on sustainable and competitive farming systems, yet most small farmers cannot think of that amount of their income leaving in that way. In Northern Ireland, we have many small farmers. The average size of a farm in Northern Ireland is between 65 and 70 acres, but there are many hobby farmers and part-time farmers. The impact on such farmers is greater, and the impact on us in Northern Ireland is greater still.

Sustainability is crucial. Raising livestock sustainably is not solely the responsibility of producers; retailers also play a pivotal and vital role, which I hope the Minister takes on board. Retailers must enable consumers to make informed decisions about the products they buy so that they can take into account animal welfare, nutritional value and environmental impact before purchasing the product. There has been much talk in the press over the past week or two about the green, amber and red system that tells consumers about a product's fat content, nutritional value and so on. That, too, will have an impact on farmers, through the retailers.

Retailers can make deals to source meat only from farms with lower emissions, which are better for the environment and are more cost-efficient, but they must stop squeezing the farmer with lower prices while maintaining or increasing prices in their shops, thereby putting pressure on farmers while increasing their own profit margins. Let us be realistic about achievable goals, rather than squeezing the farmer every time we try to achieve specific targets. That is a different story for a different day, but it comes off the back of this debate.

The question that we need to answer is simple: how will we produce enough food to feed a worldwide population of 9 billion by 2050? The answer lies with finding more efficient ways to raise livestock that do not compromise the needs of future generations. Enforcing a vegetarian diet would be unsustainable because the fertilisers used to increase yields, particularly nitrates, pollute water supplies and lead to other consequences. We are endangering the already fragile fishing ecosystems, and the carbon footprint of cattle and sheep is too high. Those issues must be fully considered.

Although I fully understand the need to reduce the carbon footprint, it cannot be done at the expense of farming in the United Kingdom and, more specifically, Northern Ireland. In any consideration of the topic, the farmers' views and opinions must be paramount. No system will work without their co-operation. Any enforcement of new regulations must be informed and subsidised and cannot be allowed to affect the cattle or the land. The Ulster Farmers Union recently highlighted an interesting figure:

"A recent European Joint Research Centre (JRC) study, highlighted that Brazilian beef has the largest carbon footprint of imported animal products, and with this in mind it is clear that it would be extremely difficult for the EU to achieve its CO₂ emission reduction objectives."

It is all very well to point the finger at our local farmers and to tell them what they should do, but other producers across the world are riding roughshod over the emissions objectives.

Any importation of animals with a high carbon footprint defeats the purpose of any targets set, and the local agriculture industry must be allowed to produce, sell and achieve reasonable aims. I urge great caution when considering the enforcement of a further burden on our agriculture sector. As one farmer said to me, and this is important,

"there are only so many targets we can reach before we realise that we haven't had time to actually produce anything at all—just time spent filling in forms and working at machinery."

Let us farm and help those who farm to do their best.

3.4 pm

Dr Eilidh Whiteford (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): I congratulate the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) not only on securing the debate but on all his work to drive forward the all-party group's report.

The impact of livestock production on greenhouse gas emissions and climate change is complex and highly contested. The report does an admirable job of highlighting some of the difficulties associated with carbon footprint modelling, particularly on measuring the impact of carbon sequestration, but that is only one aspect of a much bigger picture.

We need greater recognition of the urgent need to address climate change, and we cannot escape the reality that cattle and sheep produce a lot of methane, but it has become increasingly evident that that is not a zero-sum game; there is an increasing body of evidence showing the significant environmental benefits associated with livestock farming. When we look at both sides of the carbon balance sheet, we see that, overall, methane emissions from ruminants are only one part of the footprint of agricultural production and that cattle and sheep farming, which have been central to our culture

for millennia, play a positive role not only in enabling sustainable land use but in maintaining our carbon sinks, protecting biodiversity and creating livelihoods in rural communities.

Those issues are extremely pressing in Scotland, because livestock farming accounts for a high proportion of land use—significantly higher than in other countries of the UK. More than 82% of our agricultural land is grassland, some 70% of which is rough grazing. Those are huge carbon sinks—the Scottish Agricultural College estimates that they represent 80% of the UK's carbon stocks—so the extent to which carbon sequestration takes place on grassland is very important. We do not yet have enough consistent evidence to reach definitive conclusions, but we know that changing the use of that land could have very adverse consequences, not just for greenhouse gas emissions but for biodiversity and the livelihoods of our farmers and rural communities.

In the past, I have heard simplistic arguments for switching from livestock to arable production, which is a total non-starter in most of Scotland. Some 85% of Scottish land is less-favoured area, and much of it, especially on higher ground, is not suitable for crops. Our climate, combined with marginal land quality, makes arable farming an unviable proposition in many parts of the country. As much of that land is a carbon sink, bringing grasslands and rough grazing into cultivation would, frankly, be destructive and irresponsible in climate and environmental terms; it would increase, not decrease, greenhouse gas emissions.

By contrast, a great deal can be done to maximise the sustainability of livestock farming without compromising livelihoods. Research by Scotland's Rural College as part of the "Farming for a Better Climate" initiative shows there are lots of simple, practical steps that farmers can take to minimise and mitigate the impact of livestock-related greenhouse gas emissions, from how they manage grazing land to how they use fertilisers and manage waste and slurry; there is also the kind of energy, bedding materials and feed that they use, and even the breeds of sheep and cattle that they rear. Let us not forget that that account cannot end at the front gate—the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr Spencer), who is no longer in his place, made a point about transport costs—it is also about other aspects of the supply chain, such as packaging and processing costs, all of which potentially have an environmental impact that can be reduced to bring better produce to consumers.

I represent a constituency famous for producing some of the finest beef anywhere in the world. Indeed, Buchan was known as the stockyard of Britain in the days when we still had trains. We are proud of the beef and lamb that we produce in the north-east, but livestock numbers have fallen across Scotland in recent years. As several colleagues from Northern Ireland have said, this has not been an easy time for livestock farmers, who face a range of challenges that are outwith the scope of today's debate.

When people stop farming, the land stops being stewarded and communities start to diminish. Before we make rash policy decisions, it is important that we have a much better understanding of the role of carbon sequestration. We do not have enough of an evidence base yet, but policy should be based on knowing what we are dealing with and how we can best use our land sustainably. We should recognise that livestock farming

is one of the most sustainable ways to manage, maintain and steward grassland and land that is not suitable for cultivation.

I hope the Minister will take on board the all-party group's concerns about the methodologies used by DEFRA to measure the climate impact of beef and lamb production. I also hope he will recognise the contribution that cattle and sheep farming make to sustainable land management, food security, biodiversity and the well-being of our rural communities.

3.10 pm

Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford)—I very much enjoyed her speech. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) on calling the debate.

I should mention that I keep Hereford cattle, which are the finest, tastiest, most adaptable and most popular breed in the world—no need for any of these Welsh Whites.

Huw Irranca-Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Bill Wiggin: I would be delighted to give way after challenging the hon. Gentleman.

Huw Irranca-Davies: Welsh Whites are a very small breed, with little panda eyes that look up at you. It would be very difficult to eat them, because they are gorgeous little creatures.

Bill Wiggin: It is difficult to justify having these wonderful animals if they have no purpose. One key point is that if we did not have a healthy, nutrient-rich diet, largely from meat, it would be hard to justify having these wonderful breeds, from many different parts of the United Kingdom, which would be a great loss.

There are two primary causes of climate change: one is chopping down trees in our rain forests to plant soya beans, and we are doing what we can to mitigate the impact of that industry; the other is emissions from the front and the back of the cow, which release methane into the atmosphere. While the emissions from our cattle are regrettable, we have taken steps to control the phenomenon, and we are currently taking further action.

A report called "The English Beef and Sheep Production Roadmap—Phase 1", from 2009, states:

"Steady improvements in beef and sheep production efficiency have taken place over the past decade, with 5% fewer prime animals required to produce each tonne of meat in 2008 than in 1998."

Emission levels from British cattle have therefore been reduced due to lower cattle numbers.

Regardless of where the emissions come from, however, the inquiry undertaken by the all-party group has clearly highlighted the fact that there are specific issues surrounding the way in which we in England measure carbon emissions from grazing livestock on our farms. In some cases, we go so far as to disadvantage our farmers, our industry and even our country, in terms of its ability to meet the agricultural industry's global targets. It is outrageous that there is no international consensus on sequestration,

[*Bill Wiggin*]

and I am sure the Minister will want to see one. Having a consensus is absolutely fundamental; indeed, there is an old saying: “If you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.” We have to move forward on that.

Britain excludes sequestration from its assessments, whereas France and Wales, which is next to my constituency, include sequestration. That means that when we make comparisons between the three countries and measure how close each is to reaching its targets, we in England find ourselves at a disadvantage. While the inquiry by the all-party group, which is led by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton, has told us many things we already knew, it has also revealed sequestration to be the primary issue of contention.

England has one of the most efficient livestock production systems in the world, in the form of our rain-fed pastures. Yet, grazing cattle and sheep comes in for undue negative criticism, with the focus fixed firmly on emissions from animals. Those animals actually have a positive part to play in landscape management and the utilisation of land that cannot, as many colleagues have said, be used for arable crops. Many fellow Members would support us in the view that our sheep and cattle contribute meaningfully to our environment, and the all-party group report rightly acknowledges that. One of the contentions revealed by the report is that if we, like France and Wales, took such issues into account, our carbon footprint could be significantly lower, and our farmers would be at less of a disadvantage.

The report suggests we need more robust scientific evidence and data to move the debate forward constructively. National Farmers Union climate change adviser Dr Ceris Jones acknowledged that the report highlights the exclusion of sequestration from the majority of our calculations of greenhouse gases. As the report recalls, “a number of witnesses” supported the idea that pasture land had the ability

“to sequester carbon from the atmosphere”.

It goes on to point to research being done in France by Professor Jean François Soussana on carbon sequestration, which may point to why several countries now include carbon sequestration in their calculations.

In my constituency, farming is a major employer and a huge part of the local economy. I therefore find very troubling anything that hampers my constituents or that might prevent their businesses from growing or from being as successful as they could be.

Carbon sequestration is set to be a significant issue for the industry, particularly because of the different attitudes towards it in different countries. As I explained, those differences could have a significant negative impact on our industry. If we could offset the methane emissions from grazing livestock, as happens in France and Wales, that could have a positive implication for our understanding of our livestock’s carbon footprint. Additionally, as the report explains, that

“would render the current PAS 2050 model incorrect and would mean we should move to a model closer to that used in France.”

Before such a drastic move is contemplated, and with the science unresolved, further investigation should, of course, be our first course of action. Dr Luke Spadavecchia, of DEFRA, has explained to the all-party group the complexity of the sequestration calculation. Even if

the science on sequestration was unanimous, however, the inquiry would still have raised several valid and vital points on, for example, sustainability and the role our cattle and sheep play in feeding the world’s growing population.

Ultimately, there is still much debate to have on this matter. I hope the inquiry and our subsequent debate will enable us to find common ground so that we can move forward and give our farmers the best opportunity to succeed.

3.17 pm

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): It is a pleasure, as ever, to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Brooke.

It is probably masochism that brings me here to debate with a room full of farmers. People are well aware of where I come from on this issue, but I hope to convince them that I am speaking not from an emotive perspective, but on the basis of a significant number of reports from eminent experts in the field, which have convinced me of the environmental danger posed by the livestock sector.

In 2009, I introduced a debate in Parliament on the environmental impact of the livestock sector—as I recall, it was just me and the then Labour Minister, who was not particularly impressed. [*Interruption.*] Actually, the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) may have been there.

It is a shame that my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South (Robert Ffello) is not here, because he introduced the Sustainable Livestock Bill in Parliament a few years ago as a private Member’s Bill.

Neil Parish: When the hon. Lady refers to the dangers of livestock production, is she differentiating between grass-fed livestock on permanent pasture, which is good for the landscape and biodiversity, and other forms of livestock? It is an interesting point, and I would like her to clarify it.

Kerry McCarthy: I will get on to that in a moment. It was one of the first points I was going to make.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent South is by no means a vegetarian—he enjoys eating meat—but he made a persuasive case at that time for looking at the environmental impact of the livestock sector. It is a shame that he could not be here, because he perhaps has more credibility on these matters than I do in the eyes of the farmers present.

However, let me turn to my first point and respond to the intervention from the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish). The problem with today’s debate is that it has, for understandable reasons, focused very much on farming in the UK. I understand that Members are keen to support the industry and the farmers in their constituencies, but that has led to a bit of a distortion, with a focus on grazing and grass-fed livestock, although I entirely agree that their environmental impact is less serious.

I had an interesting meeting with the Campaign to Protect Rural England on Friday and was told how in some areas of Wales the land previously used for sheep grazing was being used to grow blueberries, or given over to forestry, which were both more profitable. I accept that the areas at the top of the hill would not be

suitable for that, but the CPRE made the case for alternative uses. Given the price of blueberries in the supermarket, perhaps people would gain from venturing into growing them.

Jim Shannon: The hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have focused on local farming, but I think every one mentioned farming elsewhere in the world, where the impact and the carbon footprint are greater. Does the hon. Lady acknowledge that if livestock farming plays a role—and we believe it may—other countries need to do their part? Does she feel that that is something she should focus on?

Kerry McCarthy: I entirely support the move, if people are going to eat meat, towards locally-sourced, sustainable, grass-fed cattle. That is far more environmentally friendly, in view of issues such as food miles; and, in the case of organic meat, issues of pesticides and fertilisers are also addressed. I support that. It is not the ideal solution, but it is a lot better.

I had a piece published on the topic in the *New Statesman* last week; 97% of the world's soya crop goes to farmed animals. As to the question of how to feed the world without a partly meat-based diet, it is estimated that we could eliminate most of the worst of world hunger with about 40 million tonnes of food, but at the moment nearly 20 times that—760 million tonnes—is fed to animals each year. My article was to an extent a criticism of the Enough Food IF campaign, which is about feeding the world and lobbying the G8 to address global hunger. The campaign criticises the fact that 100 million tonnes of crops go towards biofuels, and says that biofuels are a bad thing; but, as I have said, 760 million tonnes go towards feeding animals and it seems completely silent on that point. That needs to be addressed when we consider the devastation of the rain forest and its environmental impact.

Bill Wiggin: The hon. Lady is making an important point about the substitution of animal feed for human food, but she must understand that—even if the crop is wheat or soya beans—not all that food would be suitable for human consumption. Therefore, even in the ideal world that she hopes to live in, what she envisages would not mean we could not have animals.

Kerry McCarthy: I understand the nuanced argument that the hon. Gentleman is trying to make, but I still think that there is a compelling case, and I want to deal now with some reports.

It seemed to me that during the debate there was a herd of elephants in the room, which hon. Members were not mentioning. No reference was made to other very authoritative reports, which have said there is a serious issue to be addressed. In my 2009 debate, I cited the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation report of 2006, “Livestock's Long Shadow”, which makes compelling reading. It concluded:

“The livestock sector emerges as one of the top two or three most significant contributors to the most serious environmental problems, at every scale from local to global.”

I will not cite all the figures that I quoted in my debate, because people will be familiar with the fact that it takes 8 kg of grain to produce 1 kg of beef.

Neil Parish: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Kerry McCarthy: I do not think I can take any more interventions, because I suspect the winding-up speeches will begin soon, and I have been generous in giving way.

Raj Patel wrote in “Stuffed and Starved”:

“The amount of grains fed to US livestock would be enough to feed 840 million people on a plant-based diet. The number of food-insecure people in the world in 2006 was, incidentally, 854 million”.

I also cited figures about the water footprint. It takes 100 times as much water to produce 1 kg of beef as it does to grow 1 kg of vegetables. It takes 2.2 calories of fossil fuel energy to produce a single calorie of plant protein. It takes almost 21 square metres of land to produce 1 kg of beef, if we factor in animal feed, compared with 0.3 square metres to produce 1 kg of vegetables; I could go on. That was a 2006 report, but more recently Professor Mark Sutton, the lead author of a UN environment programme study published in February, entitled “Our Nutrient World”, called for people to become what he called demitarians, and eat half as much meat as they do now. He said:

“Unless action is taken increases in pollution and the per capita consumption of energy and animal products will exacerbate nutrient losses, pollution levels and land degradation, further threatening the quality of our water, air and soils, affecting climate and biodiversity”.

In 2009, a report was produced called “How Low Can We Go?”. It was co-authored by the World Wide Fund for Nature and the Food Climate Research Network set up by Dr Tara Garnett, who is now at the university of Oxford. It gave scenarios in which cuts in food system emissions would mean we could reduce the total UK carbon footprint by 20%—that is, make a 70% cut in the UK food carbon footprint, which is currently about 30% of the UK total. It concluded:

“A reduction in consumption of livestock products could play a significant role in any deep and long-term abatement strategy”

to cut greenhouse gas emissions

“from the UK's food chain.”

Another relevant paper was called “Public health benefits of strategies to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions: food and agriculture” and was published in *The Lancet* in December 2009. It was a collaboration between the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health at the Australian National University, Canberra, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, the Food Climate Research Network and the London International Development Centre. I am sure that hon. Members do not need me to tell them that work published in *The Lancet* is peer-reviewed. I would say that that is a considerably more rigorous process than the all-party group inquiry that we have heard about. The paper concluded:

“Agricultural food production and agriculturally-related change in land use substantially contribute to greenhouse-gas emissions worldwide. Four-fifths of agricultural emissions arise from the livestock sector. Although livestock products are a source of some essential nutrients, they provide large amounts of saturated fat, which is a known risk factor for cardiovascular disease. We considered potential strategies for the agricultural sector to meet the target recommended by the UK Committee on Climate Change to reduce UK emissions from the concentrations recorded in 1990 by 80% by 2050, which would require a 50% reduction by 2030. With use of the UK as a case study, we identified that a combination of agricultural technological improvements and a 30% reduction in livestock production would be needed to meet this target”.

[Kerry McCarthy]

The final report I want to mention is “Setting the Table”, commissioned by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and published by the Sustainable Development Commission in December 2009. It found that eliminating waste, cutting fatty and sugary foods and reducing meat and dairy consumption would make the biggest contribution towards improving health and reducing the environmental impacts of the food system. The SDC’s research found evidence that consuming only fish from sustainable stocks, eating more seasonal food, cutting out bottled water, shopping on foot, and some other things not directly related to the meat industry would contribute towards a more sustainable diet. However, it concluded that the most significant health and environmental benefits were from reducing meat and dairy, cutting food and drink of low nutritional value and reducing food waste.

I appreciate the intention of hon. Members who are present today to defend the UK beef and sheep industry; but I do not think it is helpful, in doing that, to ignore much of the other evidence. We cannot look at the issues in isolation. We should begin by acknowledging that there is a problem, and address that. I am slightly concerned that EBLEX, the organisation for the British beef and sheep industry, supports the all-party group, and is thanked in the report. I also note that Weber Shandwick provides the secretariat for the group, and has been thanked for its help in compiling the report. I do not know quite what clients it has that have led to its interest in the issue, but I think vested interests are clearly at work. I was going to say they are trying to pull the wool over our eyes—I have managed to make an entire speech without sheep or cow-related puns until now; I am not sure that the Minister or my hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Huw Irranca-Davies) will manage that. He already has a twinkle in his eye. I think that there is, to an extent, an attempt to pull the wool over our eyes, and I urge Ministers to consider the issue in the round, rather than looking only at the narrow points made in the report.

3.29 pm

Huw Irranca-Davies (Ogmore) (Lab): It is a delight to serve in a debate under your stewardship, Mrs Brooke, and to respond briefly, before the Minister takes the stage. I thank the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) and other members of the all-party group on beef and lamb for their work on the report. I note for the record my membership of the group, although I can take no credit or praise for this report. I was absent from the proceedings during witness statements and so on. My absence in no way diminishes the report; in fact, it probably strengthens it.

I will mention the contributions before I make some detailed points. The chair of the all-party group, the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton, went in some detail through the report, which I will discuss in a moment. I should make it clear that I used the example of Welsh White cattle for a particular reason. He made the point ably in his contribution that we should consider not only issues such as carbon reduction, emissions and sequestration, but the wider benefits of particular livestock in certain landscapes and environments.

The reason why I gave the curious example of the fairly rare Welsh White—a small beef animal—is that its footprint is slightly lighter than other cattle but slightly heavier than sheep. It does a perfect job of breaking up the upland peat bogs of the Plynlimon hills, but not breaking up the ground too much. Combined with excellent work done by local farmers and the Wildlife Trusts to re-block some of the drains dug during the second world war to dry out the land so crops could be planted, which never quite worked successfully, the breed is now yielding great dividends. The right creature in the right habitat helps biodiversity as well.

The hon. Gentleman made the point well in his contribution that there is a wider range of issues, some of which are interlinked. Often, we talk about carbon on this side and biodiversity on the other side. We need to pull the strands together intelligently.

The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) made a varied contribution. He always speaks well, and not only about the interests of Northern Ireland and his constituents. He rightly raised food security and food production, as did other Members. We are focusing increasingly on meeting the need for good nutrition and affordable food on the tables of a growing population both within this country and in terms of exports. Export markets are growing for Northern Ireland, Scottish, Welsh and English produce.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford) added an extra dimension to the debate when she said that we need to consider both sides of carbon. Again, that came out in the all-party parliamentary group’s report: this is not simply about carbon emissions, but about sequestration within different types of landscape. The point was well made, and I will return to it.

The hon. Member for North Herefordshire (Bill Wiggin) made a good contribution, although I should pick him up on one point. He referred to Wales, “which is next to my constituency.” It is a little larger than simply being next to his constituency; it is next to a few others as well. I understand that Wales is often used as a unit of international measurement, but I would not want to think that it is only the size of North Herefordshire. It is a little larger.

Bill Wiggin: It is definitely still next door to my constituency, though.

Huw Irranca-Davies: It is, but it is next door to a lot of others as well. We may be slightly smaller than other countries, but we are a proud nation, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) rightly challenged the farming sector with its responsibilities in terms of climate change and carbon emissions, saying that it could do more. She was eminently reasonable on the contribution that farming could play as part of the wider UK and global drive to tackle global emissions. She also widened the debate to the issue of biofuels versus food, which other hon. Members also raised, and to diet and other reports that challenge or contradict what we are debating. Those reports were useful for this debate and probably deserve separate debates, which I am sure she will seek; it is right to have challenge.

This is more than simply an applied academic argument about how we measure and compare the carbon footprint of livestock. It is about effective measures to improve the performance of different types of farms in different farming sectors, and we can seek that improvement only if we measure the right thing in the right way and make like-for-like comparisons both within the UK and its devolved Administrations and internationally. As hon. Members have said, it is also a matter of food security and providing for the demands of a growing global population, and as I am sure other members of the all-party group are aware, it is a matter of reputational importance to the livestock sector. It recognises the work that the sector can do and its role in reducing carbon emissions, while putting good, wholesome British food on consumers' plates in all parts of the UK and increasingly in other countries, which demand outstanding produce from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The all-party group's report raises questions about the accuracy and appropriateness of measurement, the lack of consensus on standard methodologies of measurement and the lack of comparability between measurement approaches domestically and internationally, as well as about how carbon sequestration can and should be taken into account with a standard approach. The all-party group has done a great service to the House by raising those issues, so that the Minister can respond to them domestically and internationally. I will turn briefly to some of the specific issues.

I am grateful for the information provided to all hon. Members by the National Farmers Union and others. One interesting dilemma within the discussions on carbon emissions and sequestration is illustrated in upland hill farming, which is part of my family background. The NFU makes the good point that such farmers could be particularly disadvantaged by how we currently measure, assess and compare carbon impacts. Some of the hill farms are on poor land without any real alternative uses. Such farming is also extensive in nature; it takes far longer to raise lambs to carcass weight. The finishing period is far longer, and generally, the vegetation and forage are of a much lower standard. That has a significant impact. When we look at the farming sector as a whole and say, "You're not doing well enough," the question comes back, "What alternatives do you have for that environment?" It is an interesting question. I am glad that I am speaking up for sheep, rather than cattle, after my earlier intervention. As we mentioned, it is also a question of the benefits for landscape management and biodiversity of having the right livestock in the right place.

On the international comparators raised by the all-party group and others, can the Minister give us an update on what progress has been made towards standardising international measures? What is happening on the common carbon footprinting methodology for the lamb meat sector? What is happening on the slightly earlier-stage beef life-cycle assessment white paper by the Global Roundtable for Sustainable Beef? How are those things progressing? They and similar transnational interventions might provide some solutions to what the all-party group seeks.

Some issues raised by the NFU include the uncertainty still associated with agricultural emissions—it existed while we were in government, and it is still ambiguous

now—the need for good data about the wider aspects of on-farm activity, the choice of unit used to assess on-farm activity and carbon emissions, where the boundary lies and whether farm-specific mitigation measures should be part of the overall measure of a farm's carbon impact. If a farm takes measures, including on renewable energy and so on, should they be included?

Finally, the NFU has broadly welcomed the recent call by the Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board to develop and deliver a computer-based environmental impact calculator for use by UK farms. It sees that as a way to achieve less ambiguity and more confidence. Will the Minister give us an update on that as well?

I thank the all-party group for its report and for securing the debate this afternoon. The right questions are being asked, and I am sure that the Minister will give us some assurance on them. Much more work needs to be done on measurement and comparability, but while recognising the real issues of food security and affordability, there are also things on which the farming sector—if we can get the measurements right—will want to deliver. Such work will show not only what a good job farmers do, but what more they can do to help us in our drive to tackle carbon emissions and climate change.

3.40 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Mr David Heath): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Brooke, and I think that this is the first time I have done so, so it is a particular pleasure. I, too, congratulate the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), not only on securing the debate and his contribution to it, but on the work of the all-party group for beef and lamb, which he chairs, and its report.

I am going to introduce a few figures, which are important to the debate. It is a fact that man-made greenhouse gas emissions represent a serious threat of climate change. Inescapably, agriculture directly accounts for about 10% to 12% of global greenhouse gas emissions. More widely, including other emissions associated with agricultural production, such as land use change, energy for fertiliser production and fuel for transport and refrigeration of products, emissions from global food production are far more significant, perhaps totalling 25% of global greenhouse gas emissions. In the UK, the figures are rather different. Agriculture accounts for about 9% of UK greenhouse gas emissions, and overall emissions from the agriculture sector have decreased by 20% since 1990, while we expect them to decrease by 12% from 2010 levels by 2025. I hope that that puts the issue into context.

The hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton, as well as the hon. Members for Strangford (Jim Shannon) and for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford), stressed the importance in discussion of such matters of recognising balance—there are downsides, but also upsides. The hon. Member for Ogmire (Huw Irranca-Davies) mentioned, for example, the value not only of biodiversity but of having a thriving and positive economy in the country. Getting the balance right is important, therefore, and is exemplified in specific cases. The hon. Member for Ogmire told us about his little, sad-looking White cattle in Plynlimon. I seem to remember that Plynlimon

[*Mr David Heath*]

is the wettest place in the United Kingdom—it has the highest rainfall—so perhaps that is why the cattle look sad: they are sitting at the source of the great River Severn and feeling sorry for themselves, because it is raining. Nevertheless, he made an important point about needing the right animals in the right places to achieve the right results.

To return to our carbon footprint in this country, UK beef and lamb producers are among the most efficient globally. In 2010, the EU Joint Research Centre published a report showing that British beef is produced with less than half the emissions per kilogram than beef from Brazil. Those results are supported by research undertaken by Ricardo-AEA and Cranfield university, which reported that beef from Brazil is produced with 33% greater emissions than beef from the UK. The point I am making, because many Members have been concerned about what carbon footprinting is all about, is that it can be a useful tool to help businesses identify inefficiencies and emissions hot spots in order to improve not only environmental performance, but business efficiency and competitiveness.

I was slightly concerned by the contributions of some Members, who suggested a serious detriment to agricultural producers in this country, which carbon footprinting is not. Carbon footprints are not used in international policy making; they are tools for the benchmarking and marketing of products. In England and Wales, we do not have Government targets for mitigation in the agricultural sector. International emission comparisons are made using greenhouse gas inventories that are compiled under strict guidance issued by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change. It is important to recognise that carbon footprinting can help the industry to meet not only our societal needs, in dealing with greenhouse gases, but its business needs, in doing the right thing. Carbon footprints are not intended—I can certainly foresee no such intention—to be introduced as targets or as something that individual producers must fulfil.

Nevertheless, the industry wants to do better. The UK beef and sheep industry, therefore, is seeking further emission reductions through the EBLEX product road maps, recognising that measures to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions generally increase business efficiency and competitiveness. My Department welcomes such developments as part of the wider growth strategy for the sector.

The APG made some specific points. Its report draws attention to the problems of standardisation for carbon footprinting of the beef and sheep sector. Under the previous Government, DEFRA worked with the British Standards Institute and the Carbon Trust to develop the PAS 2050 standard for carbon footprinting and to encourage best practice. PAS 2050 aims to simplify carbon footprinting so that it can be carried out by a wider range of practitioners, and provides guidance to ensure greater consistency in approach.

The report is right to point out, however, areas of uncertainty where flexibility is needed, so PAS 2050 is not prescriptive for individual products, although it includes the potential for industry to develop product guidelines known as “supplementary requirements” to ensure that consistent approaches are used and to improve comparability of results. The dairy sector, for example,

has produced such guidance via DairyCo, in partnership with the Carbon Trust. DairyCo has also worked with the International Dairy Federation to promote international standardisation. EBLEX is, as mentioned by the hon. Member for Ogmere, discussing international standards for carbon footprinting beef production systems with the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative or SAI Platform, a food-industry initiative supporting the development of sustainable agriculture worldwide. Similarly, EBLEX is exploring options to develop international standards for lamb production.

The APG report also calls for improved accounting of soil carbon sequestration in carbon footprinting. PAS 2050 provides for the optional inclusion of soil carbon sequestration in carbon footprinting, but we might have a misunderstanding about the terminology, which I want to address. There is a distinction between carbon storage and carbon sequestration: carbon storage is carbon that is held by permanent pasture or any other land management system; and carbon sequestration is a process by which carbon is captured in that system.

Scientific understanding indicates that UK pastures represent a significant store of carbon, but do not tend to sequester additional carbon from the atmosphere. That is where the distinction needs to be drawn. If we change land management, of course we have a change—perhaps a positive one, perhaps a negative one, but one that could be either sequestration or release of carbon—but, in a steady state, we do not have a movement of carbon on that basis. Where management practices are employed to increase soil carbon sequestration, the benefits are often small, uncertain and difficult to measure. Nevertheless, DEFRA has invested £390,000 in a project to improve carbon accounting under agricultural land management, including work to assess the extent to which agricultural land management can enhance carbon sequestration in the UK, the findings of which will support carbon footprinting studies. We expect the results to be published in the spring of 2014.

Bill Wiggin: My understanding of what the Minister said is that grassland is better storage than a sequestration process. However, the business of farming for cattle and sheep means that the carbon is captured by the grass and then moved along the food chain as the cattle eat the grass and become food and manure. That is the sequestration process, and that is why it is important to measure it.

Mr Heath: There is a constant store in any land management system. Any landscape feature, if it is not changed, will have a constant store, so there is a zero-sum gain. If the land is ploughed up or a different crop is grown, the equation may change and the position will be different. That is the simple point that I am making.

We want to continue to fund research into improving the sophistication and accuracy of carbon footprinting methods to support the industry and we have engaged actively in the production of internationally agreed standards for carbon footprints. Research under the UK’s agricultural greenhouse gas research and development platform is a £13.5 million initiative which, in response to the hon. Member for East Londonderry (Mr Campbell), who is not in his place at the moment, is shared with the devolved Administrations, so it is also relevant to the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan. Its purpose is

to improve the understanding of greenhouse gas emissions from UK agriculture, and it will also provide underpinning evidence to improve the quality of carbon footprints.

Given the wide variety of production systems and processes in beef and sheep farming, carbon footprinting inevitably becomes part of the marketing mix, but as with other product information, the industry has a responsibility to be transparent about what it has and has not included in the analyses.

Kerry McCarthy: Will the Minister address the point that was made by the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) about methane emissions? I believe that 37% of methane emissions are attributable to the livestock sector, but the hon. Gentleman argued that because they come from a natural source they may not be as environmentally damaging as emissions from other sources. My understanding is that emissions are emissions and cause the same harm regardless of where they originate.

Mr Heath: The hon. Lady is of course right. A greenhouse gas is a greenhouse gas and has an effect on climate change. I do not accept entirely the argument about some being natural and others are not. That is transparently the case, but it is not a distinction that should affect our consideration of emissions. Some processes and activities are more avoidable than others, and some have a societal interest. The hon. Lady's contention is perfectly respectable and she is entirely consistent in what she says about not using pasture land to produce animals as we do at the moment. However, society generally does not agree with that view. Society in this country generally wants to eat meat and wants the most efficient and effective processes, which is why we provide research support to help the industry to make those processes as beneficial and as least harmful as possible, but that does not mean that people do not want to eat meat. In the same way, people want to move around the country despite the fact that doing has a demonstrable effect on greenhouse gas emissions.

Kerry McCarthy: I thought I made it clear at the beginning that I was concerned primarily about soya and grain production and its impact, rather than grass-fed animals in this country.

Mr Heath: I understand. I am not trying to misrepresent the hon. Lady's point of view. She opened her comments by saying that she was somewhat masochistic in expressing her view in a debate populated largely by people with agricultural interests.

If we can do anything to mitigate effects on agriculture and any other sphere, we should do so. If we can provide help with research and help the industry to help

itself in reducing those effects, all the better. We want to put all those factors into the equation with the other undoubted benefits of extensive pasture and the societal changes in parts of the country where other forms of agriculture would be exceedingly difficult, or in areas where there is huge expertise, for example, in beef production. My hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire (Bill Wiggin) prayed in aid his Hereford cattle, and I thought there might be tension between those with Herefords and those with Aberdeen Angus cattle, but that did not arise. Let us join together in saying that this country is blessed with not only some of the best breeds of livestock, but some of the best livestock husbandry anywhere. I am proud of that, and it makes my job that much easier.

My final point is about industry development and supplementary requirements, and responds in part to the report of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton's all-party group. Getting development of supplementary requirements under PAS 2050 and product rules under the greenhouse gas protocol product standard will help to bring consistency to carbon footprinting in the beef and sheep sector. EBLEX has taken the lead, and is a very effective levy-funded organisation. It is working on a UK-wide basis, which is relevant to some of the arguments about levy funding in the red meat sector, to produce the best possible advice and support for all producers throughout the United Kingdom, and I support it in that.

My hon. Friend and his all-party group have made some important points about the lack of consistency and the interpretation of the information we have to date. We accept that there is a lack of consistency. We want to improve that and to make the information as useful as possible because that will help the industry to move in the right direction in reducing as far as possible the emissions from agriculture and ensuring that we contribute as much as we can to our overall reduction in greenhouse gas. I hope we all support that. It is a principal feature of Government policy.

Neil Parish: I thank the Minister for his response. I want to put on the record the benefits of grass-fed beef and sheep production, and the fact that the amount of carbon stored in the soil balances the methane gas that the animals release. That is the particular point that I wanted the report to emphasise.

Mr Heath: I am glad that I gave way to my hon. Friend to make that final comment without running foul of the procedural rules. This debate has been extremely useful and interesting. The argument will continue to engage us, but we have made a valuable contribution today.

Legal Aid (Rural Wales)

3.58 pm

Mr Mark Williams (Ceredigion) (LD): It is a particular pleasure, Mrs Brooke, to serve under your chairmanship this afternoon. We have an extra minute or so, for which I am very grateful.

I sought this debate to highlight the increasing number of concerns about the proposals to reform legal aid, following publication of the consultation document, "Transforming Legal Aid" by the Ministry of Justice on 9 April. I hope to obtain some reassurance from the Minister that, at the very least, the impact of the reforms on our constituents will be fully considered before changes are made.

The consultation, which closed on 4 June, outlines a number of reforms to the provision of legal aid across the England and Wales that are causing a great deal of concern. I responded to the consultation, as many other colleagues did, and tomorrow's Back-Bench debate provides another opportunity to speak on the issue—if hon. Members only have a small bite of the cherry today, there is the opportunity for a bigger bite in that debate.

I wanted to focus on the effect of the reforms particularly in rural areas—in constituencies such as mine and in rural Wales generally—because I believe that that has lamentably overlooked in the consultation. I worry that, if enacted, the proposals will have a devastating impact on access to justice for my constituents and on solicitors' practices, and we must be aware that the significance of the reforms is such that, if enacted, there will be no going back.

Before addressing the proposals, I want to raise concerns about the consultation itself. First, as mentioned by the Welsh Assembly Government in their submission to the consultation, there was no mention in the consultation document of the Welsh language in accordance with the Welsh Language Act 1993. The Welsh Language Commissioner, Meri Huws, states in her submission letter:

"There are several references in this consultation to assessing the impact of the proposed changes on various groups as well as assessing the impact in accordance with the MOJ's duties under the 2010 Equality Act. With regard to the Welsh language, there is no mention of it in the consultation's documentation."

What discussions have there been so far between the Ministry of Justice, the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Wales Office? I am glad that a colleague from the Wales Office, the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Stephen Crabb), is present today. It strikes many of us that the specific concerns of Wales have been low down the pecking order.

Mr Elfyn Llwyd (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing the debate, and I declare an interest, having practised legal aid work as a solicitor and barrister. I support everything that he is saying, but it is worse than he described. As the consultation document was sent out in English only, the Ministry of Justice thereby has broken its Welsh language policy. It is only a mere afterthought, as, I am sure, is getting rid of all these firms. The proposal is for

four legal aid firms alone to deal with legal aid in the whole of north Wales, and I am sure that it is just as bad in mid-Wales.

Mr Williams: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for that intervention, which illustrates the huge degree of concern. The Government embark on consultations, and we can have a debate about whether they are genuine; I hope very much that this one is, as much needs to be said and changes need to be made. However, I have to raise the treatment of the Welsh language in this case. I see, as an English speaker representing a majority Welsh-speaking constituency—50% of my constituents do so, and in large parts of my constituency, larger percentages speak Welsh as their first language—that what has happened is an insult to those people. All Departments across Whitehall need to be mindful of that when they produce any documentation.

Glyn Davies (Montgomeryshire) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is making a hugely important point to many of us who represent rural parts where the Welsh language is strong. Does he agree that the consultation simply has not been acceptable, and the principle reason is the attitude towards the Welsh language, not only in the consultation, but in the fact that there will be four firms, making it impossible for them to deliver the service and pay proper account to the Welsh language?

Mr Williams: I agree with my hon. Friend completely on that point, and I am grateful for both interventions. They illustrate points that I will make a little later in my speech.

Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con): I intervene briefly, simply to say that in answer to a question of mine the Under-Secretary of State for Justice, my hon. Friend the Member for Kenilworth and Southam (Jeremy Wright), stated that

"any criminal legal aid contract holder would be required to meet the obligations of the Welsh Language Act."—[*Official Report*, 11 June 2013; Vol. 564, c. 280W.]

That sounds all right on paper, but does the hon. Gentleman share my concern that it is something of an afterthought?

Mr Williams: As I shall say later, the delivery in practice will be a different story. There is concern that the consultation period of eight weeks is too short and does not allow people fully to analyse the proposals, particularly when reflecting on the Government's ambitious timetable not only to get the proposals authorised, but to start tendering the contracts by the autumn. Consultation is particularly critical in this case, given that the proposals can be enacted without further primary legislation, which is why it is opportune that we discuss such matters now.

Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing the debate. In April, the Government cut some civil and family legal aid, the consequences of which I am seeing in my office, with many parents fighting custody battles where one parent can get a solicitor and the other parent cannot. Therefore, justice is denied and courts are getting clogged up. In light of those changes, does it not make sense for the Government to slow down and have a look at what is happening already where they have cut legal aid, before rushing into further changes?

Mr Williams: I concur with much of what the hon. Lady says. This is about process, and what her constituents will find more difficult when they are faced, I think, with nine solicitors' practices in the whole of Gwent is physically accessing legal aid, if it is available to them.

On the proposals themselves, the model is inappropriate for rural areas. The geography of our country is such that defendants will be allocated a solicitor whom they will find it extremely difficult, physically, to meet sometimes. The proposals do not take into account the vast distances and travel challenges across my area of Ceredigion and the rest of rural Wales. If a defendant from Newtown was allocated a duty solicitor in Llanelli, a meeting would require the defendant or solicitor to make a round trip of more than five hours—not to mention, of course, the challenges with transport links that we face in rural areas.

The reduction in firms that are able to bid for contracts will lead to huge delays in solicitors attending courts, or possibly a police station, and that has serious implications for the defendant. I understand from a local solicitor that, just before Christmas, GEOAmev—one of the private companies—transported a constituent of mine from Manchester to Aberystwyth but was unable to take the constituent off the prison van. It had to take him back, as it had brought only two members of staff, and at least three are needed to escort a prisoner. That vast journey, at huge expense, was a wasted opportunity. A future with a criminal defence system providing that level of service is a worrying one.

Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Williams: I give way for the last time—[*Interruption.*] Sorry, nearly the last time.

Nia Griffith: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that affording that transport is virtually impossible for many clients and that, if they were allocated different people on different occasions, which can happen with repeat offences, they could end up with several different firms representing them at one court hearing? Again, that would be massively wasteful.

Mr Williams: The hon. Lady pre-empts another of my later remarks. The relationship between solicitors and those repeat offenders is critical, and we risk losing that.

It is asserted that there would be four providers across the whole of Dyfed Powys. There would be real access issues, and are the proposed consortia feasible? As we have heard from hon. Members, the proposals plan to have four providers across the whole of Dyfed Powys, four across the whole of north Wales—sorry, I correct myself—and four in Gwent and nine across the whole of south Wales. By contrast, 37 contracts are planned for Greater Manchester, which has a similar population to south Wales. Again, will the Ministry of Justice, and the Whip speaking for the Ministry today, outline how that was calculated? How was rurality factored in? Although my hon. Friends from south Wales and the M4 corridor will have strong feelings about the provision of access there, for those of us who work, live and function in mid-Wales and north Wales, the picture is disastrous. We lose out yet again, and we are put at a real disadvantage compared with other people across the country.

My next concern is that competitive tendering at 17.5% less will drive solicitors out of business. The competitive tendering proposed for contracts remains a major cause for concern. It will simply drive solicitors out of business. Those remaining will be firms that are willing to cut costs, possibly to unworkable levels. That would lead to tenders being awarded to less able and potentially less experienced firms, which may find themselves unable to deliver on the prices promised to secure the tender. I am clear in my mind where I would like to go if I needed legal advice. However, there is the spectacle of Eddie Stobart or Tesco providing the service. The Co-op has been mentioned recently, and I am a great supporter of the Co-op. It is an admirable place to go to buy food and it has a fine record of burying people—the Co-op funeral service is very good—but we should not be using such examples to justify changes to the legal system.

I am greatly concerned about the capacity of companies such as Capita, GEOAmev, Serco and G4S—and whether they are best placed to represent my constituents. My colleague in another place, Lord Thomas of Gresford alerted us in a Queen's Speech contribution to Stobart Barristers—an offshoot of Eddie Stobart trucks. Lord Thomas noted that the Stobart Barristers legal director, Trevor Howarth, had confirmed that the firm would bid for the new criminal defence contracts and had said:

"We can deliver the service at a cost that's palatable for the taxpayer... Our business model was developed with this in mind. We at Stobart are well known for taking out the waste and the waste here is the duplication of solicitors going to the courtroom. At the moment there are 1,600 legal aid firms; in future there will be 400. At Stobart, we wouldn't use 10 trucks to deliver one product".

As my noble Friend concluded, the problem with that is that criminal law is not a unit and justice is not a product that can be delivered like a load of bricks. That is the contrast in terms of what we are facing. There is a real fear that many of our high street solicitors will be lost; many will go out of business. The firms with the most cut-throat prices and cut-throat tactics will be the most successful, but I believe that liberty should be in the hands of the best, not the cheapest.

I come now to the loss of specialisms.

Roger Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD): My hon. Friend is making many very good points, but surely one of them is that the people who supply these legal services will be given a financial incentive to get their clients to plead guilty. Surely, that is a characteristic of a totalitarian state, not the liberal democracy to which we aspire.

Mr Williams: My hon. Friend and I agree. He uses a very emotive word to describe what I think will be the reality on the ground.

Under the proposals, a call centre will allocate a lawyer from any background—an impersonal experience in itself—who might provide a minimal service to meet the requirements of the contract. People will not be able to select a firm by reputation, by personal recommendation or, sadly, by past experience. That discourages good practice and good performance among professionals, as those who gain a contract will get clients regardless of performance. Therefore, clients will be unable to choose a firm according to the nature—sometimes, the specialised

[Mr Mark Williams]

nature—of their case. I have said this before and it is worth repeating: let us not understate the importance of the relationship between solicitors and clients and the trust that has been built up.

Solicitors in my constituency are concerned that the consultation document encourages solicitors not to provide a good service—not to provide the best service. The aim is to be “above acceptable levels”. That is a worrying prospect.

There will be a lack of choice. Owing to the call centre allocation of solicitors, clients will be left with no choice of representation. They may have a lawyer who does not know them or the area in which they live and who certainly does not know the background to their case. As the hon. Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith) said, a different company could represent them at different stages. I think that that is bad.

The consultation document suggests that the same fee will be paid—this is the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Brecon and Radnorshire (Roger Williams)—whether or not the matter is contested. Those firms that are awarded contracts will have a financial incentive to do minimal work to make their business sustainable, to the detriment of the client's case. That could lead to a perverse incentive for legal advisers to recommend that clients plead guilty, as they would receive the same fee regardless of plea—a conclusion that certainly the solicitors whom I have spoken to are concerned about. They believe that suspicion may be created between client and lawyer.

I want to end where I started, with the effects on language. When we are talking about the consultation, there remain serious issues surrounding the provision of language services. I have anecdotal evidence that the large firm Capita is regularly unable to provide interpreting services to courts in a timely manner. In my constituency, as I said, Welsh is the first language of about half the population. In many parts of Ceredigion, it is overwhelmingly the language of everyday use, so the issue to which I refer is a worry and a barrier preventing many people from accessing the representation to which they are entitled.

I want to ask the Minister and particularly those behind the scenes in the Ministry of Justice about their awareness of Wales and of the Welsh language. As the Welsh Government pointed out in their submission to the consultation, the Ministry of Justice's own Welsh language scheme—a point that the right hon. Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd (Mr Llwyd) mentioned—declares the Ministry's commitment to the principle of treating the English and Welsh languages on the basis of equality. The current system of more local provision means that someone is more likely to satisfy Welsh language needs. These proposals mean that it is much more likely that a provider will be based outside the relevant area and even outside Wales, allowing no provision for Welsh language services at all.

The proposals are socially divisive, as only the wealthy will be able to afford to choose their own lawyer. Only those who can afford to will be able to determine how they are represented. Everyone else, if they are eligible for legal aid, will be allocated a lawyer via a call centre.

Some of the public narrative on the issue has characterised it as one of fat cat lawyers acting in their own interests, although if we talk to solicitors on the ground, the story is somewhat different. In reality, it is far more worrying. It is about universal access to justice, the credibility of our court and justice system and the responsibility of Parliament to ensure the continued efficacy of our justice system.

Overall, what has been billed as a simple money-saving measure will have far deeper ramifications for society. The proposals take the fundamental principle of access to justice away from anyone who cannot afford it, but it is a right, not a commodity to be bought and sold.

The Minister knows that this is a consultation, and the deliberations will go on about the various submissions. I sincerely hope that it is a real consultation and that the Government will look at the submissions, particularly those from us in Wales and the concerns that we have raised; and I hope that the Minister and the Ministry of Justice will therefore reflect favourably on the needs of rural Wales.

4.16 pm

The Lord Commissioner of Her Majesty's Treasury (Mr David Evennett): I warmly congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion (Mr Williams) on securing the debate. I have been asked to respond on behalf of the Ministry of Justice by my right hon. Friend the Lord Chancellor and I will of course ensure that he is aware of the representations and comments made this afternoon by my hon. Friend and by other hon. Members present. I am delighted that the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, my hon. Friend the Member for Preseli Pembrokeshire (Stephen Crabb), is able to be with us at this important debate. I am well aware that the Wales Office has received many representations from Welsh MPs on these matters. I would like to point out that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has discussed these issues with the Lord Chancellor and we are sensitive to the interests and needs of the Principality.

Albert Owen (Ynys Môn) (Lab): I apologise for not being present at the very beginning of the debate. Is the Minister saying that he is looking favourably at a Welsh dimension to the whole consultation process? In addition to that, we are talking about rural areas that are on the periphery—areas that have lost court services and lost other forms of access to justice.

Mr Evennett: I am grateful for that intervention. Of course, we are aware of and sensitive to the issues that are being raised. We will obviously take into account everything from the debate and the consultation.

The Government must always be mindful of the impact of their policies on those affected by them. Debates such as this are most welcome, as they help to strengthen and improve Government policy by ensuring that hon. Members' expertise and local knowledge are fully considered. Before I respond to the substantive parts of the debate, I would like to make three general points about the changes that have been consulted on in respect of legal aid.

First, the Government will continue to uphold everyone's right to a fair trial. We do, however, have a duty to look at how the system is working, taking into account the

taxpayer, legal aid applicants and the legal profession as a whole. Secondly, access to justice and access to taxpayer-funded legal aid should not be confused. We have a duty to ensure that all public expenditure is justified. Thirdly, the Legal Aid Agency would ensure, as part of the tendering process, that all providers were capable of delivering the full range of criminal legal aid services under contract across their procurement areas. Quality-assured duty solicitors and lawyers would still be available if these changes were implemented, just as they are now.

I would like to outline the rationale behind the legal aid proposals and their potential impact in Wales. In its programme for government, the coalition set out its intention to undertake a full review of the legal aid scheme. Following consultation, the Government's final proposals culminated in the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012. As well as reducing the scope of the civil legal aid scheme, the Act made sweeping reforms to the central administration of the legal aid system. Through the introduction of the Legal Aid Agency, we have strengthened accountability and introduced a more rigorous approach to financial management. We estimate that those and other reforms will save about £320 million per year by 2014-15, but our legal aid scheme remains one of the most expensive in the world. Legal aid spending in Wales has increased, as it has dramatically in England.

Mr Llwyd: First, spending is in the median area of the league; it is not being compared with like common-law jurisdictions. Secondly, the Act to which the Minister refers has a specific section that says, "Of course, people will always have an entitlement to choose their own lawyer." That is now being swept away.

Mr Evennett: The right hon. Gentleman does not highlight the fact that the cost to the taxpayer of criminal legal aid is still around £1 billion a year, which is a phenomenal amount of money.

Mr Llwyd: It is going down.

Mr Evennett: And yet we are talking about a phenomenal amount of taxpayers' money.

The Government's latest reforms, published in the "Transforming Legal Aid" consultation in April this year, tackle the cost of criminal legal aid, as well as finding further savings from the civil legal aid scheme. In particular, the proposal to introduce price-competitive tendering into the market for criminal litigation services has attracted a number of comments, such as those made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion and others this afternoon. If our proposals are implemented, the number of contracts tendered by the Legal Aid Agency will reduce from about 1,600 to about 400.

For the record, I would like to dispel a few myths, which have been highlighted this afternoon, about the model on which we consulted. The 400 figure relates to the number of contracts the Legal Aid Agency would tender, not the number of firms in the market or the volume of work available. The proposals on which we consulted do not prescribe how many lawyers would be available or how those who have the contracts can divide the work allocated to them. The proposed model would result in a consolidation of the market, but that

does not mean that smaller firms of solicitors will go out of business. Some may choose to join together to bid for contracts. Others may decide to act as agents.

Nia Griffith: *rose*—

Mr Mark Williams: *rose*—

Mr Evennett: I would like to make a little progress, because otherwise I will not answer my hon. Friend's points.

Importantly, specialist services—vital for niche areas of law and for clients with particular needs—will be able to continue. We received approximately 16,000 responses to the consultation, many of which address the competition model in detail. We are carefully considering all responses before final decisions are taken. This afternoon's debate will go forward as part of that consultation and will be fed back to the Lord Chancellor and Ministers in the Department. It will be examined in the pot with the other considerations.

Mr Williams: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr Evennett: I will not be able to answer the questions and points raised if I take lots of interventions, but I will take one in a minute.

Among the particular needs to be met in the provision of legal aid is of course the provision of services in Welsh for those who want them. The Government have no intention of changing the requirements placed on legal aid providers operating in Wales to offer a bilingual service—I can nail that concern for my hon. Friend. That that issue, alongside many other practical considerations, is not expressly addressed in the consultation document reflects the fact that it will be, as at present, given effect through the Legal Aid Agency contracts with providers. The document does not propose any change in current practice, but that issue has been raised by some respondents to the consultation and we will provide simple reassurance when we publish the Government response. As well as raising the provision of services in Welsh, a number of legal aid providers have set out their concerns about the operation of the proposed competition model in rural areas, including rural Wales. Some of those concerns have been echoed here this afternoon, and I propose to raise them, highlighting the points made, with the Lord Chancellor to inform his decision making when the consultation concludes.

The consultation sets out a model of competition to cover the whole of England and Wales and seeks to address the needs of both urban and rural areas. In the cases of two regions—the areas covered by West Mercia-Warwickshire and Avon and Somerset-Gloucestershire—it makes an exception to the rule that procurement areas will be based on current criminal justice areas, by combining each pair into a single area. That proposal, however, is based on the volume and type of work, rather than the areas' rural geography. The consultation in fact sought views on whether the geographical arrangement of contracts it set out was the right one and sought alternatives. We are of course open to good suggestions and urge the profession to work with us to come up with the best solution. The appropriateness of the model to rural Wales was raised during the engagement events held by

[Mr Evennett]

the Ministry of Justice during the consultation period. We will consider carefully the views raised, before finalising our proposals.

Concerns have been expressed about the Government's decision to publish the transforming legal aid consultation in English before the Welsh translation was ready. I shall address that issue directly, because it is unfair to suggest that the Ministry of Justice has not taken its commitments under its Welsh language scheme seriously. The Department has committed to treating English and Welsh equally, as far as is reasonably practicable, and that is what we did. Translating a document of that length and complexity takes time, and it was published as soon as it was available. In translating the entirety of the document, we have gone further than the previous 2010 legal aid consultation. In deciding not to delay publication of the English version until the Welsh version was ready, we were conscious that the majority of the target audience in Wales comprises legal aid providers required to provide services in English, as well as Welsh. Moreover, when the previous legal aid consultation was published in 2010, only the executive summary was translated; the Department did not receive requests for a full translation in Welsh and we did not receive any responses in Welsh. We have so far identified about 10 responses to the current consultation in Welsh. That we have had responses in Welsh reflects, I hope, that legal professionals working in Wales have shown their own expertise in responding to our proposals.

Officials are in the process of studying all the consultation responses received and will consider carefully all views on how Wales's particular rural geography should be accounted for before final decisions are taken.

Mr Mark Williams: I have two questions. The first relates to remarks the Minister made some time ago. The consultation ends on 8 June and we have a short time to get the system up and running. How optimistic is he that that can happen and in particular that the consortia he mentioned, of small solicitors practices coming together, can be realised? Finally, he mentioned

a consultation event in Cardiff, where I know some of my local solicitors were keen to ask Ministry of Justice officials about the extent of their detailed knowledge of rural, north and mid-Wales and the challenges of rural transport. How much detail has gone into the assessment of rural Wales, or for that matter rural England?

Mr Evennett: I will have to write to my hon. Friend, because I do not have that information to hand. All I will say is that we have engaged with many professionals and received lots of consultation responses in the Department. We are very aware of the difficulties and the particular issues he raises.

Time is ever so short, but I want to mention the Government's compliance with the Equality Act 2010. We are mindful of the importance of considering the impact of our policies on different groups. In accordance with our obligations under the 2010 Act, we have considered the impact of the proposals, in order to give due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful conduct, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. Our initial assessment was published with the consultation paper, and we will update it in light of responses, before final decisions are taken on the equality issues.

I am aware that a half-hour debate is not long enough, but there is of course a debate tomorrow on the Floor of the House, where issues can be developed further. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ceredigion for securing this important debate and I thank right hon. and hon. Members for the contributions that they have made. I am confident that, after long discussions and a long thought-out process, which will include the consultation information, the Ministry of Justice will publish final proposals that command the confidence of those who provide and use legal aid-funded services in Wales. Final decisions have not yet been taken, and today's debate will certainly be read and noted by the Lord Chancellor and his ministerial team. I have listened to the views raised. I again commend my hon. Friend for securing the debate. I will certainly pass on to my right hon. Friend the comprehensive views that have come up this afternoon. The Under-Secretary of State for Wales and I will discuss the issues raised. I am grateful for the opportunity to put forward the Government view.

Kettering General Hospital A and E

4.30 pm

Andy Sawford (Corby) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Brooke. I am grateful for the opportunity to debate the future of Kettering General hospital's accident and emergency services.

Kettering General hospital has served the people of my constituency for 115 years. It is where my children were born, and where my granddads received care at the end of their lives—where I said goodbye to them—and today it is a place that is relied on by my family and my constituents. I declare an interest in that it is where my mum, like many thousands of local people, works. Kettering General hospital is a huge part of the community, because of the care it provides and because it is one of the major local employers. Many of my constituents are employed there, as nurses, doctors and auxiliary staff, and I take this opportunity to thank them, in whatever capacity they work. Working in our health services is demanding and, for most health workers, not particularly well paid. The hours are long and the demands are great, but the overwhelming majority of my constituents receive good care, and for that we are all grateful.

However, we have to face some hard truths. The quality of care at the hospital is not good for everyone. It is not realistic to think that 100% of my constituents will get perfect care every time, but it is something for which we should surely strive. All the evidence shows that too many people do not get the care they need. Kettering General hospital employs more than 3,000 staff, and has more than 600 in-patient and day-case beds and 17 operating theatres. The hospital has a consultant-led level 2 trauma unit in its 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week accident and emergency department, and there are currently two locums and five consultants who are on site until 11 o'clock in the evening and on call until 8 o'clock in the morning. Some cases, such as severe burns and head injuries, are transferred, often by air ambulance, to Coventry, which has a level 3 trauma facility, but Kettering General hospital is where most trauma patients go. It serves the accident and emergency needs of a wide population across north Northamptonshire.

The hospital's location, right next to one of the busiest arteries in the midlands—the A14—makes it the most accessible accident and emergency for many people, not only in north Northamptonshire but across the whole county and in neighbouring counties, particularly Leicestershire. The core of the hospital's patients, however, is from my constituency and that of my two neighbours, the hon. Members for Kettering (Mr Hollobone) and for Wellingborough (Mr Bone).

Today, I want to speak about the challenges that our accident and emergency services face, and to seek Government support in meeting them. The context is highly political, and the Minister and I will strongly disagree on some health policies, but I would much prefer us to have as constructive a debate as possible today. Much of what I have to say will be supported by the hon. Members for Kettering and for Wellingborough who are unable to be here, but with whom I am working closely and regularly in support of the hospital. We

have formed a campaign group, consisting not only of the three of us, but of the local media, the local authorities and many other interested local organisations.

As three Members of Parliament, we meet regularly with the chair and the chief executive of the hospital, and I am pleased to say that, as of last night, we have a meeting arranged with the Minister's colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for Health, the hon. Member for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich (Dr Poulter). We are also in dialogue with the local clinical commissioning groups. A and E services are our top priority.

The Minister will be aware of the Healthier Together proposals for the south midlands area. Last autumn, there was a hurried timetable and inadequate consultation on the proposals. The public gradually became aware of them, the thrust of which was for five hospitals to go into three for some of the services, particularly full accident and emergency, obstetrics and maternity, and in-patient paediatrics. The detailed model underpinning the proposals stated that the best option, according to their criteria, was that Kettering lose its full accident and emergency.

I am pleased to say that, in response to a strong cross-party community campaign, Healthier Together and all those involved, including the clinical commissioning groups and the hospitals, recognised that communities in my constituency and across the north of Northamptonshire would not support the proposals. Our nearest accident and emergency would be at Northampton general, and anyone who knows the county and understands its geography will recognise that that is not acceptable. We do not need the independent experts—as they were called—employed by the Healthier Together team to tell us that it is almost impossible to get from Corby to Northampton along the A43 during peak times without coming to a standstill. There is no rail link between the towns in the north of the county and Northampton, and the bus service is intermittent.

The Department says that it expects proposals for local health service changes to meet four key criteria: support from GPs; strengthened public and patient engagement; sound clinical evidence; and that the proposals support patient choice. I do not believe, nor do the hon. Members for Kettering and for Wellingborough, that those four criteria were met in the Healthier Together work. And it is not just in my area. Councillor Hannah O'Neill, the deputy leader of the Labour group on Milton Keynes council, told me that Healthier Together caused uncertainty across Milton Keynes, that neither communities nor the council was properly consulted, and that they were left with no information about the future of the programme for their hospital. A critical issue for the whole south midlands Healthier Together area is that we do not know where the proposals will take us next.

The final Healthier Together report, published in March, states:

“Current A&E staffing levels do not meet national guidance, which recommends a minimum of ten consultants for a medium-sized A&E department.”

It also raises concerns about the long-term viability of retaining five acute surgical rotas:

“Concentrating A&E and general surgeons onto fewer sites could improve sustainability, but there would still be a need to recruit further A&E consultants to provide consultant presence.”

The report proposes an alternative model of four fully supported accident and emergency sites, with the fifth being a “warm” site, managing and transferring some

[*Andy Sawford*]

patients under protocols. In the north of Northamptonshire, the worst case scenario is that we would have to assume, based on the previous detailed proposals, that Kettering would be in line to be that “warm” accident and emergency. That is simply not on, not just because of the geography, but because of the demand from the area that Kettering serves.

We recognise, however, that there is a challenge to improve accident and emergency at Kettering. The hospital had to save £11 million last year, and has to save a further £12 million next year, but the answer lies not in taking away our proper accident and emergency and maternity services but in improving the health system. We need a more integrated health and social care system. I will study the detail of today’s spending review announcements, and if they reflect the integration policies that my right hon. Friend the Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) and my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester West (Liz Kendall) have been championing, they will have my support.

We need local authorities to act more quickly to get elderly patients out of hospital once they have been treated, so that they can have the care they need in the community and so that hospital beds are freed up. That happened just last year with my nan, after she had a stroke. A critical issue is how primary and acute care will work together in the future. It is also about prevention, about which I heard the Minister speak last week at an event organised by Cambridge Manufacturing, a great Corby-based company that exports across the world and helps people become fitter. If the Minister is wondering, the event was at the National Obesity Forum, and Cambridge Manufacturing was the partner organisation. The issue is also about the hospital itself becoming as efficient and effective as possible.

I am sorry to tell the Minister that instead of moving towards an improved service, there are very serious issues at Kettering A and E. This is a very worrying time. The hospital simply cannot cope with demand; we have rising demand, and an ageing and growing population. There are issues relating to the local doctor services and the out-of-hour services, and twice this year the general hospital had to close the doors of the A and E to patients other than those arriving by ambulance, announcing it to the media and asking local Members of Parliament to tell patients not to turn up. We have been told that the principal factor in that was the 111 changes.

Corby is the fastest-growing town in the UK and has the highest birth rate, but there is population growth right across north Northamptonshire. The number of people attending the A and E department at Kettering General has doubled over the past 20 years, from 40,000 in 1992 to 80,000 in 2012. That 100% increase is far greater than the rate of population growth, and growth continued last year. We have continued growth in Northamptonshire’s elderly population, so an increase in acuity, for example, is to be expected, with more people with more complex problems who really do need A and E care. The trust’s emergency department was not designed to see that many patients. In the hospital’s own words, it is now “not fit for purpose”: it is too small and does not have enough rooms to provide appropriate care.

There are significant issues around the inappropriate use of accident and emergency. A recent patient education project in Northamptonshire showed that 70% of patients did not try to contact out-of-hours GP services before going to A and E. The trust is currently investigating and pricing ways in which it could expand its emergency care department’s footprint to make it more suitable for patients and to make it more efficient to help reduce waiting times.

On accident and emergency waiting times, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people waiting for more than four hours. In April 2012, 262 people waited more than four hours, but in April 2013 that figure stood at 1,530 people. A year on, we can see how significant the rise in the number of people waiting for more than four hours is. Breaches of the target are largely because of patients waiting in A and E for hospital beds to become available. Kettering General hospital’s bed base runs very hot: 95% to 100% of beds are full. It is therefore often bed availability in the whole hospital, rather than issues in A and E, that leads to breaches of the transit time.

The hospital has launched a transformation programme, which local MPs support, by creating new direct access services for GPs, putting in a new discharge team to improve discharges and expanding the A and E department—for example, with an observation bay for patients needing short-term observation and tests. The hospital is investigating the creation of more of its own step-down facilities in the community.

There are other positive developments. The Corby urgent care centre has improved facilities, particularly for my constituents in Corby. It is not the hospital that Corby people really wanted, but it brings many services closer to my constituency. It is open from 8 am to 8 pm, and it reduces the need for patients to travel to A and E. It is only now coming fully into use, so it will be some time before it takes significant pressure off A and E at Kettering.

I went to the opening of the new foundation wing at Kettering, which is a fantastic new facility. It will improve some of the problems in the hospital, and it increases the number of beds. The hospital is to be congratulated on developing the proposals for that wing. It has been 10 years in the making, and there was a delay in its opening, but it is a significant improvement.

In a few weeks, with the hon. Members for Kettering and for Wellingborough, I will meet the local clinical commissioning groups to discuss GP out-of-hours services. A key issue relates to people using a GP where appropriate, rather than presenting at accident and emergency.

I hope that the Minister will comment on the seriousness of the Care Quality Commission report published in March. It stated that action is needed on cleanliness and infection control, on supporting workers and, in particular, on assessing and monitoring the quality of service provision. In fact, so severe were its findings that it has taken enforcement action against the hospital.

The report makes mixed reading. Most patients seen by the CQC generally commend the hospital. As I said at the outset, most people’s experience is good, but where it is not good, it can be very disappointing. For example, because of that huge rise in demand in accident and emergency, the CQC found open storage of needles and syringes, containers overflowing with syringes, and

noisy and rusty bins in areas of the department, and it observed that the public toilets were dirty and that floors appeared dirty and stained.

As the CQC has stated, that situation was not because the hospital staff were not working incredibly hard—it observed that the staff were working with clear protocols and trying to do the right thing—but the facility is now frankly too small for what is really needed to serve the north of Northamptonshire. It is cramped, which really affects the quality of care.

The CQC specifically mentioned long waiting times. I have heard cases of people waiting up to 10 hours, which is clearly unacceptable. Not only are there the waits in accident and emergency, but, having been seen in A and E, there are the waits to be transferred to wards in the hospital. There are also knock-on effects. The CQC highlighted issues in orthopaedic and surgical wards, where other medical admissions from A and E have become a way of life, because the beds are needed, but those wards do not have the staff, the expertise or the capacity to meet the needs of the patients transferred.

I want to hear from the Minister an understanding of the pressures facing us in Kettering General hospital's accident and emergency, and support for initiatives that the local chair, chief executive, trust and staff are taking and which we are trying to support. We want to support this incredibly important hospital. We also want a commitment to capital improvements in accident and emergency. Whether that comes from what I understand is a dedicated fund in the Department of Health for capital improvements for A and E that is underspent or from the general NHS underspend, I hope that we will hear about it today. I also hope that she will comment on the issues about how the health system works locally.

4.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Anna Soubry): As ever, it is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mrs Brooke. I congratulate the hon. Member for Corby (Andy Sawford) on securing the debate. He quite properly brings forward his constituents' concerns about their hospital. I am delighted that he is working with two other Members of Parliament whose constituencies are served by the hospital.

I am especially grateful to the hon. Gentleman, if I may say so, for having contacted my office and spoken to my officials before the debate. If only all hon. Members took such a positive step, because it assists hugely. He is quite right to make the point that this is not the stuff of party politics. I fear that I may not be able to answer some questions that he quite properly asked. If that is the case, I or my officials will write to him to ensure that all the matters he raised and all the questions he asked are given proper and full answers.

I am very pleased that the hon. Gentleman will meet the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich (Dr Poulter), on 16 July, with my hon. Friends the Members for Kettering (Mr Hollobone) and for Wellingborough (Mr Bone). I am sure that there is no connection, but having said that, a frog has entered my throat. I am going to stop for a minute.

Annette Brooke (in the Chair): That would be wise.

Anna Soubry: I am sorry.

The hon. Member for Corby has raised important issues about accident and emergency services, although I will not be dealing with the national situation. As we know, there have been some issues and problems in emergency departments throughout the country, many of which have been well rehearsed in this place.

Underlying themes and problems are often common to all our accident and emergency departments. Undoubtedly, many of the problems at Kettering's accident and emergency are exactly the same as those that have caused so much difficulty in other A and E departments in this country. I am pleased that huge progress has been made and that overall performance is improving across the country as might be expected, especially given my Department's efforts.

The hon. Gentleman has pointed out how health services are under pressure in his constituency and having a knock-on effect at Kettering, and those pressures are being experienced across the whole system. He quite properly identified that the reasons for that are complex. Dealing with those pressures means looking at the underlying causes, which the Department has been doing by working with NHS England.

The hon. Gentleman pointed out that Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is experiencing many of the issues that I have highlighted. I am aware that, as he told us, the trust has not met the A and E standard. It has struggled with that difficulty for some time. He will know that Monitor, as the regulator of foundation trusts, has unfortunately found that the trust is in breach of its licence in relation to its A and E performance, as well as wider financial and governance issues. That will cause concern not only to the people who use the hospital, but to its outstanding staff.

Monitor has required the trust to implement an urgent care action plan to ensure that it can return to compliance against the A and E standard. The deadline for that is 1 July, so it will not be long before the trust has to implement it. Monitor is working with local commissioners and NHS England to support the trust to meet that requirement.

I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman feels that further investment is needed to expand facilities at the trust to improve its position. It is right that, as I understand it, he has had meetings with the chair of the trust and other Members of Parliament, and that letters have been written, to request assistance in securing extra capital funding. Some £5 million to £10 million has been requested, so that the trust can redevelop and expand its A and E department.

Of course it is for NHS foundation trusts to develop and take forward their own capital investment proposals, and trusts such as Kettering can apply to the Department for a capital investment loan. We understand that the trust has allocated some of its capital budget this year to make improvements within A and E, and it has worked with commissioners to redesign what we call pathways to improve flow. Hot clinics and ambulatory pathways have been developed, which divert patients away from A and E and avoid GP admissions, which, as we know, often stack up in the Department.

On the matter of whether Kettering has ever closed its doors, I am told that its accident and emergency department has never done so, and it is important to put that on the record. I am told that there was a period

[*Anna Soubry*]

in February when the hospital trust effectively advised members of the public—I think that this sounds like a sensible piece of advice—to ensure that they only went to A and E if they had had an accident or an emergency. In other words, to use the jargon, they were told to use the department appropriately, because the trust had become aware of a sudden and acute rise in people using A and E. Actually, that is a good message for all of us to take back to our constituents. The department is not called “accident and emergency” for no good reason; it is for accidents and emergencies.

When we had a debate on A and E in the main Chamber, Members from both sides told stories about people presenting at A and E when they could have gone to the pharmacy or just taken a paracetamol. The point I am making is that, often for understandable reasons, people attend A and E when they cannot get the appointment they want at the GP surgery. There is this wider issue that perhaps we do not do what we used to do in the past, which was to self-administer, take advice from our brilliant pharmacies or ring the GP surgery for advice before simply turning up at A and E.

As I have said, meetings have taken place, and, as I understand it, the trust has been working with local commissioners in the way that I have described. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the new Corby urgent care centre. I think I saw it before I was in this position—I was there for other reasons which I am sure the hon. Gentleman will understand—when it was in the process of being constructed. I am delighted that it is now open. It is called an urgent care centre. To be frank, we do not always use the best language when it comes to naming places where patients can go. In fact, the review, which is being conducted in the Department of Health, is looking at the sort of language that should be used, so that people understand where they have to go when they have a particular problem. I am delighted that the centre has opened in Corby and is providing additional urgent care services to the hon. Gentleman’s constituents, which should help to ease the unnecessary attendances at the A and E department of Kettering General.

I also want to mention the East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust, because it is of concern to all of us who represent seats in the east midlands. I know that the hon. Gentleman has rightly talked about how problems with EMAS have affected services in his constituency.

Andy Sawford: I wanted to cover more issues in my opening remarks. The Minister is absolutely right to say that EMAS is a huge concern for all MPs across the region. I am sure that she is aware that the proposal is for the hub that would serve my constituents now to be at Kettering and for the level of service to be reduced at Corby, which is a concern for us.

Anna Soubry: Indeed, and it is right that the hon. Gentleman should raise that concern. I think I am right in saying that Earl Howe, who is the Minister with responsibility for the ambulance service, has agreed to meet the hon. Gentleman. If he has not agreed that, then he just has. In any event, Earl Howe will be more than happy to meet the hon. Gentleman to talk about the various issues.

The hon. Gentleman will also be aware that the NHS Trust Development Authority has intervened at the East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust and is working with local commissioners to ensure that it has robust turnaround plans in place to improve its performance. The fact that the ambulance service has not been meeting the high standards that we all expect of it has been a long-standing problem in the east midlands. It is now implementing proposals to improve the way it delivers services across the east midlands through its “being the best” programme. That includes the replacement of some ambulance stations, including the one in Corby. It is creating 108 community ambulance posts, 19 ambulance stations and nine purpose-built hubs or superstations to enable ambulances to be dispatched from strategic points across the region to meet demand. I know that the “being the best” proposals have been referred to the Secretary of State by Lincolnshire county council. I do not know whether Northamptonshire will now take the same course, but it may not need to as Lincolnshire has already made the referral. As a result, the Independent Reconfiguration Panel is due to advise in the next few days, so it would not be right for me to make any further comments on that matter.

I will conclude now unless of course the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene again, which I am more than happy about because we still have four minutes.

Andy Sawford: I thank the Minister for giving way again and I am delighted to take up the opportunity to use up a little more of the time we have available. It is of course very welcome news that those proposals have been referred to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel. However, I must say to her that, irrespective of how those proposals proceed, I have no confidence in the trust board of the East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust or in its leadership and management.

I will be interested to hear the Minister’s comments about what role, if any, the Department of Health can play in intervening when there are concerns about the management of an ambulance trust. I know that hon. Members from across the eastern region ambulance service, which also serves some of my constituency, have—frankly—successfully changed the leadership of that service. I feel that we may need to make some progress in that regard ourselves.

Anna Soubry: The diplomatic answer to that is to say that, yes indeed, east of England MPs have quite rightly taken their concerns to the highest level and there has been some serious intervention. There has been a report; we had a 90-minute debate here in Westminster Hall only yesterday on it. I have to say that apparently most members of the board of that ambulance service still remain in place, but the board has a new chair. There has been a full report into the service and there is hope that many of the report’s recommendations will now be put forward.

I must say that the Care Quality Commission, notwithstanding some of the comments that were made last week, can play a hugely important role in looking at the performance of ambulance trusts. I speak now as a constituency MP when I say that I myself have been in contact with the CQC and I urge the hon. Gentleman perhaps to take the same course, because the CQC can

really play an important role in ensuring that ambulance services and indeed many other providers of health care are absolutely up to standard and providing the services that they should be providing. That may be of some assistance, but I must say that I think things have improved.

Andy Sawford: The Minister says that there are issues at Kettering General hospital's A and E department that are in common with those in other hospitals. Finally, I draw her attention to the exceptional case for investment in Kettering General hospital, because of the growth in population locally. Corby has the highest birth rate in the country; it is the fastest growing town in the country; and the Northamptonshire area is one of the fastest growing areas in the country, so this is an exceptional case.

Anna Soubry: That is a good point well made, and no doubt this will all be discussed at the meeting to be held on 16 July and the hon. Gentleman will make that point again with all the right force that he should.

I was going to say "in all seriousness", as if I was being flippant, which I was not being. However, I hope that Kettering General hospital continues to work with Monitor, NHS England and its local commissioners to put in place robust plans for improving its position. That should also include working with all the elected Members in the area, so that we can be sure that the hospital delivers absolutely the best services to the people it seeks to serve and should be serving.

Question put and agreed to.

4.59 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Wednesday 26 June 2013

CABINET OFFICE

Departmental Business Plans 2013

The Minister for Government Policy (Mr Oliver Letwin): Today the Government published, in a digital format, an updated set of departmental business plans.

Each Department's business plan sets out:

- the Department's coalition priorities;
- the actions each Department will undertake to meet these priorities and the dates when it will implement these actions;
- expenditure for each year of the current spending review; and
- indicators and other data it will publish on the cost and impact of the public services for which it is responsible.

In particular, the business plans have been updated to reflect:

- a new growth priority has been added showing each Department's contribution to promoting UK growth; and
- the commitments made in the coalition Government's mid-term review.

The business plans can be accessed at, <http://transparency.number10.gov.uk>, which also sets out cross-Government priorities and details of departmental input and impact indicators.

A full list of the changes to the structural reform plan and input and impact indicators contained in the business plans is also attached. This list can also be found at, <http://transparency.number10.gov.uk>.

TREASURY

Financial Policy Committee

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Greg Clark): The June 2013 "Financial Stability Report" of the Financial Policy Committee (FPC) and the FPC's response to the Chancellor's "Remit and Recommendations for the Financial Policy Committee" have today been laid before Parliament.

The "Financial Stability Report" includes the committee's view of the current stability of the UK financial system, its assessment of the outlook for stability, a summary of the activities of the committee over the previous five months, and any new policy decisions by the committee by way of recommendations and directions.

The report forms a key part of the accountability mechanism for the FPC under the Bank of England Act 1998 as amended by the Financial Services Act 2012.

On 30 April 2013, the Chancellor wrote to the Governor of the Bank of England, as chair of the FPC, to specify the Government's economic policy and to make recommendations to the committee concerning its objectives and functions.

The FPC is required to respond to the Treasury setting out any action it has taken or intends to take in accordance with the Treasury's recommendations and, if it does not intend to act in accordance with a recommendation, why not.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

2014 Local Elections

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Brandon Lewis): As I informed the House on 26 March, *Official Report*, column 84WS, we published a consultation document inviting views on whether or not we should, subject to parliamentary approval, move the date of the English local elections from Thursday 1 May 2014 to the same day as the European parliamentary election. At the time of the consultation the actual date of the European parliamentary elections had yet to be formally decided.

That consultation closed on 13 May and we have received 155 representations, including from the Electoral Commission, the Association of Electoral Administrators, the Local Government Association and many of the councils that would be affected. While the consultation shows there are mixed views on moving the date, some two thirds of the 155 consultation responses favoured the change of date, including the Electoral Commission.

The Council of the European Union has now confirmed that the European parliamentary elections will be held between 22 to 25 May 2014 and so the date for elections to the European Parliament in the United Kingdom will be 22 May.

In the light of the European decision, and having carefully considered all the representations received, the practical course of action is to move the local government elections to the same day. Holding two elections within three weeks of each other would be inconvenient to voters. I appreciate that the arguments are finely balanced, and I would observe that this does not necessarily create a precedent for any future set of elections.

So I am today laying a draft of the Local Elections (Ordinary Day of Elections in 2014) Order 2013 which, if approved by Parliament and made no later than 31 October, would move the local election day in England, in 2014, to the date of the European parliamentary election.

The local elections which are affected by this change of date are the elections to over 90 district councils in England, all metropolitan district councils, and all London boroughs plus a small number of parishes, as well as five mayoral elections. A list of the relevant local authorities is included in the explanatory memorandum which accompanies the draft order I have today laid before the House.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 26 June 2013

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Defence Select Committee

Michael Dugher: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, which specialist advisers to the Defence Select Committee have been issued a photo parliamentary pass. [161391]

John Thurso: As at 20 June 2013, the current specialist advisers to the Defence Committee are as follows:

Paul Beaver
 Professor Michael Clarke
 Christopher Donnelly
 Dr John Louth
 Major General Mungo Melvin
 Rear Admiral Christopher Snow
 Air Marshal Philip Sturley

All the above specialist advisers have been issued with parliamentary passes, which are not valid beyond 2015.

Details of specialist advisers from previous parliamentary sessions are published annually in the Sessional Return.

Energy and Climate Change Select Committee

Michael Dugher: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, which specialist advisers to the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee have been issued a photo parliamentary pass. [161392]

John Thurso: As at 20 June 2013, the current specialist advisers to the Energy and Climate Change Committee were as follows:

Professor Derek Bunn
 Dr Robert Gross
 Marc Ozawa
 Dr Anthony White

As at 20 June 2013, none of the above named had a parliamentary pass.

Details of specialist advisers from previous parliamentary sessions are published annually in the Sessional Return.

Select Committees

Michael Dugher: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, which specialist advisers to select committees have declared relevant financial interests in the subject matter for which the committee they advise is responsible; and what those declarations were. [161389]

John Thurso: Before any Committee decides on their appointment, potential specialist advisers to Select Committees are required to declare their interests, financial or otherwise, in the area of the inquiry for which they are appointed. Financial interests may include employment, shareholdings, research contracts or consultancies, or similar arrangements. It is open to a Committee to decide that the interests so declared are incompatible with the person being appointed as an adviser for that inquiry. Specialist advisers are also asked to update their declared interests at the start of a new session or on reappointment.

The appointment of specialist advisers, their interests, and any subsequent changes, are recorded in the formal minutes of each Committee. Formal minutes are published regularly on Committee websites.

Committees are also advised to include the interests of advisers in reports, in a footnote, at the point where the Committee refers to the advisers who have assisted with that inquiry.

Michael Dugher: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the name is of each person who acts in an official capacity as a specialist adviser to a select committee. [161390]

John Thurso: A record of the work of Select Committees during each parliamentary session is recorded in the Sessional Return. The return for each Committee lists the name of each person who has acted in an official capacity as a specialist adviser to a Select Committee during that session.

The Sessional Return for 2012-13 period is currently being prepared, and publication is expected in mid-July 2013.

The Sessional Returns for previous sessions are available on the parliamentary website:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmsesret.htm#>

The names of specialist advisers, and any interests that they declare, are also recorded in each Committee's formal minutes, which are published regularly on the Committee website.

TRANSPORT

Air Routes: USA

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration he has given to creating route development funds to assist in the creation of additional air routes between the US and (a) the north east of England and (b) Yorkshire and the Humber. [161762]

Mr Simon Burns: The state aid rules have been tightened in recent years and limit the ability of Government or regional bodies to support air services. The state aid rules may allow for funding of air services within the European Union, as well as for some airline costs such as marketing services. However they do not permit the funding of airlines' operating costs for long-haul air services.

Cycling

Mr Leech: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what change there was in the number of miles cycled in 2012 compared with 2011; and what assessment he has made on whether any increase was the result of more people taking up cycling or extra trips by existing cyclists. [R] [161862]

Norman Baker: A time series of distance travelled in Great Britain per person per year by bicycle for 1995-2011 from the National Travel Survey (NTS) can be found in table NTS0305 at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/nts03-modal-comparisons>

NTS data for 2012 are not yet available, but are scheduled for publication on 30 July 2013.

NTS measures of cycling are known to be volatile year-to-year because of the relatively small number of regular cyclists in the NTS sample. In 2011, 2% of all trips were made by bicycle, and the volatility reflects the difficulty in measuring this relatively uncommon mode of transport. Therefore, while long-term trends are likely to be informative, year-to-year movements in NTS estimates of cycling trips or cycling distance should be interpreted with caution.

SCOTLAND

European Arrest Warrants

8. **Stewart Hosie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with legal authorities in Scotland on European arrest warrants. [160891]

David Mundell: The Government are currently reviewing a range of European law and order measures, which includes the European arrest warrant.

13. **Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with legal authorities in Scotland on European arrest warrants. [160896]

David Mundell: The Government is currently reviewing a range of European law and order measures, which includes European arrest warrants.

Energy Bill

9. **Mr Weir:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with energy generators in Scotland on the Energy Bill. [160892]

Michael Moore: I hold regular discussions with energy generators in Scotland about a range of issues, including the important changes being delivered under the new Energy Bill.

Living Standards

10. **Fiona O'Donnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of recent trends in living standards in Scotland. [160893]

11. **Gemma Doyle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of recent trends in living standards in Scotland. [160894]

David Mundell: In tough economic times the Government are working hard to secure a fairer society and a strong economy to succeed in the global race. Measures we have taken forward which particularly benefit Scotland include the fuel duty increases and lifting 224,000 people out of income tax.

Economic Performance

12. **Mr McCann:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent assessment he has made of the performance of the economy in Scotland. [160895]

Michael Moore: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Motherwell and Wishaw (Mr Roy).

Common Agricultural Policy

14. **Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had on the potential effects of the most recent proposals for reform of the common agricultural policy on Scotland; and if he will make a statement. [160897]

Michael Moore: Last week I had extensive discussions with the Scottish farming industry at the Royal Highland Show. I am in regular discussions with DEFRA Ministers on implications of CAP reforms for Scotland.

Superfast Broadband

15. **Mr Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent discussions he has had with Ministers in the Scottish Government on the delivery of superfast broadband to the Highlands and Islands. [160898]

David Mundell: The Government has made £100 million available to the Scottish Government to deliver rural broadband projects in Scotland. It is the responsibility of the Scottish Government to deliver on this and we are closely monitoring the roll-out of these projects.

WALES

Devolution

Hywel Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he plans to announce the Government's response to the Commission on Devolution in Wales Part 1 Report; and what the reason is for the time taken to respond. [161567]

Mr David Jones: The Commission on Devolution in Wales made 33 recommendations that have required detailed analysis within Government. Following our autumn statement, we have made good, positive progress in our assessment of the recommendations and we expect to make an announcement in the very near future.

Legal Aid Scheme

Owen Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent discussions he has held with ministerial colleagues on the effect on Wales of planned changes to legal aid. [161652]

Mr David Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave on 17 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 466W, to the hon. Member for Newport East (Jessica Morden).

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police: Recruitment

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of the effect of charging for a certificate of knowledge on police recruitment from (a) black and ethnic minority communities and (b) deprived neighbourhoods. [161139]

Damian Green: No specific assessment has been made of the effect of charging for a certificate of knowledge on police recruitment from (a) black and ethnic minority communities and (b) deprived neighbourhoods.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Fire Services

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on proposals to make police and crime commissioners responsible for fire service provision. [161745]

Brandon Lewis: Ministers within the Department for Communities and Local Government regularly meet colleagues from other Departments to discuss a range of matters.

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what discussions he has had with (a) representatives of private sector fire industry firms and (b) the European Commission on the compliance with European state aid regulations of the use by fire brigades of public resources to promote risk management community interest companies which seek private sector contracts. [161746]

Brandon Lewis: I have had no discussions with representatives of private sector fire industry firms or with the European Commission on this issue.

Flood Control

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much of the Coalfield Regeneration Fund has been used to assist companies developing new flood protection technologies; and in which coalfield regions such funding has been allocated. [161289]

Mr Prisk: Our partners in the Coalfields Regeneration Trust and Coalfields Growth and Enterprise Funds, inform us that none of their funding has been used to assist companies developing new flood protection technologies. Funding decisions are a matter for these local bodies, rather than Ministers.

Housing: Construction

Alison Sebeck: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much Government-owned land has been released (a) in total and (b) by each Government department for housing in the last six months. [R] [161131]

Mr Prisk: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave her on 1 February 2013, *Official Report*, columns 975-76W. The following table gives the housing capacity of the land released under the public sector land programme as at 31 March 2013. This is the latest data available.

	<i>Housing capacity released to 31 March 2013</i>
DEFRA	9,092
MOD	13,784
DH (includes NHS trusts)	7,106
DFT	3,502
DCLG (inc. HCA)	8,513
Other ¹	5,176
Total	47,173

¹ This includes small landholding Departments such as MOJ, HO, and DCMS and other public corporations.

This represents almost half of our ambition to release land capable of delivering up to 100,000 homes by April 2015.

Local Government: North East

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what powers he plans to devolve to the proposed North East Combined Authority from 1 April 2014 to enable it to promote better transport, skills and economic development. [161551]

Brandon Lewis: The Government's response to the Heseltine report welcomed the intention of the seven local authorities of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership to form a combined authority. It is for those councils to include, in their proposals, the powers they would want that combined authority to have. Having regard to those proposals, and following consultation, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, my right hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr Pickles), may, if he is satisfied the proposals meet the statutory criteria for combined authorities, and if Parliament approves, make an Order establishing the combined authority and specifying its powers.

Urban Areas: Regeneration

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government with reference to the Portas Review on the future of high streets, published in December 2011, what progress has been made on

bringing forward legislative proposals to allow landlords to become high street investors by contributing to their local business improvement district. [161625]

Mr Prisk: Business improvement districts are an important tool for growth and this is already recognised by landlords who are voluntarily contributing to individual projects. In our response to the Portas Review we committed to explore with industry experts how a formal property owner business improvement district scheme may be delivered, within the provisions of the Business Rate Supplement Act 2009. Further to that work in England we are aiming to issue a consultation paper on how a scheme may work shortly. Any legislation implementing a formal property owner business improvement district scheme will be subject to that consultation.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Alternatives to Prosecution

Emily Thornberry: To ask the Attorney-General how many indictable-only offences were disposed of by the Crown Prosecution Service by a final warning in 2012-13 and in each of the preceding seven years by offence category. [161442]

The Solicitor-General: It is not possible to identify pre-charge requests where a final warning was recommended following an admission of guilt to an indictable only offence without reviewing individual files at disproportionate cost. Pre-charge requests cannot be split by offence categories as these categories are only allocated at the end of a prosecution case.

Crown Prosecution Service

Emily Thornberry: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions decisions of the Crown Prosecution Service have been challenged via judicial review in each of the last five years; and how many such challenges were successful. [159757]

The Solicitor-General: Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has maintained centrally recorded data on the number of judicial reviews for the last two years. The total number of finalised judicial reviews recorded was 102 in 2011-12 and 110 in 2012-13. No central record has been kept of the number of reviews for earlier years and such information could be obtained only at a disproportionate cost.

The data includes judicial reviews where the CPS was the applicant as well as those where the CPS was the respondent. It is not possible to show only specific challenges made against the CPS because this information is not held centrally.

Police Cautions

Emily Thornberry: To ask the Attorney-General how many indictable-only offences were disposed of by the Crown Prosecution Service by a (a) formal caution and (b) conditional caution in 2012-13 and in each of the preceding seven years by offence category. [161441]

The Solicitor-General: The CPS will only recommend a formal caution or conditional caution for an indictable only offence in exceptional circumstances where the prosecutor has concluded that the public interest does not require the immediate prosecution of the offender. Such a decision will take into account the particular circumstances of the offence or the offender and could involve considerations such as whether a prosecution is likely to have an adverse effect on the victim's physical or mental health.

The number of indictable only defendant prosecutions that were disposed of by way of either a formal caution or conditional caution is set out in a table which has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Training

Priti Patel: To ask the Attorney-General how many officials in (a) the Law Officers' Departments and (b) the non-departmental public bodies for which they are 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. [155421]

The Solicitor-General: Tables containing the information requested have been placed in the Library of the House.

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

Coastal Areas

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how much was allocated to seaside towns by each regional development agency in each year for which information is available. [161540]

Michael Fallon: This information is not available.

Community Interest Companies

Chris White: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many community interest companies were created in 2012. [161610]

Michael Fallon: Companies House has confirmed that 2,087 community interest companies were created in 2012.

Companies: Ownership

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment he has made of the adequacy of resources available to Companies House to enable it to compile and administer the register of beneficial ownership of UK companies which is to be created following the commitment by the Prime Minister at the G8 summit at Lough Erne; when he expects the first such register to be completed; and what public access to the register he expects to be available. [161510]

Michael Fallon: The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills will publish a discussion paper on corporate transparency before September 2013. This will invite views on the implementation of a central registry of

information on companies' beneficial ownership, including whether there will be public access to this information and how the registry will be maintained by Companies House. This will allow us to establish the resource implications for Companies House. We plan to introduce reforms before the end of this Parliament.

Credit

Alun Cairns: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps his Department is taking to ensure greater transparency in the consumer credit market; and if he will bring forward proposals to mandate all lenders to show the total cost of credit.

[160372]

Jo Swinson: The Government have taken a number of steps, working with industry, to ensure greater transparency in the consumer credit market. Some of the measures include:

credit card issuers providing customers with annual statements. These give customers a clear view of how they have managed their credit card over the previous 12 months, setting out costs and charges;

annual bank statements for personal current accounts which show customers how much their current account has cost them over the year and help them decide whether they are getting a good deal from their bank;

introduction by the major banks of balance alerts which are sent to a customer when their current account balance is low, and in some cases when they are about to go into their unarranged overdraft, so they can take action to avoid charges; and

the midata programme, where we are working with industry representatives including banks and credit card providers to give those consumers requesting it safe and ready access to their own transactions data in electronically readable and editable format to help inform their future decisions.

The Consumer Credit Directive was implemented in the UK in 2011 and made changes to the advertising of credit with the intention of making it more intelligible for consumers, including with regard to the total cost of credit.

The directive requires that where an advertisement includes an interest rate or any amount relating to the cost of the credit, then a representative example of the credit on offer must also be included in the advertisement.

The representative example includes comprehensive information including: a representative APR, the total amount of credit (i.e. the credit limit), any charges as part of the total cost of credit, the cash price (when linked to the supply of good or services) and the total amount payable.

Alun Cairns: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps his Department is taking to promote access to credit in the retail market.

[160373]

Jo Swinson: The Government wants to help low income consumers to access reliable, affordable credit. To that end, Government have committed to a further investment of up to £38 million to April 2015 to support participating credit unions to provide financial services, including affordable credit, for up to 1 million more consumers in a way that will enable credit unions to modernise expand and become financially sustainable.

CABINET OFFICE

Agriculture: Barnsley

Michael Dugher: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people in Barnsley East constituency are employed in the agriculture sector. [161557]

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 recent Parliamentary Question to the Minister for the Cabinet Office asking how many people in Barnsley East constituency are employed in the agriculture sector [161557].

Annual employment statistics are available from the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES). Due to the ONS policy on statistical rounding and disclosure for BRES, employment values are rounded to the nearest 100. As such, the number of people in Barnsley East constituency employed in the agriculture sector is less than 50 and therefore rounds to zero.

National and local area estimates for many labour market statistics, including employment, unemployment and claimant count are available on the NOMIS website at:

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

Community Development

Michael Dugher: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many Big Society community organisers have been trained to date. [161286]

Mr Hurd: As at the end of April, 1,168 community organisers have been trained, including 311 senior community organisers.

Death

Jonathan Edwards: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the mortality rates were for working age (*a*) men and (*b*) women (i) nationally, (ii) in each constituent part of the UK and (iii) in each region in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement. [161811]

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 recent question asking the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the mortality rates were for working age (a) men and (b) women (i) nationally and (ii) in each constituent part of the UK and each region in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement (161811)

Table 1 provides age-standardised mortality rates for males and females aged 16 to 64 years in the UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and regions of England, for deaths registered between 2002 and 2011 (the latest year available). A copy of Table 1 has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

The number of deaths registered in England and Wales, by sex, age group and underlying cause of death are available on the ONS website:

www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/mortality-statistics--deaths-registered-in-england-and-wales--series-dr-/index.html

Mortality data for Scotland are available from National Records of Scotland:

www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/theme/vital-events/deaths/index.html

Mortality data for Northern Ireland are available from the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency:

www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp14.htm

Employment: Norfolk

Simon Wright: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what estimate his Department has made of the net change in the number of people employed in (a) Norfolk and (b) Norwich South constituency in each of the last five years. [161810]

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 Minister for the Cabinet Office asking what estimate his department has made of the net change in the number of people employed in (a) Norfolk and (b) Norwich South in each of the last five years. (161810)

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) compiles employment statistics for local areas from the Annual Population Survey (APS) following International Labour Organisation (ILO) definitions. However, estimates of the net change in employment for the requested periods in Norwich South constituency are not available, due to small sample sizes.

The table shows the number and net change of people employed in Norfolk. These estimates are compiled from APS interviews held during the period January 2012 to December 2012, the latest period available, and the 12 month periods ending in December in each year since 2008.

As with any sample survey, estimates from the APS are subject to a margin of uncertainty. A guide to the quality of the estimates is given in the table.

National and local area estimates for many labour market statistics, including employment, unemployment and claimant count are available on the NOMIS website at:

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

Table 1: Net change in the number of people employed in Norfolk

12 months ending December:	Number of people employed aged 16 and over	Net change in employment ¹ (+/-)
2008	383	n/a
2009	400	17
2010	393	-7
2011	409	16
2012 ²	**418	9

¹ The net change is calculated on unrounded figures.

² Coefficients of Variation have been calculated for the latest period as an indication of the quality of the estimates. See Guide to Quality following.

Guide to Quality:

The Coefficient of Variation (CV) indicates the quality of an estimate, the smaller the CV value the higher the quality. The true value is likely to lie within +/- twice the CV—for example, for an estimate of 200 with a CV of 5% we would expect the population total to be within the range 180-220.

Key:

* 0 = CV < 5%—Statistical Robustness: Estimates are considered precise

** 5 = CV < 10%—Statistical Robustness: Estimates are considered reasonably precise

*** 10 = CV < 20%—Statistical Robustness: Estimates are considered acceptable

**** CV = 20%—Statistical Robustness: Estimates are considered too unreliable for practical purposes

CV = Coefficient of Variation

Source:

Annual Population Survey

Government Departments: Procurement

Stephen Phillips: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what recent assessment he has made of the performance of his Department's efforts to open up Government procurement to British small and medium-sized enterprises. [161359]

Miss Chloe Smith: It is this Government's aspiration that, by the end of this Parliament, 25% of direct and indirect Government procurement by value should go to SMEs. Spend with SMEs across Government has steadily increased since 2010 as a result of the steps we have taken. We have required all Departments to put in place plans to ensure that their spend with small companies continues to increase.

The Cabinet Office will be publishing a further report on progress shortly.

The Government is also providing industry with visibility of up to £79 billion of potential procurement opportunities across 18 sectors by publishing pipelines of future demand, meaning that British firms of all sizes will be in a good position to gear up in order to deliver Government's needs.

Honours: Scotland

Gregg McClymont: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office pursuant to his answer of 17 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 514W, on honours: Scotland, what the name is of each person nominated to the Honours Committee since May 2007 who has subsequently received an honour. [161520]

Mr Maude: These nominations will have originated from a number of sources, such as the Scottish Government itself, the voluntary and private sectors and from members of the public. All nominations received for people living and working in Scotland are sent, in the first instance, to the Scottish Government. A list of the successful candidates submitted by the Scottish Government to the Cabinet Office for consideration by the independent Honours Committees since May 2007 will be placed in the Library of the House.

Life Expectancy

Jonathan Edwards: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the life expectancy at birth was for (a) men and (b) women (i) nationally, (ii) in each constituent part of the UK and (iii) in each region in each of the last 10 years; and if he will make a statement. [161812]

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 recent question asking the Secretary of State for Health what the life expectancy at birth is for (a) men and (b) women (i) nationally and (ii) in each constituent part of the UK and each region in each of the last 10 years. (161812)

Life expectancy figures are calculated as three year rolling averages. Table 1 provides the period life expectancy at birth for males and females in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, English Regions and the UK for the period 1999-2001 to 2008-2010

{the latest figures available). A copy of Table 1 has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Period life expectancies at birth for males and females for the UK, each constituent part of the UK and each region, for rolling three-year periods from 1991-1993 onwards are published on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/subnational-health4/life-expect-at-birth-age-65/index.html>

Ovarian Cancer

Jim Shannon: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people in the UK have ovarian cancer; what the age group is of such people; and what their life expectancy is. [161831]

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 recent question asking the Secretary of State for Health how many people in the UK have ovarian cancer; what the age group is of such people; and what their life expectancy is [161831].

The Office for National Statistics maintains the national cancer registry for England. Cancer statistics published by ONS are therefore for England only. Figures for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales are available from the Cancer Registries representing those countries.

The latest available figures for newly diagnosed cases of cancer (incidence) are for the year 2011.

Table 1 provides the number of newly diagnosed cases of ovarian cancer in women in England, by five year age group for the year 2011. Please note that these numbers may not be the same as the number of women diagnosed with cancer, because one person may be diagnosed with more than one cancer.

Estimates of life expectancy for women diagnosed with ovarian cancer are not available. ONS publishes one and five-year cancer net survival estimates for England, for 21 common cancers. Ovarian cancer is one of these common cancers. Table 2 provides one and five-year net survival estimates for those women diagnosed with ovarian cancer in 2006-2010.

The latest published figures on cancer incidence in England are available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsobl/cancer-statistics-registrations--england--series-mb1-/index.html>

The latest published figures on cancer survival in England are available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/cancer-unit/cancer-survival/index.html>

Table 1: Registrations of newly diagnosed cases of ovarian cancer¹ by 5-year age group, England, 2011^{2, 3}

Age group	Registrations
<1	—
1-4	—
5-9	2
10-14	5
15-19	22
20-24	40
25-29	91
30-34	92
35-39	128
40-44	236
45-49	356
50-54	451
55-59	474
60-64	727
65-69	675
70-74	695
75-79	605
80-84	497
85+	497
Total	5,593

¹ Cancer of the ovary is coded as C56 according to the International Classification of Diseases Tenth Revision (ICD-10).

² Cancer incidence figures are based on newly diagnosed cases registered in each calendar year.

³ Based on boundaries as of May 2013.

Source:

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Table 2: One-year and five-year net survival (percentage)¹, with 95% confidence intervals (CI)², for women (15-99 years)³ diagnosed with ovarian cancer⁴ during 2006-2010: England

Age group	Number of patients	One-year survival			Five-year survival		
		Percentage	95%	CI	Percentage	95%	CI
Age-standardised	27,466	72.7	72.1	73.3	44.0	43.0	45.0
Un-standardised		70.0	69.4	70.5	42.4	41.6	43.3
15-39	1,928	95	94	96	87	85	89
40-49	2,845	91	90	92	69	67	71
50-59	4,895	85	84	86	55	53	57
60-69	6,990	77	76	78	40	38	41
70-79	6,196	61	59	62	28	27	30
80-99	4,612	33	32	34	17	15	19

¹ Net survival is an estimate of the probability of survival for the given time after diagnosis of the cancer, assuming that no other cause of death occurs.

² A 95% confidence interval is a measure of the uncertainty around an estimate. It provides a range around the estimated value within which we have a 95% level of confidence that the true value for the population is likely to fall.

³ All women (aged 15-99 years) in England who were diagnosed during 2006-2010 with ovarian cancer as an invasive, primary, malignant neoplasm were eligible for analysis. Ineligible patients were those whose tumour was benign (not malignant) or in situ (malignant but not invasive) or of uncertain behaviour (uncertain whether benign or malignant), or for which the organ of origin was unknown.

⁴ Ovarian cancer is coded as C56 in the international Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10).

Source:

Office for National Statistics and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine.

Prostate Cancer

Jim Shannon: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) how many people have been diagnosed with prostate cancer in each year from 2007 to 2012; [161827]

(2) what the age group of those diagnosed with prostate cancer was in each year since 2007. [161828]

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 recent questions asking the Secretary of State for Health (a) how many people have been diagnosed with prostate cancer in each year from 2007 to 2012 [161827]; and (b) what the age group of those diagnosed with prostate cancer was in each year since 2007 [161828].

The Office, for National Statistics maintains, the national cancer registry for England. Cancer statistics published by ONS are therefore for England only. Figures for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are available from the Cancer Registries representing those countries.

The latest available figures for newly diagnosed cases of cancer (incidence) are for the year 2011.

Table 1 provides the number of newly diagnosed cases of prostate cancer in men in England, by five year age group for each of the years 2007 to 2011.

Please note that these numbers may not be the same as the number of men diagnosed with prostate cancer, because a man may be diagnosed with more than one primary prostate cancer over time, although this is rare.

The latest published figures on cancer incidence in England are available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/cancer-statistics-registrations--england--series-mb1-/index.html>

Table 1: Registrations of newly diagnosed cases of prostate cancer¹ by 5-year age group, England, 2007-2011^{2,3}

Age group	Registrations				
	Year				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<1	—	—	—	—	1
1-4	—	1	—	1	—
5-9	—	—	—	—	—
10-14	—	1	—	2	—
15-19	1	—	1	1	—
20-24	—	—	—	1	—
25-29	1	—	—	—	1
30-34	—	—	2	1	—
35-39	4	5	6	6	7
40-44	50	58	64	58	57
45-49	183	229	314	292	340

Table 1: Registrations of newly diagnosed cases of prostate cancer¹ by 5-year age group, England, 2007-2011^{2,3}

Age group	Registrations				
	Year				
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
50-54	819	826	1,003	984	1,060
55-59	2,437	2,355	2,539	2,427	2,535
60-64	4,381	4,660	5,123	5,146	5,213
65-69	5,748	5,753	6,557	6,852	6,941
70-74	6,195	6,167	6,950	6,936	6,828
75-79	5,674	5,770	6,146	6,225	6,053
80-84	3,757	3,702	3,874	3,783	3,711
85+	2,909	2,925	3,098	2,987	2,820
Total	32,159	32,452	35,677	35,702	35,567

¹ Cancer of the prostate is coded as C61 according to the International Classification of Diseases Tenth Revision (ICD-10)

² Cancer incidence figures are based on newly diagnosed cases registered in each calendar year.

³ Based on boundaries as of May 2013.

Source:

Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Unemployment: Coastal Areas

Chris Ruane: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the unemployment rate was in each of the principal seaside towns in each of the last 30 years. [161846]

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 to the Minister for the Cabinet Office asking what the unemployment rate was in each of the principal seaside towns in each of the last 30 years (161846).

Although not a standard ONS geography, the concept of principal seaside towns in Great Britain was covered in the report "The Seaside Economy", by Beatty and Fothergill (Sheffield Hallam University, June 2003 (updated June 2010)) and has been referred to in parliamentary debate and used for other parliamentary questions on a number of occasions since. There is no equivalent definition of seaside towns for Northern Ireland.

Estimates of unemployment are not produced for the principal seaside towns in Great Britain. Instead we have provided estimates relating to the local authorities associated with each of these towns using model based estimates of unemployment for the 12 month periods ending in December for 2004 to 2012. Estimates are not available for earlier periods from this source.

These figures, along with a wide range of other labour market data for parliamentary constituencies and local authorities, are also published on the Office for National Statistics' Nomis website:

<http://www.nomisweb.co.uk>

Table 1: Unemployment rate¹ in principal seaside towns

Principal seaside town	Local authority	Percentage								
		12 months ending December								
		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Bognor Regis	Arun	3.3	3.6	4.3	3.9	4.3	6.1	6.7	6.3	4.9
Blackpool	Blackpool	5.0	5.9	6.1	6.4	6.5	8.8	10.0	10.6	9.8
Bournemouth	Bournemouth	4.1	4.1	4.4	4.4	5.2	8.5	7.4	7.4	6.7
Brighton	Brighton and Hove	6.3	6.4	6.8	6.5	6.9	8.0	7.5	7.7	8.2
Whitstable/Herne Bay	Canterbury	4.0	4.2	6.1	4.2	4.7	6.0	7.1	7.0	7.1
Falmouth	Cornwall	4.0	3.9	4.1	4.4	4.4	5.7	6.8	6.4	5.9

Table 1: Unemployment rate¹ in principal seaside towns

Principal seaside town	Local authority	Percentage								
		2004	2005	12 months ending December						
				2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Newquay	Cornwall	4.0	3.9	4.1	4.4	4.4	5.7	6.8	6.4	5.9
Penzance	Cornwall	4.0	3.9	4.1	4.4	4.4	5.7	6.8	6.4	5.9
St. Ives	Cornwall	4.0	3.9	4.1	4.4	4.4	5.7	6.8	6.4	5.9
Deal	Dover	4.9	5.0	6.4	5.3	5.3	6.5	8.3	7.8	7.7
Sidmouth	East Devon	2.5	2.8	3.0	3.2	3.1	3.9	5.0	5.4	3.9
Skegness	East Lindsey	3.8	3.9	5.3	5.2	5.1	5.8	6.6	7.2	7.2
Bridlington	East Riding of Yorkshire	3.4	3.6	4.6	3.8	4.3	6.3	6.4	6.5	6.9
Eastbourne	Eastbourne	5.4	5.2	6.1	6.2	5.8	8.1	6.8	7.0	7.6
Great Yarmouth	Great Yarmouth	6.3	7.1	7.6	6.4	8.0	8.4	9.5	10.8	9.2
Hastings/Bexhill	Hastings	6.6	6.3	6.9	7.1	8.0	8.0	10.4	9.7	10.0
Isle of Wight	Isle of Wight	4.1	4.2	4.8	5.6	5.9	7.4	9.4	9.1	8.1
Morecambe and Heysham	Lancaster	5.8	5.4	5.2	5.1	6.0	6.4	5.5	6.2	7.5
Ilfracombe	North Devon	3.4	3.7	4.0	4.1	4.4	5.3	6.4	5.9	4.5
Weston-super-Mare	North Somerset	2.9	2.9	2.6	2.9	3.6	5.7	5.4	5.8	6.3
Whitley Bay	North Tyneside	5.2	5.6	6.5	5.8	6.8	8.5	8.9	9.8	9.9
Swanage	Purbeck	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.7	3.7	5.1	4.6	4.4
Scarborough	Scarborough	4.0	4.0	5.6	5.5	5.6	7.9	9.5	7.6	8.8
Whitby	Scarborough	4.0	4.0	5.6	5.5	5.6	7.9	9.5	7.6	8.8
Burnham-on-Sea	Sedgemoor	3.3	3.2	4.2	4.4	4.7	7.4	7.6	7.2	6.7
Southport	Sefton	5.0	5.5	6.0	6.3	6.1	8.1	8.9	9.4	8.5
Folkstone/Hythe	Shepway	4.7	4.7	5.9	6.2	5.6	6.9	9.6	7.9	7.0
Southend-on-Sea	Southend-on-Sea	5.2	5.2	5.9	5.8	5.9	7.6	7.7	8.5	7.9
Dawlish/Teignmouth	Teignbridge	2.7	2.7	2.9	3.6	3.2	4.9	5.2	5.8	4.8
Exmouth	Teignbridge	2.7	2.7	2.9	3.6	3.2	4.9	5.2	5.8	4.8
Clacton	Tendring	3.8	4.5	6.1	5.9	6.3	6.9	8.9	9.3	8.7
Thanet	Thanet	5.2	6.4	7.4	7.1	7.3	7.9	9.6	13.2	10.9
Torbay	Torbay	4.1	4.6	5.3	5.1	6.0	7.9	9.6	8.9	7.5
Lowestoft	Waveney	4.5	5.1	7.0	6.1	5.5	6.3	8.5	8.6	8.6
Minehead	West Somerset	3.4	4.4	5.3	4.9	4.7	4.4	4.6	5.3	4.8
Weymouth	Weymouth and Portland	3.7	3.4	4.1	4.1	4.5	7.2	7.8	7.5	6.1
Worthing	Worthing	3.3	3.6	4.5	4.6	4.9	6.7	6.5	6.2	6.6
Porthcawl	Bridgend	4.2	5.5	6.2	6.1	6.6	9.0	8.2	8.1	8.7
Llandudno/ Colwyn Bay/Conwy	Conwy	3.6	4.1	4.8	4.6	5.7	6.5	7.1	7.5	6.6
Rhyl/Prestatyn	Denbighshire	3.6	4.1	4.7	4.9	6.1	7.0	8.3	7.1	7.1
Barry	The Vale of Glamorgan	4.7	4.9	4.7	5.0	6.0	8.0	7.9	7.5	7.8
Dunoon	Argyll and Bute	4.2	4.4	3.9	4.0	4.3	5.6	6.2	6.9	6.3
Greater Ayr	South Ayrshire	6.0	5.6	5.6	5.0	5.2	7.7	9.0	9.7	9.2

¹ Number of unemployed divided by the number of economically active.

Source:

Model based estimates of unemployment

DEFENCE

Afghanistan

Angus Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what equipment he proposes will (a) remain at Lashkar Gah, (b) be moved to Camp Bastion and (c) be returned to the UK; [160994]

(2) when the last service person stationed in Lashkar Gah will leave. [160995]

Mr Robathan: Future base reductions will be carried out in line with UK withdrawal plans. As part of these plans the UK base in Lashkar Gar is due to be closed in 2014.

Equipment and material will only be redeployed from Afghanistan once operational commanders are content that it is no longer required. In some cases we will not redeploy material because it is beyond economic repair or does not represent good value for money to return it to the UK. If we decide not to redeploy an item we have several options for disposal; these include sale, scrap and gifting.

Freedom of Information

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he plans to reply to the Freedom of Information request from the hon. Member for Bridgend, reference MM/JH/29/04/2013 dated 29 April 2013. [161329]

Mr Dunne: A response was sent to the hon. Member on 26 June 2013.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Energy Companies Obligation

Graham Stringer: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the answer of 14 May 2013, *Official Report*, column 155W, on the Energy Companies Obligation (ECO), if he will take steps to collect data on the number of (a) oil-fired boilers and (b) LPG-fired boilers installed under the ECO scheme. [161317]

Gregory Barker: We will be publishing information relating to ECO measures which have been delivered and notified to Ofgem in an Official Statistics release on 27 June. However, this data will not be able to distinguish between oil-fired and LPG-fired boilers. For further information about measures available under ECO please see:

<http://www.ofgem.gov.uk/Sustainability/Environment/ECO/Info-for-suppliers/Documents/1/Energy%20Companies%20Obligation%20ECO%20-%20List%20of%20Measures%20and%20Additional%20Information.pdf>

Energy: Prices

Caroline Flint: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate his Department has made of the average annual energy bill for (a) dual fuel and (b) non-dual fuel for customers paying (i) standard credit, (ii) direct debit and (iii) pre-payment in each region. [161932]

Michael Fallon: DECC does not publish estimates of energy bills for dual fuel and non-dual fuel customers. However, it does produce estimates of annual gas and standard electricity bills for customers paying by standard credit, direct debit and pre-payment meter in various towns and cities in the UK (representing the regions). These can be found in table 2.2.3 (standard electricity) and 2.3.3 (gas) of the Quarterly Energy Prices (QEP) publication:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/annual-domestic-energy-price-statistics>

These bills are based on an assumed level of consumption of 3,300 kWh of standard electricity and 18,000 kWh of gas per year. Dual fuel discounts vary considerably between suppliers.

Public Expenditure

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what assessment he has made of the equality impact of his Department's spending reductions since 2010; whether this assessment has been used to inform his planning ahead of the 2013 Comprehensive Spending Review and with what result; what plans he has to publish the equality impact assessments undertaken by his Department as a result of the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review; and if he will make a statement. [161177]

Gregory Barker: The Department of Energy and Climate Change considers equality issues in exercising its functions, including in setting priorities within its budget, in order to comply with equality legislation and to ensure it understands how its activities will affect specific groups in society.

DECC provided HM Treasury with an equalities assessment of its main areas of expenditure, as well as some additional areas of spending that have particular equalities impacts, both before and during the spending round process.

DECC's overall spending round submission was informed by its own equality assessments and by the SR equalities assessment commissioned by HMT.

This Government has been clear that producing formal Equality Impact Assessment documents are not required in order to ensure compliance with the legal responsibility to consider equality impacts.

The assessment of equalities feeds in to both spending round decisions and future decisions by the Department of Energy and Climate Change. The outcome of the spending round will be published today.

Termination of Employment

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change on how many occasions (a) a compromise agreement, (b) a confidentiality clause and (c) judicial mediation was used when an employee of (i) his Department and (ii) the public bodies for which he is responsible left their employment in (A) 2010-11, (B) 2011-12 and (C) 2012-13; and if he will make a statement. [160905]

Gregory Barker: Our records show that 11 compromise agreements and two judicial mediations were concluded in the period from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2013. As the numbers by year are too small to report this represents the total number of agreements and judicial mediations across the Department of Energy and Climate Change and its non-departmental public bodies (NDPB's).

Typically all agreements will include a confidentiality clause preventing disclosure of the terms of the settlement to anyone other than the employee or former employees immediate family, professional adviser or as otherwise required by law.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Belarus

Stephen Phillips: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to encourage the development of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Belarus. [161321]

Mr Lidington: The UK works with international partners, and multilateral organisations, including the UN, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe, as well as with Belarusian civil society and relevant parts of the Government, to promote reform in Belarus. The UK remains a strong supporter of the EU's policy of critical engagement with Belarus, including restrictive measures. On 15 October 2012 the EU's Foreign Affairs Council

extended sanctions to a year. We welcomed the UN Human Rights Council's 13 June extension of the mandate of a Special Rapporteur on Belarus. We continue to urge the Government of Belarus to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur. I met Belarus human rights defenders on 5 June and stressed UK opposition to the death penalty in all circumstances. In my statement following the meeting, I urged Belarus to introduce a moratorium on executions immediately, and release and rehabilitate all political prisoners.

Billing

John Healey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the savings it could achieve by paying its suppliers early in return for rebates. [161054]

Mr Lidington: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office adheres to the Government's prompt payment code and aims to pay its suppliers within 10 working days as stated on our website. Our standard payment terms remain at 30 days. We have not undertaken any specific exercise to evaluate savings to be made from making payments earlier than 10 days.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the prospects for long-term stability in Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement. [160999]

Mr Lidington: This Government believes that the strongest way to ensure the long-term stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina is through membership of the EU and NATO. Our assessment is that there has not been any substantive progress toward this goal this year. Current political crises in the Federation and in Mostar and continuing ethnic tensions show that stability is not yet entrenched. We will continue to encourage Bosnia and Herzegovina's political leaders to make the reforms needed for progress towards the EU and NATO, and in so doing help ensure the long-term stability of the country.

Burma

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received on the treatment by the Burmese Army of ethnic minority peoples in that country. [161347]

Mr Swire: We note the involvement of senior Burmese military in the most recent talks between the Kachin Independence Organisation and the Burmese Government in May, the outcomes of which I welcomed in a statement on 6 June.

However, we are very concerned by reports from a number of sources, including from the UN Special Rapporteur for Burma, Tomas Quintana in February 2013, which have set out incidents of forced labour, rape and sexual violence, arbitrary detention and other human rights violations by the Burmese military. Many of these abuses have been reported in ethnic areas, including in Kachin, Shan and Karen states.

We continue to raise our concerns about human rights, particularly in ethnic areas, on a regular basis in meetings with senior Burmese Ministers. We appointed a Defence Attaché to Burma in February 2013 to build relationships with the Burmese military. The Chief of Defence Staff visited Burma from 2-4 June, where he met with Burma's President, Commander in Chief, lead negotiators in the peace process and ethnic leaders. He emphasised to them the importance of professionalising the Burmese military and pursuing a sustainable peace process in Burma's ethnic areas. The focus of our defence engagement in Burma will be on adherence to the core principles of democratic accountability and human rights. We want to see a Burmese army that protects and respects, and is in turn respected by, the Burmese people.

Colombia

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to the answer of 17 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 485W, on Colombia, what response he has received from the Colombian Attorney General; if he will place a copy of this response in the Library; and if he will make a statement. [161328]

Mr Swire: We are expecting a reply to our letter of 11 June shortly. We will also place a copy in the Library of the House.

Human Trafficking

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether awareness-raising seminars on human trafficking are organised for his Department's staff prior to posting abroad. [161024]

Mr Swire: Staff of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) do not receive awareness-raising seminars on human trafficking prior to posting abroad. The activities that the FCO undertakes to combat trafficking overseas are political lobbying and intervention and reintegration projects, as mandated through the Government strategy. As such, there is little front-line contact of staff with potential victims, particularly in a first responder role overseas.

Human trafficking training is mandatory for all Home Office Immigration and Visas staff who manage and process applications under this system. This helps them to identify those who might have been trafficked and understand the steps that should be taken to safeguard possible victims. In addition, seminars and conferences are arranged with local partners in countries where there is a known threat.

Sexual Offences

Naomi Long: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how he plans to measure the success of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative up to the planned review of this issue by the G8 in 2015. [161073]

Mark Simmonds: The FCO team, together with other UK Government Departments is developing a G8 implementation plan. This identifies who is responsible for the various commitments made in the April G8

Declaration. The FCO will monitor the progress of this plan on a regular basis with DFID, the MOD and the UN. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), will continue to report on progress in respect of G8 implementation to his Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative Steering Board, which includes senior representatives from NGOs and civil society.

We will continue to monitor the impact of the ongoing political campaign on PSVI as well as our practical action. This will involve an assessment of the extent to which it has encouraged greater national and international commitment and action. An example of a successful outcome was the signing of a Joint Communique between the UN and the Government of Somalia on action on sexual violence at the London conference in May. The UK's work with the Federal Government of Somalia in its preparations helped provide the foundations for the Federal Government of Somalia to work with the UN on sexual violence in the future.

Naomi Long: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when his Department's funding for the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative will be made available; and how that funding will be delivered. [161074]

Mark Simmonds: Since preventing sexual violence in conflict is critical to addressing long term conflict reduction and peace building, funds are currently allocated to the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative from geographical Conflict Pool programmes.

On 11 April, at the launch of the G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), also announced £5 million, over three years, of FCO funding to support grassroots and human rights projects on sexual violence in conflict, and wider projects to tackle violence against women and girls. This will be provided through the Human Rights and Democracy programme, the FCO's dedicated source of funding for human rights projects overseas. The open bidding round for these funds will be announced in July on the FCO's website. Funding will be allocated to high quality proposals in line with the bidding criteria. We expect that the majority of projects will be implemented by local or international civil society organisations, overseen by UK Embassies and High Commissions.

Naomi Long: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans his Department has to discuss the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative at the UN General Assembly Ministerial Week. [161075]

Mark Simmonds: The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), intends to host a high level side event during the UN General Assembly Ministerial Week. The purpose of which is to take the political campaign on preventing sexual violence in conflict to a wider UN audience and press for more concerted action. We hope as many countries as possible will join us in endorsing a high level statement of action.

Naomi Long: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department plans to take to ensure that projects specifically for children receive funding from the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative. [161076]

Mark Simmonds: The Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) recognises that sexual violence in conflict not only affects women, but also men and children. Our work reflects this and aims to support all survivors of sexual violence. For example, the UK team of experts includes experts in investigating and prosecuting sexual crimes committed against children, providing psychosocial assistance and medical treatment to child survivors and multi-disciplinary gender-based violence and child protection responses.

On 11 April, at the launch of the G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), announced £5 million (over three years) of FCO funding to support grassroots and human rights projects on sexual violence in conflict. Funding will be allocated to high quality proposals. All organisations and NGOs who are eligible can bid for funds, including those working directly in support of children affected by sexual violence in conflict.

The G8 Declaration contains a number of commitments specific to children, including the deployment of Child Protection Advisers within appropriate UN and other peacekeeping operations to ensure that children are protected in conflict situations: assisting conflict-affected countries to ensure that their national security sector and justice reform programmes are child centred; and support for the mandate of the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict. At the launch of the Declaration the Foreign Secretary announced £150,000 funding to the Office of the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Children in Armed Conflict. These measures, alongside the broader provisions of the Declaration, reflect a clear determination to address the issue of sexual violence committed against Children in conflict.

Sudan and South Sudan

Mr Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implementation of UN Resolution 1591 with regards to Sudan and South Sudan. [161341]

Mark Simmonds: It is deeply concerning that eight years after the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1591, there is still ongoing conflict in Darfur, and that the security situation has worsened since the start of 2013. A factor in this insecurity is the continuing supply of weapons to all parties to the conflict in Darfur in contravention of the arms embargo in UNSCR 1591. Alongside UNAMID, the Panel of Experts established by UNSCR 1591 remains a key monitoring mechanism, providing the Security Council with regular briefings and reports on the situation in Darfur. The UK continues to value and support the work of the Panel of Experts. Four individuals have been sanctioned on the recommendation of the Panel, though the Sudanese Authorities have failed to fully enforce the travel ban

and asset freeze implied by that sanctioning. The EU have implemented a wider arms embargo on the whole of Sudan and South Sudan.

Termination of Employment

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions (a) a compromise agreement, (b) a confidentiality clause and (c) judicial mediation was used when an employee of (i) his Department and (ii) the public bodies for which he is responsible left their employment in (A) 2010-11, (B) 2011-12 and (C) 2012-13; and if he will make a statement. [160907]

Alistair Burt: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the public bodies for which it is responsible have settled fewer than five cases using (a) compromise agreements, (b) confidentiality clauses or (c) judicial mediation in each year since 2010 for UK-based FCO staff working in both the UK and at our overseas posts. To avoid the possibility of revealing the identities of individual staff the FCO does not disclose more detailed information when overall numbers amount to fewer than five. This is in line with Cabinet Office guidance.

Turkey

Mr Lammy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funding the Government has allocated to BBC Turkish Services since 6 May 2010; and if he will make a statement. [161414]

Mr Lidington: The BBC World Service currently receives Grant-in-Aid Funding from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The BBC World Service is editorially and operationally independent and takes its own funding decisions for its Turkish and other services.

The UK Government does not provide any other funding to the BBC which is funded through the Licence Fee and a dividend from BBC Worldwide. The BBC World Service will continue to be funded by the Grant-in-Aid until the end of March 2014 when the World Service transfers to Licence Fee funding.

HEALTH

Accident and Emergency Departments

Gloria De Piero: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many hospitals only allow admissions through accident and emergency; and what assessment he has made of the potential effect of such a policy on the stress levels of (a) staff and (b) patients. [161413]

Anna Soubry: Information on the number of hospitals that only allow admissions through accident and emergency (A and E) are not centrally held. Protocols regarding admission to hospital are an operational matter for local national health service trusts, working in collaboration with their commissioners.

No assessment has therefore been made on the effect of such policy on the stress levels of staff or patients.

Staff wellbeing in general is monitored through the annual staff survey and patient satisfaction with services is monitored through NHS Friends and Family Test where patients are asked whether they would recommend hospital wards and A and E departments to their friends and family if they needed similar care or treatment.

Ambulance Services

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for the Home Department on proposals to make police and crime commissioners responsible for ambulance service provision. [161744]

Anna Soubry: There have been no discussions with the Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), on proposals to make police and crime commissioners responsible for ambulance service provision.

The Department has been in discussions with the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Home Office about promoting greater collaboration between emergency services, where appropriate.

Closer co-operation between the emergency services is clearly desirable and should be encouraged and incentivised, within the bounds of what is reasonably practicable and affordable. However, any more wide-ranging measures designed to bring the ambulance services and other emergency services together, operationally and/or legally, would have to have a sound evidence base in terms of clear benefits, not only in monetary terms, but also in terms of clinical outcomes for patients.

Autism: Luton

Gavin Shuker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many autistic children whose families reside in Luton access care outside of the borough. [161263]

Norman Lamb: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Cancer

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress cancer strategic clinical networks have made in developing their terms of reference; and if he will place in the Library copies of such terms of reference. [161461]

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the role of cancer strategic clinical networks in promoting equality and reducing inequalities in cancer care; and if he will make a statement. [161458]

Anna Soubry: Information on terms of reference is not held centrally. As set out in the "Single Operating Framework for Strategic Clinical Networks", published in November 2012, the terms of reference for individual Strategic Clinical Networks (SCNs), including cancer networks, are agreed locally between health communities and their SCNs and in line with the overarching expectations and priorities of NHS England.

NHS England has developed fixed points for measuring success that have formed the foundation on which SCNs have been designed and should guide their development and operation. This includes a statutory duty to promote equality and reduce inequalities.

While SCNs will fundamentally support the achievement of outcome ambitions and the delivery of the NHS Outcomes Framework, they should also ensure that their activities have regard for the NHS constitution and that they promote equality.

A copy of the "Single Operating Framework for Strategic Clinical Networks" has already been placed in the Library.

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps (a) his Department and (b) NHS England plan to take to deliver improvements in the relational aspects of cancer care. [161462]

Anna Soubry: Over the past two years, the National Cancer Survivorship Initiative (NCSI), a partnership between the Department and Macmillan Cancer Support, has worked with NHS Improvement to pilot transformed pathways of care for adults and for children and young people with cancer.

Lessons learned from the pilots informed the NCSI report "Living with and beyond cancer; Taking Action to Improve Outcomes", published in March 2013, which recommends an integrated package of care that includes: holistic needs assessment and care planning; treatment summaries; access to health and well-being clinics; and schemes that support people to undertake physical activity and healthy weight management.

Survivorship care is now the responsibility of NHS England. The recommendation in the report will support NHS England and local national health service teams to drive improved cancer survivorship outcomes and will help deliver our ambition to enhance the quality of life for all people with long-term conditions. A copy of the report has been placed in the Library.

Care Quality Commission

Charlotte Leslie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what (a) one-off payments and (b) pension entitlements Care Quality Commission board members who stepped down or were removed from their posts in 2012 received. [161738]

Norman Lamb: The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and adult social care providers in England.

The CQC has provided the following information:

In the period 1 January to 31 December 2012, one non-executive director, Martin Marshall, left the board when his period of appointment expired at the end of December. He received no kind of one-off payment and none of the non-executive members of the board is provided with a pension in relation to their role as CQC board members.

In the period 1 January to 31 December 2012, one member of the executive team left in February 2012, chief executive Cynthia Bower. She resigned from her post voluntarily and therefore was not in receipt of any compensation for loss of office (redundancy or ex-gratia). She was entitled to a pension under the NHS pension scheme and is now in receipt of her benefits.

Children's Centres

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidance his Department provides to clinical commissioning groups on the provision of services through children's centres in their area; [161335]

(2) what amount his Department and its agencies spent on providing services through children's centres in each of the last five financial years. [161337]

Norman Lamb: The Department has not issued guidance to clinical commissioning groups on the provision of services through children's centres. NHS England has published a resource pack to support clinical groups who commission maternity services, which acknowledges that in some areas midwives working in the community are based in children's centres.

The Department for Education published Sure Start children's centres revised statutory guidance in April 2013, which is for local authorities, commissioners of local health services and Jobcentre Plus on their duties relating to children's centres under the Childcare Act 2006 which is available at:

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/s/childrens%20centre%20stat%20guidance%20april%202013.pdf>

The Department has not provided funding specifically for the provision of services through children's centres. Information is not collected centrally on local national health service expenditure for the provision of services through children's centres.

Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Sandra Osborne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will take steps to encourage research on medically unexplained symptoms as part of wider research on ME and chronic fatigue syndrome. [161418]

Norman Lamb: The Department's National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including chronic fatigue syndrome/myalgic encephalomyelitis (CFS/ME). These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards being made on the basis of the scientific quality of the proposals made.

The Medical Research Council (MRC), which is an independent body funded by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, has identified research into CFS/ME as a research priority and the Council has implemented a number of initiatives to stimulate high quality research in this area. The MRC's current priorities for this area are outlined in a highlight notice, which can be found on its website at:

www.mrc.ac.uk/Fundingopportunities/Highlightnotices/CFSME/MRC001747

Applications for research into all aspects of CFS/ME are welcomed by the MRC; this would include research on medically unexplained symptoms.

The MRC is independent in its choice of which research to support and the selection of projects for funding is determined through peer review.

Disability: Bedfordshire

Nadine Dorries: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to improve health care for the disabled in Mid Bedfordshire constituency. [161632]

Norman Lamb: The provision of health care services locally is a matter for the relevant local organisations.

The Mandate to the national health service expects NHS England to ensure that clinical commissioning groups work with local authorities to ensure that vulnerable people, particularly those with learning disabilities and autism, receive safe, appropriate, high quality care.

The Equality Act 2010 requires NHS bodies, and those carrying out public functions on their behalf, to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people, which may include providing more appropriate services. This statutory duty aims to ensure that a disabled person can use a service as close as reasonably possible to the standard usually offered to non-disabled people. NHS bodies must think in advance and on an on-going basis about what disabled people with a range of impairments that use their services might reasonably need.

The Department is currently in discussions with its partners about publishing further guidance on making reasonable adjustments in healthcare settings.

“The NHS Outcomes Framework 2013-14” sets out the outcomes and corresponding indicators that will be used to hold NHS England to account for the outcomes it delivers through commissioning health services. Reducing premature death in people with serious mental illness and people with a learning disability are identified as improvement areas.

The Operating Framework specifically talks about a focus on the physical healthcare of people affected by mental illness for the coming year and also that the NHS should ensure momentum is maintained in improving care and outcomes for people with learning disabilities.

Fruit Juices

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information his Department holds on the effect of freshly squeezed citrus fruit juice on tooth enamel and consequent effects on public health. [161287]

Anna Soubry: Evidence indicates that fresh fruit, and in particular citrus fruit, have erosive potential and particularly when consumed with high frequency.

The Department published the second edition of ‘Delivering better oral health—an evidence-based toolkit for prevention’ in 2009 which can be found here:

www.oralhealthplatform.eu/sites/default/files/field/document/NHS_Delivering%20Better%20Oral%20health.pdf

This report contains a section on erosion and relevant supporting references. Dietary associations with erosion are present but weak, as the evidence is predominantly based on laboratory studies which do not fully explain causal relationships and co-factors in the erosive process.

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice his Department gives to the public about the effects of citrus fruit juice on oral hygiene. [161331]

Anna Soubry: The Department’s second edition of “Delivering better oral health—an evidence-based toolkit for prevention” (2009) includes the advice

“Avoid frequent intake of acidic foods or drinks—keep them to mealtimes”

and

“Do not brush immediately after eating or drinking acidic foods or drinks”.

The toolkit can be viewed here:

www.oralhealthplatform.eu/sites/default/files/field/document/NHS_Delivering%20Better%20Oral%20health.pdf

Health Services: Staffordshire

Mr Burley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS staff in Staffordshire were paid over (a) £50,000, (b) £65,738 and (c) £100,000 in the last year for which figures are available. [161277]

Anna Soubry: The numbers of national health service staff in Staffordshire who, in 2012-13, were paid over (a) £50,000, (b) £65,738 and (c) £100,000 are estimated to be (a) 1,480, (b) 990 and (c) 490 respectively and include both frontline staff and management.

These estimates are inclusive (i.e. count (b) is included in count (a)) and based on unvalidated data as recorded in the electronic staff record (ESR) data warehouse which is a monthly snap shot of the live ESR data.

HIV Infection

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the number of people per 100,000 with HIV who are (a) gay and (b) not gay. [161283]

Anna Soubry: In 2011, an estimated 4,700 per 100,000 men who have sex with men (MSM) were living with an HIV infection in the United Kingdom. In the same year, 150 per 100,000 of the general population were estimated to be living with HIV.

In numbers, an estimated 96,000 people were estimated to be living with HIV in 2011 in the UK. Of these, 42% (40,100) were estimated to be MSM.

Human Papillomavirus

Mr Blunt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health with reference to the answer of 20 March 2013, *Official Report*, columns 714-15W, on Human Papillomavirus, if he will make it his policy to ensure that parents of children about to receive the HPV vaccination are given a copy of the vaccine manufacturer’s own patient information leaflet prior to signing a consent form for vaccination. [161339]

Anna Soubry: The vaccine manufacturer’s patient information leaflet (PIL) is not routinely given to girls and their parents or carers. As set out in my answer of 20 March 2013, *Official Report*, columns 714-15W, an information leaflet about HPV vaccination should be issued prior to consent being sought. This contains summary information about possible side effects. The leaflet advises girls and their parents or carers to read the PIL if more detailed information is needed about side effects.

We are content that these arrangements, clearly set out in “Immunisation against infectious disease”, ensure that appropriate information, sufficient to enable informed decisions to be made, is provided, whilst also enabling girls and their parents or carers to obtain further information if required.

Sleep Apnoea

Naomi Long: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what arrangements his Department has made to ensure that the work of its obstructive sleep apnoea working group, established in July 2012, is being continued following the recent NHS reforms. [161266]

Anna Soubry: Responsibility for determining the overall national approach to improve clinical outcomes from health care services now lies with NHS England.

Local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) are responsible for commissioning services for patients with obstructive sleep apnoea. Management of the condition is governed by clinical guidelines from the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and NHS England would expect CCGs to ensure that services are available to patients in line with these national guidelines and the needs of their local populations.

We understand from NHS England that it currently has no plans to continue the work of the obstructive sleep apnoea working group in its previous form. The National Clinical Director for Respiratory Disease Professor Mike Morgan will continue to consider whether any additional specific initiatives or commissioning protocols are needed to promote best practice and treatment for people with obstructive sleep apnoea and to provide advice on this.

Social Enterprises

Chris White: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of his Department’s suppliers are social enterprises. [161326]

Norman Lamb: The Department does not hold information on how many of its suppliers are social enterprises.

The category of suppliers captured in the Department’s Business Management System includes voluntary and community sector supplier information but does not separately distinguish supplier types specifically relating to social enterprises alone.

Suicide

Jim Shannon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funding his Department makes available to tackle suicides; and what discussions he has had with devolved assemblies on implementing a UK-wide strategy to reduce suicides. [161835]

Norman Lamb: The suicide prevention strategy, which was published on 10 September 2012, can help us to sustain and reduce further the relatively low rates of suicide in England and to respond positively to the challenges we face over the coming years. The strategy recognises that research is essential to suicide prevention and the Department’s policy research programme will fund up to £1.5 million for new suicide prevention research to contribute to delivery of the strategy.

The Government are working with the devolved Administrations to share evidence on suicide prevention and effective interventions. A five nations official level joint working forum facilitates the sharing of best practice between the nations and enhances co-operation on mutually beneficial areas of work.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Developing Countries: Health Services

Sir Tony Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether health will be a priority within the post-2015 development framework. [161349]

Mr Duncan: The post-2015 framework will need to build on the successes and momentum created around health by the millennium development goals (MDGs). The UK is working hard with others to ensure that unfinished health issues from the MDGs are addressed in the new framework, and that we raise our ambition to include emerging health challenges.

Sir Tony Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what her Department’s policy is on the creation of a standalone development goal for universal health coverage. [161352]

Mr Duncan: The UK Government welcomes the report of the high-level panel of eminent persons on the post-2015 development agenda and particularly the emphasis it places on the importance of health and well-being.

We think a future health goal in a development agenda should be based on health outcomes and results, rather than processes. Universal health coverage is central to achieving health outcomes and so needs to be part of a future development agenda, but is not a goal in itself.

EU Budget

Sir Tony Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps the UK has taken to champion a strong EU budget and to hold other countries accountable for their aid promises. [161450]

Mr Duncan: The UK’s top priority for the next EU budget framework was budgetary restraint and the European Council agreed at its meeting in February 2012 that the overall budget framework for 2014-20 should be lower than for the current period, 2007-13. Nevertheless, the level of spending on the EU’s external actions was protected and, thanks to pressure from the UK and our allies, the Council has agreed that EU development support should focus on the poorest countries. UK and other member states are now pressing to ensure the European Parliament will endorse this very good deal.

The UK Government regularly lobbies other donors to meet their aid commitments, and was instrumental in establishing high-level and transparent development accountability mechanisms in both the EU and G8. This year’s G8 accountability report—compiled under the UK presidency—clearly and publicly rates the progress

made by G8 states on their development commitments. The UK also helped secure the re-affirmation of collective and individual development commitments at the EU Development Foreign Affairs Council in May 2013.

India

Sir Tony Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what support her Department provides to India to achieve universal health coverage. [161351]

Mr Duncan: In 2010, DFID provided expert advice to inform the 'High Level Expert Group Report on Universal Health Coverage for India'. Following that report, the Government of India's 12th five year plan proposes to ensure universal access to a defined package of health services, which would be publicly funded, and delivered through a mixture of public and private providers.

Between now and 2015, DFID will conclude its financial grant support for delivery of health services in three of India's poorest states. As we graduate to a new development relationship with India, DFID expect to continue providing technical support to Indian partners, including through mobilising partnerships with the UK health service.

Working Conditions: Children

Stephen Phillips: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent estimate her Department has made of the number of children worldwide who are employed in hazardous work conditions; and what steps her Department is taking to reduce that number. [161320]

Mr Duncan: The International Labour Organisation's most recent estimate is that there are 115 million children, aged 5-17, who are working in hazardous conditions globally.

UK development assistance has an important role both in helping combat child labour in hazardous condition in developing countries and in addressing the conditions that give rise to this. An example of this is DFID's Governance and Human Rights programme in Bangladesh, which assists the removal of children engaged in harmful work or exploitative conditions by providing alternative employment opportunities, providing support and employment opportunities to their families, and providing education after working hours for those children who continue to be employed.

The UK Government continues to believe that one of the most effective ways of reducing child labour is to get more children into school, and will be supporting 11 million children to attend school by 2015.

JUSTICE

Anti-Slavery Day

Mr Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what plans he has to mark anti-slavery day on 18 October 2013; and if he will make a statement. [160837]

Mrs Grant: The Government is committed to marking anti-slavery day and using this opportunity to raise awareness of human trafficking. Plans are still being considered and will be announced in due course.

Capita Translation and Interpreting

Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what assessment he has made of the quality of service provided by Capita Translation and Interpreting; and if he will make a statement. [160754]

Mrs Grant: Performance review meetings are held regularly with Capita TI, and detailed management information on performance is obtained on a weekly basis. Statistics published in March 2013 show that between 30 January 2012 and 31 January 2013, only 0.2% of all bookings completed by Capita TI received complaints about interpreter quality. We remain committed to working closely with Capita TI to drive continuous improvement.

Claims Management Services

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the estimated cost to businesses is of (a) invalid and (b) fraudulent payment protection insurance claims by claims management companies. [157443]

Mrs Grant: The Department's Claims Management Regulation Unit has not made an estimate of such cost to businesses. The CMR Unit is however well aware of this issue and a specialist PPI compliance team is targeting poor practices used by those claims management companies that submit poorly prepared or spurious PPI claims.

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what steps he is taking to regulate claims management companies. [157447]

Mrs Grant: Firm measures are being taken to improve compliance and to strengthen enforcement action against claims management companies (CMCs) who breach the conduct rules. We work with relevant regulators, complaints handlers and industry bodies to identify problems early, with a focus on tackling the poor practices employed by some CMCs operating in the mis-sold payment protection insurance claims sector and on enforcing the ban on referral fees in the personal injury claims sector.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many applications for compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme Hardship Fund have been (a) received and (b) accepted since the new scheme was established. [160474]

Mrs Grant: Since its establishment on 27 November 2012, 10 applications have been received under the Hardship Fund administered by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority. Of these seven have been successful.

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how much has been paid out by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme Hardship Fund since the new scheme was established. [160476]

Mrs Grant: £1,692.47 has been paid out under the Hardship Fund administered by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority.

The payment is capped at the equivalent of four weeks statutory sick pay, which means the maximum for an individual payment would be £306.61.

Sadiq Khan: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many applications for compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme have been rejected due to the injuries not being within the scope of the new scheme since that scheme was established. [160486]

Mrs Grant: 1,543 claims under the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme 2012 (the Scheme), have been refused at first decision as the injury claimed for was not set out in the Scheme's Tariff of Injuries.

The Government introduced a Hardship Fund in November 2012 to provide temporary relief from financial hardship for very low paid workers who are temporarily unable to work as a direct result of a being a victim of a crime of violence in England and Wales and whose injuries are not sufficiently serious to fall within the tariff of injuries in the Scheme.

The Government is committed to ensuring that victims are supported. The changes we have made to the Scheme make it easier for victims, and bereaved relatives, of traumatising crime to receive compensation.

Human Trafficking

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what awareness raising campaigns on human trafficking his Department has held for legal professionals. [161141]

Mrs Grant: The Crown Prosecution Service has undertaken a number of activities to raise awareness among criminal legal practitioners about steps they should take to identify potential trafficked victims in the criminal justice process. They have provided presentations to the Law Society, Bar, Judiciary and Immigration judges to raise awareness among practitioners on the incidence of trafficked victims compelled to commit criminal offences.

Building on this work, The Ministry of Justice is currently considering a number of other ways to raise awareness of human trafficking among the legal profession so that they are able to identify potential victims and ensure they get the support they need and deserve.

Leasehold Valuation Tribunal

Jesse Norman: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many claims in the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal where one of the parties was a registered social landlord were issued in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and how many such claims were successful. [160814]

Mrs Grant: The Leasehold Valuation Tribunal does not record the numbers of any particular category or type of party to the proceedings and so cannot provide data on the number of cases involving a registered social landlord. It is also not possible therefore to provide figures detailing the number or outcome of cases involving a registered social landlord.

LVT decisions, which detail the parties, are published on the Justice website and can be found at:

www.residential-property.judiciary.gov.uk/search/decision_search.jsp

Legal Aid Scheme

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice on what basis he plans to determine the number of contracts for criminal legal aid work for each procurement area under the proposals set out in his Department's consultation on transforming legal aid. [156962]

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 Legal Aid Agency (LAA) currently contracts with over 1,600 separate organisations to deliver services under the 2010 Standard Crime Contract.

The proposed model would ensure that providers have exclusive access to a share of the work available (and control of the case from beginning to end). By awarding longer and larger contracts with greater certainty of volumes, providers would have increased opportunities to grow their businesses and invest in the restructuring required to achieve economies of scale and scope and provide a more efficient service at a price that offers a saving to the public but is also sustainable. This model would result in a reduction in the number of contracts available but gives providers the freedom to develop the most efficient approach in delivering the service (e.g. the extent to which they use agents). This approach would also deliver a reduction in administrative costs to the LAA.

In determining the optimum number of contracts in each procurement area we consider that the following are the key factors:

- Sufficient supply to deal with potential conflicts of interest
- Sufficient case volume to allow fixed fee schemes to work
- Market agility
- Sustainable procurement

Based on our assessment of the factors listed above, the LAA data for the period October 2010 to September 2011 would suggest approximately 400 contracts with providers across England and Wales. This would mean current providers would need to grow their business on average by around 250% (or join with other providers to create sufficient resource to deliver the expected caseload).

This approach would entail a significant reduction in the number of contracts in each procurement area. A detailed breakdown of the illustrative number of contracts based on the LAA administrative data on legal aid claims in the period October 2010 to September 2011 in each procurement area is set out in the consultation paper. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, we would revise the number of contracts in line with the most current data available prior to any procurement process commencing.

Legal Profession: Standards

Mr Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what discussions he has had with the Bar Standards Board on its Quality Assurance Scheme for Advocates. [R] [158032]

Mrs Grant: The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling), has not discussed the Quality Assurance Scheme for Advocates with the Bar Standards Board.

Public Expenditure

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what assessment he has made of the equality impact of his Department's spending reductions since 2010; whether this assessment has been used to inform his planning ahead of the 2013 Comprehensive Spending Review and with what result; what plans he has to publish the equality impact assessments undertaken by his Department as a result of the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review; and if he will make a statement. [161182]

Mrs Grant: The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) has taken equality into account in its work on the spending review since 2010 in accordance with its statutory equality duties. As part of our spending round 2013 negotiations with Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) we undertook an equality analysis of the spending plans that formed part of our spending round 2013 submission to HMT. The MOJ will continue to undertake equality analysis on the detailed proposals for delivering its spending round 2013 agreement, with publication being considered on a case by case basis.

Salvation Army

Mrs Laing: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice pursuant to the answer of 12 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 370W, on Salvation Army, of the actual funding allocated to the Salvation Army in (a) 2011-12 and (b) 2012-13 how much was (i) spent by the Salvation Army on running the 24 hour helpline and other administration connected with the contract and (ii) paid to shelters caring for victims which are run independently of the Salvation Army; what the names are of NGO subcontractor shelters; and to whom the Salvation Army makes payments. [160598]

Mrs Grant: The Government contract with the Salvation Army to deliver support services to adult victims of human trafficking ensures a vital service is provided

victims of this terrible crime. The contract commenced on 1 July 2011, this means that the financial information is accounted for and presented to the Ministry of Justice on a contract year basis (1 July-30 June).

For the first year of the contract, 1 July 2011- 30 June 2012, 90% of the contract-spend was on direct delivery costs, with 10% being spent on administration costs, including those relating to the start up of the contract.

For the second year of contract, management reports are available for the period 1 July 2012 to 30 March 2013. Over this period 95% of the contract-spend was on direct delivery costs, with 5% being spent on administration costs. These proportions will be finalised at the end of the contractual year when the reporting accounts are finalised.

Total spend on the contract includes funding in addition to government funding. It includes income the Salvation Army has generated through fundraising activities.

Administration costs include the necessary overheads to oversee and co-ordinate the provision of support provided to adult victims of human trafficking. It includes the associated costs of running the 24 hour helpline.

Direct delivery costs are the expenditure on services which were directly delivered to victims via the Salvation Army's wide and diverse supply chain of sub-contractors who support victims in the most appropriate environment and tailor support according to need. This has included the provision of safe and secure accommodation, providing access to legal advice and preparing individuals for work through arranging access to training courses and mentoring.

The Salvation Army have formally contracted the services of 12 NGOs who collectively provide access to 19 safe houses. One of these is a the Salvation Army shelter—the Jarrett Community. The other NGOs are:

Ashiana
BAWSO
BCHA
City Hearts
Hestia
The Medaille Trust
Midland Heart
Migrant Helpline Ltd UK
Sandwell Women's Aid
Unseen UK
Riverside

Fiona Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many victims of human trafficking have been assisted by his Department after they left the subcontractor shelters in which they were placed by the Salvation Army to date; [160976]

(2) how much is paid per night to shelters in the UK to accommodate victims referred to them by the Salvation Army Victim Support scheme; what the average length of stay is which is funded; and what funding is available after the reflection period has ended; [160977]

(3) how much funding was (a) made available and (b) paid out to the Salvation Army Victim Support scheme in (i) 2011-12 and (ii) 2012-13; how much will be made available in 2013-14; and if he will make a statement. [160978]

Mrs Grant: This Government is committed to helping victims of human trafficking. Since 1 July 2011 The Salvation Army has been contracted to oversee and co-ordinate the provision of support to adult victims of trafficking who have been referred through the National Referral Mechanism. They are contracted to provide support services for a minimum of 45 days or until a victim receives a 'Conclusive Grounds' decision. In May 2013, the average length of stay in The Salvation Army service was 102 days. Once moved victims continue to receive support from mainstream support services, such local authority housing, and can apply for benefits.

The Salvation Army provides tailored support to victims which takes into account their individual needs. This means that the cost of accommodating and supporting a victim in a shelter will vary according to their specific requirements.

The following table details the funding provided to The Salvation Army.

	<i>£ million</i>
2011-12	1.5
2012-13	3

For 2013-14, the Government has made £3 million available to The Salvation Army to run the contract. Since July 2011, there has been a significant increase in the number of referrals to The Salvation Army for support and accommodation. The Ministry of Justice and Home Office will therefore keep this funding allocation under regular review.

Social Enterprises

Chris White: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many of his Department's suppliers are social enterprises. [160662]

Mrs Grant: There are 20,723 organisations working with the Ministry of Justice and determining which of these is a social enterprise could be done only at a disproportionate cost.

Work Capability Assessment: Wales

Nia Griffith: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) how many of those living in each constituency in Wales who appealed against decisions on benefits entitlement made following work capability assessments had their appeals heard during the financial year 2012-13; [161126]

(2) how many claimants living in each parliamentary constituency in Wales had their appeals heard during the financial year 2012-13 against decisions on benefits entitlement made following work capability assessments. [161264]

Mrs Grant: The First Tier Tribunal—Social Security and Child Support (SSCS), administered by HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) hears appeals against Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) decisions on entitlement to employment and support allowance (ESA) (decisions in which the work capability assessment (WCA) is a key factor).

Appeals made to the SSCS are not recorded on a constituency basis, but by the office which deals with the case. This is usually the hearing venue nearest to the appellant's home address. Consequently the information has been provided by SSCS hearing venues in Wales.

The following table shows the number of cases disposed of by the Tribunal in hearing venues in Wales in which the WCA was factor in 2012-13, which includes those disposed of without the need for a hearing: for example those withdrawn, superseded or struck out.

Number of cases disposed of in Wales where the WCA was a factor 2012-13

<i>SSCS Venue</i>	<i>Total number of cases disposed of</i>
Aberystwyth	344
Bridgend	1,338
Caernarfon	324
Cardiff	6,610
Carmarthen	91
Colwyn Bay	378
Cwmbran	179
Haverfordwest	510
Langstone All	3,702
Llandrindod Wells	35
Llandudno	133
Llangefni	222
Merthyr Tydfil	298
Neath	652
Newtown	102
Pontypridd	74
Port Talbot	2,832
Prestatyn	269
Swansea	466
Welshpool	66
Wrexham	1,401
Wales Total	20,026

The number of appeals received by the SSCS tribunal nationally has risen significantly: from 339,200 in 2009-10 to 507,100 in 2012-13 (an increase of 49%). In addition to local initiatives, such as identifying additional hearing venues across HMCTS estate, and increasing the use of Saturday sessions, HMCTS continues to respond strongly at a national level to continue to increase the capacity of the SSCS tribunal and reduce waiting times. Measures in place include ongoing recruitment of additional judges and medically qualified members and the review and continuous improvement of administrative processes both internally and between HMCTS and DWP. All of this is having a positive effect. The total number of disposals has increased significantly from 279,000 in 2009-10 to 465,500 in 2012-13 (an increase of 66%).

The average waiting time has fallen nationally from 23 weeks in 2011-12 to 18 weeks in 2012-13; in Wales this has fallen from 21 weeks in 2011-12 to 13 weeks in 2012-13.

PRIME MINISTER

Russia

Paul Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he had with President Putin of Russia on nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament at the bilateral meeting on 16 June 2013. [161650]

The Prime Minister: I did not discuss this specific issue with President Putin on this occasion.

The UK Government regularly raises issues of strategic security in bilateral meetings such as the joint UK-Russia Foreign and Defence ministerial meeting in March, in partnership with our allies such as at the NATO-Russia Foreign ministerial last December, and at official level in multilateral meetings such as the conference of the five nuclear non-proliferation treaty nuclear weapon states in April in Geneva.

I also refer the hon. Member to the G8 Communiqué that sets out the G8's agreed position on nuclear proliferation issues. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

TREASURY

Child Tax Credit

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many workless lone parent and couple households with (a) six, (b) seven, (c) eight, (d) nine and (e) 10 children claim child tax credit. [161491]

Sajid Javid: The following table shows the number of families benefiting from child tax credit who are working fewer than the number of hours required to claim working tax credit. This is usually a combined 24 hours a week for a couple with children (with one parent working at least 16 hours), or 16 hours a week for a lone parent. The figures are based on finalised tax credit awards from the 2011-12 financial year, which are the latest available.

<i>Number of children</i>	<i>Lone parents</i>	<i>Couples</i>	<i>All families</i>
Six	4.4	4.4	8.8
Seven	1.4	1.7	3.1
Eight	0.4	0.7	1.0
Nine	0.1	0.2	0.3
Ten	¹ —	0.1	0.1

¹ fewer than 50 cases

Notes:

1. All numbers are in thousands and rounded to the nearest 0.7 thousand.

2. Totals may not sum due to rounding

The Government are committed to making work pay, and is rewarding work by:

raising the personal allowance to £9,440 and announcing a further increase to £10,000 from April 2014. The combined effect of all personal allowance increases announced by this Government will be to remove 2.7 million low income individuals, under 65, out of income tax altogether from April 2014.

developing a new Tax-Free Childcare scheme to expand support for affordable childcare to 2.5 million families; and

introducing universal credit to make the benefits of work clearer and simpler, with the aim of offering a smooth transition into work and encouraging progression in work.

Personal Income

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent estimate he has made of the change in the median household real income before housing costs since May 2010. [161505]

Sajid Javid: The households below average income (HBAI) report published by the Department for Work and Pensions provides estimates of median household incomes before housing costs up to 2011-12. The National Accounts measure of total real household disposable income published by the Office for National Statistics reports a rise of 2.0% between 2010Q1 and 2012Q4.

Welfare Tax Credits

Philip Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what the annual total paid out in tax credits is; [161204]

(2) what estimate he has made of the cost of raising personal allowance in line with the minimum wage; and what the saving in tax credits payments would be as a result; [161206]

(3) how many adults in full-time employment are in receipt of tax credits; [161207]

(4) how much has been paid inaccurately in tax credits in each of the last three years. [161416]

Sajid Javid: The total amount of Tax Credits (Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit) paid by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) in 2012-13 and in previous years can be found on the HMRC website at:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/statistics/receipts/receipts-stats.xls>

In 2012-13 HMRC made Tax Credit payments amounting to £29.9 billion.

The Government has not made an estimate of the effect of increasing the Personal Allowance in line with the National Minimum Wage.

The Exchequer costs of increasing the personal allowance and age-related personal allowances by £100 are provided in Table 1.6 "Direct effects of illustrative tax changes", available on the HMRC website at:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/statistics/expenditures/table1-6.xls>

Tax Credit awards are paid based on gross income therefore changes to the level of the personal allowance have no impact on Tax Credit payments.

There is no standard definition of 'full-time' employment in the context of Tax Credits. Therefore, 'full-time' is assumed to be those working 30 hours per week or more.

Based on provisional information on families receiving Tax Credits as at April 2013 the number of adults working 30 hours per week or more and in a family unit in receipt of Tax Credits is 2.5 million.

The latest published finalised Tax Credits Error and Fraud statistics for 2011-12, are available on the HM Revenue and Custom's website at:

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/statistics/fin-error-stats/cwtcredits-error.pdf>

These published statistics contain a breakdown of the level of Error and Fraud in the 2011-12 tax year. This document also includes information on the level of Error and Fraud in previous years (Annex A Table A2).

For ease, the level and percentage of expenditure of Error and favouring the claimant or HMRC has been provided here.

Table 1: Tax Credits Error and Fraud

	<i>E&F favouring the claimant</i>		<i>E&F favouring HMRC</i>	
	<i>Outturn (%)</i>	<i>Outturn (£ billion)</i>	<i>Outturn (%)</i>	<i>Outturn (£ billion)</i>
2009-10	7.8	2.060	1.4	0.380
2010-11	8.1	2.270	0.8	0.230
2011-12	7.3	2.090	0.9	0.260

Philip Davies: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the annual cost is of administering the tax credit system; and how many civil servants are employed in its administration. [161205]

Sajid Javid: The annual cost of administering the tax credit system; and number of civil servants employed in administering the process in 2009-13 is presented in Table 1 as follows.

Table 1

<i>Business area</i>	<i>Period</i>	<i>Staff numbers (FTE)</i>	<i>Total gross expenditure (£)</i>
Tax credits	2009-10	10,682	562,682,793
Tax credits	2010-11	9,432	495,209,042
Tax credits	2011-12	8,421	469,725,522
Tax credits	2012-13	7,757	429,534,680

WORK AND PENSIONS

Children's Centres

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what guidance his Department provides to local Jobcentre Plus offices on delivering welfare advice and employment-focused programmes through children's centres in their area. [161333]

Mr Hoban: DWP recognises the value of delivering community based support and provides comprehensive guidance about the extension of Jobcentre Plus services to community settings. This could include Children's Centres. This outreach/co-location guidance covers both the practical challenges of delivering Jobcentre Plus services in a non DWP premises (for example provision of information technology and health and safety considerations) along with examples of previous good practice.

Mrs Hodgson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what amount his Department and its agencies spent on providing services through children's centres in each of the last five financial years. [161336]

Mr Hoban: DWP do not collate the costs spent on delivering Jobcentre Plus services in outreach locations including in children's centres.

Employment Schemes: Disability

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of entrants to the Work Choice programme found work lasting longer than six months in (a) 2011 and (b) 2012. [161734]

Esther McVey: Latest published Work Choice statistics show:

In 2011 there were 3,060 unsupported job outcomes sustained for at least six months

In 2012 there were 2,070 unsupported job outcomes sustained for at least six months. Data is currently only available on unsupported sustained job outcomes to the end of September 2012, this is not therefore a figure for the whole of 2012.

These figures exclude Remploy and only count job outcomes for which providers receive a payment.

We do not publish cohorted information on the proportion of entrants finding sustained work of over six months.

The latest Work Choice statistics to the end of March 2013 can be found via the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/203397/wc_may13.pdf

Future Jobs Fund: Clwyd

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many young people in Vale of Clwyd constituency returned to work under the Future Jobs Fund in each month of that fund's operation. [161969]

Mr Hoban: The Department does not hold information on the number of young people returning to work in any parliamentary constituency under the Future Jobs Fund in each month of that Fund's operation.

Misuse of Drugs Ministerial Group

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many times Ministers of his Department have attended the inter-ministerial group on drugs since May 2010. [161579]

Mr Hoban: I refer to the reply given by the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (James Brokenshire), on 9 July 2012, *Official Report*, column 83W, I can confirm that the Inter-Ministerial Group on Drugs met on the following occasions:

12 November 2012

10 January 2013

30 April 2013

As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government's practice to publish details, including agenda items, of such meetings.

New Enterprise Allowance: Barnsley

Michael Dugher: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many people in (a) Barnsley East constituency and (b) Barnsley local authority have had access to financial support from the new enterprise allowance to date; [161558]

(2) how many people in (a) Barnsley East constituency and (b) Barnsley local authority area have had access to mentoring through the new enterprise allowance to date. [161559]

Mr Hoban: The information is available and can be accessed at:

http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/adhoc_analysis/2013/nea_by_la_jcp_district_parl_c.xls

New Enterprise Allowance: Staffordshire

Mr Burley: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people in (a) Cannock Chase constituency and (b) Staffordshire are in receipt of the new enterprise allowance. [161923]

Mr Hoban: The number of starts to the New Enterprise Allowance by parliamentary constituency can be accessed at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/196645/nea_by_la_jcp_district_parl_c.xls.xls

Universal Credit

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the cost of increasing the first and subsequent child elements of universal credit by (a) five per cent, (b) 10 per cent and (c) 15 per cent. [161741]

Mr Hoban: Increasing the child elements of universal credit by (a) 5% would cost around £1.0 billion per year in steady state (once universal credit is fully introduced); (b) 10% would cost around £2.0 billion per year in steady state; and, (c) 15% would cost around £3.1 billion per year in steady state.

This analysis is consistent with the impact assessment published in December 2012. All figures are expressed in 2013-14 prices and have been rounded to the nearest £0.1 billion.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the cost of increasing the higher and lower rate disabled child elements of universal credit by (a) five per cent, (b) 10 per cent and (c) 15 per cent. [161742]

Mr Hoban: Increasing the disabled child elements of universal credit by (a) 5% would cost less than £50 million per year in steady state (once universal credit is fully introduced); (b) 10% would cost less than £50 million per year in steady state; and, (c) 15% would cost around £100 million per year (rounded to the nearest £100 million to reflect sample data limitations) in steady state.

This analysis is consistent with the impact assessment published in December 2012. All figures are expressed in 2013-14 prices.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the cost of increasing the current universal credit earnings disregard for lone parents by (a) 10 per cent, (b) 20 per cent and (c) 30 per cent. [161743]

Mr Hoban: Increasing the level of universal credit work allowances for all lone parents by (a) 10% would cost around £350 million per year in steady state in 2014-15 prices; by (b) 20% would cost around £700 million per year in steady state in 2014-15 prices; by (c) 30% would cost around £1,050 million per year in steady state in 2014-15 prices.

The figures above do not take account of the potential dynamic effects from these changes.

Universal Credit: Luton

Gavin Shaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of how many households in Luton will fall into the poverty bracket following the implementation of universal credit. [161265]

Mr Hoban: The information requested is not available as sample sizes are too small to yield reliable results.

Work Capability Assessment: Appeals

Mr Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will issue guidance to decision-makers about the requirement to consider all relevant evidence in work capability assessments and to provide a copy of that evidence to tribunals. [161453]

Mr Hoban: The current guidance to decision makers emphasises the requirement to give due consideration to all of the evidence presented. It also instructs that all information made available to the decision maker is included in the appeals response to the Tribunal. This is also copied to the appellant and their representative, if they have appointed one. This guidance is underpinned by formal training for decision makers and the Quality Assessment Framework, which also detail this requirement.

Work Programme

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many and what proportion of unemployed people gained access to work under the Work Programme in each month of its existence. [161539]

Mr Hoban: The information requested is not available. Statistics on how many people gained a job outcome under the Work Programme in each month from 1 June 2011 to 31 July 2012 can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/series/dwp-statistics-tabulation-tool#benefit-caseloads>

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many recipients of employment and support allowance with a 12 month prognosis participating in the Work programme secured a sustained job outcome. [161740]

Mr Hoban: During the period for which Work programme statistical information is available (1 June 2011 to 31 July 2012) 60 recipients of employment and support allowance secured a sustained job outcome. To identify how many of these had a 12 month prognosis would incur in disproportionate cost.

Statistics covering Work programme referrals, attachments and job outcomes to March 2013 will be published on 27 June 2013.

Work Programme: Kingston Upon Hull

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people in Hull found work lasting more than six months through the Work programme since it inception; how many such people were aged under 24; and how many such people had a disability. [161596]

Mr Hoban: Work Programme statistical information is available for the period 1 June 2011 to 31 July 2012. In Kingston upon Hull in that period:

- 23,530 people found work lasting for more than six months;
- 7,080 of the people who found work were aged 18 to 24;
- 10 of the people who found work were registered disabled.

Statistics covering Work programme referrals, attachments and job outcomes to March 2013 will be published on 27 June 2013.

EDUCATION

Care Proceedings

Craig Whittaker: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will consider making provision for an extension to the proposed 26-week care proceedings limit in very complex cases. [161500]

Mr Timpson: The Children and Families Bill legislation allows for the possibility of extending the time limit in a particular care or supervision case beyond the new 26 week time limit, should this be necessary to resolve proceedings justly. It will be possible for extensions to be granted for periods of up to eight weeks at a time (with no limit on the number of extensions) from the end of the 26-week period or the end of the extension—whichever is the later.

GCSE: Wales

Hywel Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what discussions he has had with his Welsh counterpart regarding the status of GCSEs in Wales and the introduction of I-levels in England. [161568]

Elizabeth Truss: The Secretary of State for Education, my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), met the Minister for Education and Skills for Wales and the Minister for Education for Northern Ireland on 13 May 2013 to discuss the reform of GCSEs and A-levels, in their respective jurisdictions.

Ofqual and the Welsh regulator are responsible for matters relating to the standards of qualifications in England and Wales respectively, and the extent to which they are comparable. I understand that Ofqual has regular discussions with the Welsh regulator.

We are reforming GCSEs in England from 2015 to ensure that young people have access to qualifications that set expectations that match and exceed those in the highest performing countries.

Pupil Referral Units

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils in schools in England were referred to a pupil referral unit in 2011-12. [161637]

Elizabeth Truss: The latest data on pupils attending pupil referral units is given in the following table.

Pupil referral units in England: number of pupils¹ January 2011 to January 2013

<i>As at January each year</i>	<i>Total number of pupils as at January attending pupil referral units²</i>	<i>Total number of pupils attending a pupil referral unit, but also registered elsewhere eg at a school</i>
2011	14,050	9,125
2012	13,495	9,145
2013	12,950	9,425

¹ From Tables 1b and 2a of the 'Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2013' Statistical First Release at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/schools-pupils-and-their-characteristics-january-2013>

² Includes pupils who are sole or dual main registrations and pupils registered in pupil referral units, but attending further education colleges or other providers.

To determine the number of pupils referred to a pupil referral unit in 2011-12 would incur disproportionate cost.

Pupils: Disadvantaged

Mr Jamie Reed: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the pupil premium; and what methodology was used for that assessment. [161619]

Mr Laws: In July the Department for Education will publish the findings of an independent evaluation of the pupil premium. The evaluation was commissioned in June 2012 and has been conducted by a consortium led by TNS-BMRB. The report will provide evidence on how schools have used the pupil premium and will give details of the research methodology.

On publication, a copy of the report will be placed in the House Library.

Mr Jamie Reed: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what recent assessment he has made of correlations between educational attainment levels and (a) location within a rural community, (b) access to extra-curricular activities and (c) other lifestyle factors. [161621]

Mr Laws: Information on pupil attainment by the degree of rurality of pupil residence is published each year in the Department's statistical first releases (SFR).

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) attainment of pupils by the degree of rurality of pupil residence is available in table A2 of the 'EYFSP attainment by pupil characteristics in England: academic year 2011 to 2012' SFR, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/eyfsp-attainment-by-pupil-characteristics-in-england-academic-year-2011-to-2012>

Table A2 can be found within the 'Pupil residency tables: SFR30/2012' link.

Key stage 1 pupil attainment by the degree of rurality of pupil residence is available in table A2 of the 'Phonics screening check and national curriculum assessments at key stage 1 in England: 20121 SFR, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/phonics-screening-check-and-national-curriculum-assessments-at-key-stage-1-in-england-2012>

Table A2 can be found within the 'KS1—local authority and pupil residency based tables: SFR21/2012' link.

Key stage 2 attainment of pupils by the degree of rurality of pupil residence is available in table A2 of the 'National curriculum assessments at key stage 2 in England: academic year 2011 to 2012' SFR, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-assessments-at-key-stage-2-in-england-academic-year-2011-to-2012>

Table A2 can be found within the 'Pupil residency and school location based tables: SFR33/2012' link.

Key stage 4 attainment of pupils by the degree of rurality of pupil residence is available in table A2 of the 'GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England: 2011 to 2012' SFR, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-and-equivalent-attainment-by-pupil-characteristics-in-england>

Table A2 can be found within the 'Pupil residency and school location based tables: SFR04/2013' link.

Information on attainment by access to extra-curricular activities is not held by the Department.

The publication 'DCSF: Youth Cohort Study and Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: The Activities and Experiences of 16 Year Olds: England 2007' gives information on the correlation between attainment and factors such as: risky behaviours; parental occupation; parental qualifications; truanting, frequency of family evening meals; parental knowledge of child location in the evening; and frequency of curfew setting. This publication can be found at the following link:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110206154043/http://education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000795/index.shtml>

Tables 3.2.2, 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3 and chart-4.2.2 hold the relevant data within this publication. A summary of the statistics can be found within the PDF link on the webpage. These tables can be found within the 'Additional information' Excel link labelled as 'All tables and charts as they appear in the Bulletin'. The 2008 update to this publication includes information on the correlation between attainment and factors such as: the likelihood of voting in the next general election; disability; exclusion from school; truancy in Year 11; and parental occupation. This can be found within the 'DCSF: Youth Cohort Study and Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: The Activities and Experiences of 17 year olds: England 2008' publication, which can be found at the following link:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110206154043/http://education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000850/index.shtml>

Tables 4.1.1, 4.2.1 and chart 2.2.7 hold the relevant data within this publication. A summary of the statistics

can be found within the PDF link on the webpage. These tables can be found within the 'Additional information' Excel link.

The 2009 update to this publication includes information on the correlation between attainment and factors such as: parental occupation; parental education; disability; exclusion from school; and living arrangements in Year 11. It can be found within the 'DfE: Youth Cohort Study and Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: The Activities and Experiences of 18 year olds: England 2009' publication. This can be found at the following link:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110206154043/http://education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000937/index.shtml>

Tables 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 hold relevant data within this publication. A summary of the statistics can be found within the PDF link on the webpage. These tables can be found within the 'Additional information' Excel link labelled as '(All tables and charts contained within Bulletin in excel format)'.

The 2010 update to this publication includes information on the correlation between attainment and lifestyle factors such as: parental occupation; disability, exclusion from school; and whether pupils had their own child. It can be found within the 'Youth cohort study and longitudinal study of young people in England: the activities and experiences of 19-year-olds—2010' publication, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/youth-cohort-study-and-longitudinal-study-of-young-people-in-england-the-activities-and-experiences-of-19-year-olds-2010>

Tables 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and A.1.1 hold relevant data reported within this publication. A summary of the statistics can be found within the 'Main text: B01/201V link on the webpage. These tables can be found within the 'Main tables: B01/2011' link.

Mr Jamie Reed: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of reasons for differences in attainment levels between schools in rural communities and schools in large cities. [161622]

Mr Laws: "Educational Attainment in Rural Areas", a report published in 2009 by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), examined the apparent difference in performance between urban and rural pupils¹. In line with evidence from the annual Statistical First Releases of the Department for Education, this report found that rural pupils had slightly higher attainment at key stage 3. Once socio-economic background was taken into account, there was virtually no difference in attainment.

However, the research did find that some groups, such as pupils whose mothers have lower levels of qualifications, are making less progress in rural than urban areas. This problem is also highlighted by the recent Ofsted report "Unseen Children: access and achievement 20 years on", which has found that there may be regional differences in terms of outcomes, particularly for pupils from low income backgrounds².

The Government is considering Ofsted's recommendations and will respond in due course. Closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is at the heart of the Government's reforms. That is why we introduced the pupil premium, worth £2.5 billion per

year by 2015, to target additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Every child eligible for the pupil premium attracts the same £900 additional funding, no matter where they live in the country.

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/189847/DEFRA-2009-12-02.pdf.pdf

² <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/a-and-a/Unseen%20children%20-%20access%20and%20achievement%2020%20years%20on.pdf>

Mr Jamie Reed: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to improve attainment levels of children entitled to free school meals. [161623]

Mr Laws: The Government believes that it is unacceptable for children's achievement at school and success in life to be constrained by economic disadvantage. This is why in April 2011 we introduced the pupil premium: additional funding for schools to raise the attainment of pupils who have been registered for free school meals at any point in the past six years and for children in care who have been looked after by a local authority continuously for more than six months. The grant is worth £900 per pupil for 2013-14, and the total pupil premium will amount to £2.5 billion in 2014-15.

Since the pupil premium was introduced, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils has improved. Results for 2012, the first year to reflect the impact of a full year of pupil premium, showed a larger than expected narrowing of attainment gaps nationally for both key stage 2 and key stage 4.

The Education Endowment Foundation also administers £125 million on behalf of the Department to fund research into innovative approaches to raising attainment.

School Meals

Sir Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he plans to publish the School Food Plan. [161203]

Elizabeth Truss: The independent reviewers, Henry Dimpleby and John Vincent, are continuing their work on the School Food Plan. It is expected that the Plan will be published soon.

Schools: Cumbria

Mr Jamie Reed: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether any officials of his Department have visited schools in (a) Cumbria, (b) West Cumbria and (c) Copeland constituency. [161626]

Elizabeth Truss: Comprehensive information on officials' visits is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The Department can confirm there have been at least three visits to schools in Cumbria, including schools in the Copeland constituency, over the past 12 months.

Schools: Holidays

Mr Graham Stuart: To ask the Secretary of State for Education with reference to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, what provision has been made for parents whose contracts of employment state that they cannot take time off during school holiday periods to be granted leave of absence to take their children on holiday during term time. [161733]

Elizabeth Truss: The Government has not made any special arrangements for parents who cannot take time off work during school holidays. Head teachers still have the discretion to grant leave of absence during term time but only in exceptional circumstances.

Social Enterprises

Chris White: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many of his Department's suppliers are social enterprises. [161322]

Elizabeth Truss: The Department is unable to answer the question as information on the status of suppliers is not held on the Department's finance system and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Truancy

Mr Burley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many days were missed due to unauthorised absence from schools in (a) Cannock Chase constituency and (b) Staffordshire in each of the last five years. [161258]

Elizabeth Truss: Information on unauthorised absence from 2007/08 to 2011/12 is shown in the tables.

The latest data on absence, for the school year, is published in the 'Pupil Absence in Schools in England, Including Pupil Characteristics: 2011/12' Statistical First Release.¹

¹ Available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-including-pupil-characteristics>

State-funded primary, state-funded secondary and special schools^{1, 2, 3, 4}; the number of days missed through unauthorised absence and unauthorised absence rates, England, Staffordshire local authority and Cannock Chase constituency, 2007/08 to 2011/12

	England							
	State-funded primary schools ^{1, 2}		State-funded secondary schools ^{1, 3}		Special schools ⁴		All schools ^{1, 2, 3, 4}	
	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶
2007/08	2,847,740	0.6	6,553,900	1.5	225,990	2.2	9,627,620	1.0
2008/09	3,178,660	0.6	6,501,070	1.5	232,540	2.1	9,912,270	1.1
2009/10	3,332,700	0.7	6,297,870	1.4	216,660	2.0	9,847,230	1.0
2010/11	3,543,500	0.7	6,236,370	1.4	225,630	2.0	10,005,500	1.1

State-funded primary, state-funded secondary and special schools^{1, 2, 3, 4}: the number of days missed through unauthorised absence and unauthorised absence rates, England, Staffordshire local authority and Cannock Chase constituency, 2007/08 to 2011/12

England								
	State-funded primary schools ^{1, 2}		State-funded secondary schools ^{1, 3}		Special schools ⁴		All schools ^{1, 2, 3, 4}	
	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶
2011/12	3,459,320	0.7	5,752,050	1.3	225,270	2.0	9,436,640	1.0
Staffordshire local authority								
	State-funded primary schools ^{1, 2}		State-funded secondary schools ^{1, 3}		Special schools ⁴		All schools ^{1, 2, 3, 4}	
	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶
2007/08	16,880	0.2	69,690	0.9	2,640	1.2	89,210	0.6
2008/09	20,100	0.3	60,960	0.8	2,340	1.1	83,390	0.5
2009/10	22,020	0.3	59,720	0.8	1,820	0.9	83,550	0.5
2010/11	21,880	0.3	61,820	0.8	2,120	1.0	85,810	0.6
2011/12	22,150	0.3	59,670	0.8	1,760	0.8	83,570	0.5
Cannock Chase constituency								
	State-funded primary schools ^{1, 2}		State-funded secondary schools ^{1, 3}		Special schools ⁴		All schools ^{1, 2, 3, 4}	
	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶	Days missed due to unauthorised absence ⁵	Unauthorised absence rate ⁶
2007/08	4,040	0.4	14,270	1.5	160	0.6	18,470	0.9
2008/09	4,610	0.5	11,720	1.3	210	0.8	16,540	0.9
2009/10	5,640	0.6	12,010	1.3	210	0.8	17,850	1.0
2010/11	5,380	0.6	11,400	1.4	50	0.2	16,830	1.0
2011/12	4,660	0.5	13,600	1.5	70	0.2	18,330	1.0

¹ Includes middle schools as deemed.

² Includes primary academies.

³ Includes city technology colleges and secondary academies.

⁴ Includes maintained special schools, non-maintained special schools and special academies. Excludes general hospital schools.

⁵ Morning and afternoon registration sessions missed divided by two to give days missed.

⁶ The number of sessions missed due to unauthorised absence expressed as a percentage of the total number of possible sessions.

Note:

Number of days missed has been rounded to the nearest 10.

Source:

School Census

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Arts: Work Experience

Jim Sheridan: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what estimate she has made of the number of unpaid interns working in the creative industries in (a) Paisley and Renfrewshire North constituency, (b) Glasgow city, (c) Scotland, (d) London and (e) the UK. [161725]

Mr Vaizey: We have made no such estimate of the number of unpaid interns working in the creative industries across the UK. We want internship opportunities to be made available to talented young people from all backgrounds and encourage businesses to offer internships openly and transparently and to provide the appropriate financial support to ensure fair access. Maximising the overall number of opportunities is the best way to help young people get into work and realise their ambitions.

Jim Sheridan: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what steps she is taking to encourage businesses in the creative industries to pay all interns. [161759]

Mr Vaizey: As set out in our Social Mobility Strategy, we encourage businesses to offer internships openly and transparently and to provide the appropriate financial support to ensure fair access. This could either be payment of at least the appropriate national minimum wage rate, or reasonable out-of-pocket expenses where this is in compliance with national minimum wage law.

There is no definition of an internship in minimum wage legislation. The key issue is whether or not interns are workers as defined by minimum wage legislation. If they are, then they are eligible for the minimum wage unless a specific exemption applies. Volunteers are not workers and are not eligible for the minimum wage. Voluntary workers are workers, however, they are exempt from the national minimum wage (NMW) entitlement provided certain conditions are met.

The NMW worker checklist defines a worker under NMW legislation. This is available online by searching 'worker checklist' on

www.gov.uk

If all items on the checklist apply, you are a 'worker' who is entitled to the relevant NMW.

Paying the national minimum wage is the law and not a choice, and the rules apply to all employers equally. When an intern makes a complaint to the Pay and Work Rights Helpline about their pay conditions, that case is-prioritised by HMRC to ensure their employer is complying with the law. Where that is not the case, HMRC will not hesitate to take action.

BBC Trust

Hywel Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what meetings she has had with the Chairman of the BBC Trust since her appointment.

[159857]

Mr Vaizey [*holding answer 17 June 2013*]: The Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Maria Miller)'s, external meetings are published quarterly on the departmental website:

<http://www.transparency.culture.gov.uk/category/other/meetings/>

Capita

Mr Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how much her Department currently spends on contracts with Capita; and how much was spent in each year since 2008.

[158461]

Mr Vaizey: Please see the following table re Capita companies.

<i>Capita Company</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>
					£
Capita Symonds Ltd	0	0	0	0	63,375.60
Capita Conferences	0	747.50	0	0	0
Capita Learning and Development	1,056.32	0	0	0	11,172.55
Capita Resourcing	27368.75	2,238.91	0	1,248.95	2,245,242.05
Capita Business Travel Ltd	125,602.33	49,761.92	60,433.00	53,332.85	109,466.30
Capita Health	5,489.17	0	253.51	80.78	0
Total	159,516.57	52,748.33	60,686.51	54,662.58	2,429,256.50

Cultural Heritage

Helen Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the English Heritage open day scheme.

[161640]

Mr Vaizey: Last year, 4,648 properties and activities attracted 2 million visitors, 1,422 organisations and 51,214 local organisers. 518,652 volunteer hours were devoted to the event. 99% of visitors enjoyed their experience, 93% felt inspired to visit other heritage sites,

63% experienced increased pride of their local area and heritage, and 51% wanted to find out more about their local area. Overall, 84% of sites reported more visitors than on normal days.

Helen Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many open days there are annually in the English Heritage open day scheme.

[161641]

Mr Vaizey: Heritage Open Days runs over four days. This year's Heritage Open Days will take place from 12 to 15 September. They cover the whole of England, excepting London where London Open House operates independently. Not all properties and activities participate on all four of the days.

Helen Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what information her Department holds on the cost to English Heritage of running Heritage open days in 2013.

[161653]

Mr Vaizey [*holding answer 25 June 2013*]: English Heritage's financial support for the Heritage Open Days National Partnership is £280,000 in the current financial year, as part of a four-year funding agreement that runs until March 2015.

Digital Broadcasting: North West

Jake Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) what steps she has taken to improve the digital television signal for residents of (a) the North West, (b) Lancashire and (c) Rossendale and Darwen constituency;

[161078]

(2) what proportion of households in (a) the North West, (b) Lancashire and (c) Rossendale and Darwen constituency do not have any digital television coverage;

[161079]

(3) what proportion of households in (a) the North West, (b) Lancashire and (c) Rossendale and Darwen constituency received full digital television coverage;

[161081]

(4) what proportion of households in (a) the North West, (b) Lancashire and (c) Rossendale and Darwen constituency received limited digital television coverage.

[161082]

Mr Vaizey: Ofcom estimates that 98.5% of UK households have access to 17 public service broadcasting digital terrestrial (DTT) channels and just under 90% of UK households are also able to receive these and additional channels. Around 1.5% of UK households cannot easily receive digital terrestrial television, with less than 0.5% not able to receive DTT services at all. However, DTT, cable and satellite digital television services together cover practically 100% of UK households, so that in all but the most exceptional of cases, everyone should be able to get digital television, by one means or another. There are no plans to require broadcasters to improve coverage, above the levels agreed for Digital Switchover in 2006.

The current DTT coverage figures for the north-west region (the Granada area), Lancashire and the Rosendale and Darwen constituency are set out in the table.

Households	Percentage		
	DTT services		No DTT services
	Three PSB multiplexes	All six national multiplexes (including three PSB multiplexes)	
Granada TV region	99.6	95.9	0.4
Lancashire	99	95	1
Rossendale and Darwen	99.9	72.3	0.1

Ofcom estimates that 99.9% of households in the Rossendale and Darwen, are able to receive the public service broadcasting DTT channels and 72.3% are able to receive all DTT channels. Commercial DTT channels in the constituency area are broadcast only from larger transmitters such as the main Winter Hill transmitter near Bolton. Households in many parts of the constituency are therefore unable to receive signals from the Winter Hill transmitter due to the local terrain. In those areas, viewers receive signals from smaller relay transmitters that transmit only the public service broadcasting channels. In the constituency, 0.1% of households cannot receive any DTT coverage.

Social Enterprises

Chris White: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many of her Department's suppliers are social enterprises. [161323]

Hugh Robertson: The Department does not currently record this information and the current system is set up in such a way that the information requested could only be compiled whilst incurring disproportionate costs.

World War I: Anniversaries

Sir Bob Russell: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what plans she has to recognise the contribution of the Army Service Corps during the centenary commemorations of the Great War; and if she will make a statement. [161148]

Hugh Robertson: The national first world war centenary commemoration will offer a diverse and inclusive programme of activities and opportunities, in which everyone can participate and commemorate aspects of the war of particular interest or significance to them.

The national first world war centenary commemoration will offer a diverse and inclusive programme of activities such as six key events of national significance in which the military will play an appropriate part. The National programme offers the flexibility for others to organise their own event or events, and to be a part of this act of national remembrance.

Written Questions: Government Responses

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport when she plans to answer question 158022, tabled on 31 May 2013 for answer on 4 June 2013. [161739]

Hugh Robertson: The response to PQ 158022 was published on 24 June 2013, *Official Report*, column 116W.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Agriculture: Finance

Mary Creagh: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the answer of 3 June 2013, *Official Report*, columns 782-4W, on agriculture: finance, what the reasons are for the increase in the level of funding to the Food and farming group business support between 2009-10 and 2011-12. [161474]

Mr Heath: In April 2011 a new executive agency was created which combined the old Animal Health Agency (AH) and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) into a single body, the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA). Upon the merger of these two executive agencies, an element of their sponsorship costs was reallocated to this programme line. There has been no increase to the other underlying programmes recorded against the food and farming group business support line.

Bovine Tuberculosis

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what use his Department makes of social analytics and horizon scanning software to monitor public opinion on the badger cull; and if he will make a statement. [161555]

Mr Heath: DEFRA uses a commercially available web based software programme which enables social media analysis of approximately 40 topics at a time, including bovine TB and the pilot badger culls. The analysis helps DEFRA identify emerging issues and trends.

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what funding he has made available for the development of an oral TB vaccine for badgers in each of the last three years; and what funding he plans to make available for this purpose in each of the next two years. [161647]

Mr Heath: The following funding has been made available for the development of the oral TB vaccine in badgers:

Financial year	£
2010-11	2,476,273
2011-12	2,127,448
2012-13	1,684,948

The anticipated funding for this financial year and next financial year are as follows:

- 2013-14 financial year—approximately £2 million
- 2014-15 financial year—approximately £1.6 million

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate he has made of the total cost including policing of the badger cull programme for each badger killed. [161648]

Mr Heath: The badger control policy is based on a cost-sharing approach with the farming industry. The industry will be responsible for the operational costs of delivering culling and DEFRA will bear the costs of licensing, monitoring and policing the policy. The costs to Government for a typical 350 km² area over a period of four years as set out in the impact assessment are:

£0.4 million for licensing;

£0.7 million for monitoring;

£2 million for policing;

£0.1 million in relation to an increase in TB incidents in the neighbouring area.

We would expect these costs to be offset by savings as a result of reduced TB incidence within the control areas and in neighbouring areas, extending for five years beyond the culling period. The Government currently bears the majority of the cost of TB incidents by paying for TB testing and compensation for slaughtered animals.

Conditions of Employment

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many staff were retained on zero-hour contracts by (a) his Department and (b) the Executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies for which he is responsible in (i) 2010-11, (ii) 2011-12 and (iii) 2012-13; and if he will make a statement. [160768]

Richard Benyon: The number of staff retained on zero-hours contracts was as follows:

Body	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Core DEFRA	0	0	0
Executive agencies and NDPBs	55	49	48

Dangerous Dogs

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many dog attacks have been reported to police in each of the last five years. [161279]

Mr Heath: These statistics are not held centrally and would be held by each police force. They could therefore be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps his Department is taking to tackle dog on dog attacks. [161281]

Mr Heath: On 9 February, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs announced a package of measures to tackle irresponsible ownership of dogs. Included in the package was the extension of the criminal offence of allowing a dog to be dangerously out of control to all places; a requirement, from April 2016, for all dogs to be microchipped; and that the new

early intervention measures to deal with anti-social behaviour will apply to such instances where they involve a dog. The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill is currently before Parliament and contains clauses that will extend the criminal offence to all places and the appropriate antisocial behaviour measures. The Bill will also make it an offence to allow a dog to attack an assistance dog. I therefore consider that the necessary measures for tackling all instances of irresponsible ownership of dogs, including where a dog attacks another dog, are being taken forward by this Government.

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many reported dog attacks have led to a successful prosecution in each of the last five years. [161417]

Mr Heath: The numbers of prosecutions and convictions for the four offences under section 3 of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 for the last five years are set out in the following table:

Defendants proceeded against at magistrates courts and found guilty at all courts for offences under Sections 3(1) and 3(3) of the

Offence	Outcome	2008 ³	2009	2010	2011	2012
Owner or person in charge allowing dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place, no injury being caused ⁴	Proceeded against	356	379	365	267	282
	Found guilty	239	249	241	186	211
Owner or person in charge allowing dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place injuring any person ⁴	Proceeded against	675	614	845	842	899
	Found guilty	481	445	598	620	703
Owner or person in charge allowing dog to enter a non-public place causing reasonable apprehension of injury to a person ⁵	Proceeded against	20	18	19	20	16
	Found guilty	10	12	15	14	13
Owner or person in charge allowing dog to enter a non-public place and injure any person ⁵	Proceeded against	44	60	67	41	51
	Found Guilty	33	39	45	31	35

¹ The figures given in the table relate to persons for whom these offences were the principal offences for which they were dealt with. When a defendant has been found guilty of two or more offences it is the offence for which the heaviest penalty is imposed. Where the same disposal is imposed for two or more offences, the offence selected is the offence for which the statutory maximum penalty is the most severe.

² Every effort is made to ensure that the figures presented are accurate and complete. However, it is important to note that these data have been extracted from large administrative data systems generated by the courts and police forces. As a consequence, care should be taken to ensure data collection processes and their inevitable limitations are taken into account when those data are used.

³ Excludes data for Cardiff magistrates court for April, July and August 2008.

⁴ An offence under S.3(1) of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

⁵ An offence under S.3(3) of the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991.

Source:

Justice Statistics Analytical Services—Ministry of Justice.

Disciplinary Proceedings

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many staff were suspended from his Department and its associated

public bodies on full pay in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12 and (c) 2012-13; and what costs were incurred as a result of such suspensions. [160413]

Richard Benyon: The information requested is as follows:

Numbers of permanent staff suspended on full pay and the costs¹ associated with that suspension

Organisation	2010-11		2011-12		2012-13	
	Number	£	Number	£	Number	£
Core DEFRA	0	0	0	0	0	0
Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratory Agency	1	16,330	0	0	1	5,883
Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rural Payments Agency	0	0	0	0	0	0
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	0	0	0	0	0	0
Food and Environment Research Agency	1	2,876	1	4,935	1	24,304
Agriculture and Horticulture Delivery Board	0	0	1	857.97	0	0
Commission for Rural Communities	² —	² —	² —	² —	³ n/a	³ n/a
Consumer Council for Water	1	1,429.76	0	0	0	0
Environment Agency	⁴ —	⁴ —				
Gangmasters Licensing Authority	3	19,084.25	1	3,244.58	0	0
Joint Nature Conservation Committee	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Management Organisation	1	20,110.80	0	0	0	0
National Forest Company	0	0	0	0	0	0
Natural England	0	0	0	0	1	4,066.76
Royal Botanic Gardens Kew	1	590	0	0	0	0
Sea Fish Industry Authority	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sustainable Development Commission	⁵ —	⁵ —				
Covent Garden Market Authority	0	0	0	0	0	0

¹ Costs associated with the suspension include salary, ERNIC (national insurance) and pension costs.

² It would incur disproportionate cost to provide this data.

³ Abolished March 2013.

⁴ It would incur disproportionate cost to provide this information.

⁵ Abolished March 2011. It would incur disproportionate cost to provide this data.

Domestic Waste: Recycling

Dame Joan Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs which local authorities in England have stopped conducting doorstep recycling collections as stipulated under the Household Recycling Act 2003. [160790]

Richard Benyon: All waste collection authorities have made arrangements for source separated or co-mingled collection of waste from the doorstep or kerbside. In some local authority areas, a very small number of households may not receive a kerbside collection service due to cost, access or location issues, or because alternative arrangements have been made. Information on the small number of households which may not receive a doorstep or kerbside collection service is not held by DEFRA.

Flood Control

John Mann: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how much funding his Department has made available for the development of new flood protection technologies in each of the last three years; which specific new technologies have been granted such funding; and which parts of the UK have benefited from that funding. [161318]

Richard Benyon: DEFRA does not provide direct grant in aid for the development of new flood protection technologies, as it would contravene competition legislation. Flood risk management authorities are in a much better position to decide which technologies will work best to manage flood risk in their area.

The Property Level Grant schemes operated by DEFRA and the Environment Agency between 2009 and 2012 stimulated the market for innovative products. Amongst the innovations to emerge during this period were flood proof doors.

DEFRA aims to build public confidence in products and technologies through the development of testing and standards. In 2003 we sponsored the development of a British Standard (PAS1188), which provided independent verification of the effectiveness of property level flood management technology.

Government funding is channelled to specific areas as grant in aid through Regional Flood and Coastal Committees, which can prioritise cost beneficial schemes on the basis of local need. The Lead Local Flood Authority or the Environment Agency can develop local schemes to access this funding.

Fly-tipping

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the prevalence of fly-tipping; and if he will commission a review of steps to prevent it. [161423]

Richard Benyon: In 2011-12, local authorities in England reported over 744,000 fly-tipping incidents to the Environment Agency's Flycapture database. The estimated cost to local authorities of clearing fly-tipped waste from public land was £37.4 million.

Following our 2011 Review of Waste Policy in England, the Government has been taking action to tackle and prevent fly-tipping including:

cracking down on waste criminals by working with the Sentencing Council to ensure fines and sentences act as a real deterrent to offending.

supporting and working with the DEFRA-chaired National Fly-tipping Prevention Group. The Group has helped develop a draft Fly-tipping Partnership Framework outlining best practice for the prevention, reporting, investigation and clearance of fly-tipping. The Framework is currently being finalised ahead of publication.

funding two pilot projects in Suffolk and Swindon during 2013-14 to test some of the best practice options outlined in the Framework.

Hunting Act 2004

Mr Sanders: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether he plans to bring forward proposals for a statutory instrument allowing more than two hounds to pursue a fox towards guns under the Hunting Act 2004. [161464]

Richard Benyon: The Government currently has no plans to amend the Hunting Act. The Government has said that it will bring forward a motion on whether the Hunting Act 2004 should be repealed. To date, no time scale has been set for this work.

Nature Conservation

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps the Government plans to take to implement the commitment in the Prime Minister's recent G8 communiqué statement to tackle the illegal trafficking of protected or endangered wildlife species. [161503]

Richard Benyon: HRH the Prince of Wales and the Government co-hosted a meeting on 21 May with key governments and other partners. This identified three key areas for action: law enforcement and criminal justice issues; reducing demand for ivory and rhino horn; and supporting the development of alternative livelihoods in affected communities.

The Government will host a high-level international meeting in late autumn to secure commitment from governments and the international community at the highest level to combat illegal wildlife trade. At the same time the Government is assessing the actions of all relevant departments and agencies to provide a co-ordinated cross-government approach to ensure the UK is playing a full part.

Public Expenditure

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment he has made of the equality impact of his Department's spending reductions since 2010; whether this assessment has been used to inform his planning ahead of the 2013 comprehensive spending review and with what result;

what plans he has to publish the equality impact assessments undertaken by his Department as a result of the upcoming comprehensive spending review; and if he will make a statement. [161178]

Richard Benyon: DEFRA considers equality issues in exercising its functions, including in setting priorities within its budget, in order to comply with equality legislation and to ensure it understands how its activities will affect specific groups in society.

DEFRA provided HM Treasury with an equalities assessment of its main areas of expenditure both before and during the spending round process.

DEFRA's overall spending round submission was informed by its own equality assessments and by the SR equalities assessment commissioned by HMT.

The assessment of equalities feeds into both spending round decisions and future decisions by DEFRA. The outcome of the spending round is published today 26 June 2013.

Termination of Employment

Mr Thomas: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on how many occasions (a) a compromise agreement, (b) a confidentiality clause and (c) judicial mediation was used when an employee of (i) his Department and (ii) the public bodies for which he is responsible left their employment in (A) 2010-11, (B) 2011-12 and (C) 2012-13; and if he will make a statement. [160906]

Richard Benyon: The information is as follows:

	Number of occasions		
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
<i>Core DEFRA</i>			
Compromise Agreement	0	0	0
Confidentiality clause	0	0	0
Judicial Mediation	0	0	0
<i>Animal Health Veterinary Laboratories Agency</i>			
Compromise Agreement	1	1	1
Confidentiality clause	0	0	0
Judicial Mediation	0	0	0
<i>Centre for Environment Fisheries and Aquaculture</i>			
Compromise Agreement	0	0	0
Confidentiality clause	0	0	0
Judicial Mediation	0	0	0
<i>Food and Environment Research Agency</i>			
Compromise Agreement	0	0	1
Confidentiality clause	0	0	1
Judicial Mediation	0	0	0
<i>Rural Payments Agency</i>			
Compromise Agreement	1	2	4
Confidentiality clause	1	2	4
Judicial Mediation	0	0	0

	Number of occasions				Number of occasions		
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13		2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
<i>Veterinary Medicines Directorate</i>				Confidentiality clause	0	0	0
Compromise Agreement	0	0	0	Judicial Mediation	0	0	0
Confidentiality clause	0	0	0	<i>Natural England</i>			
Judicial Mediation	0	0	0	Compromise Agreement	0	1	0
<i>Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board</i>				Confidentiality clause	0	0	0
Compromise Agreement	2	1	0	Judicial Mediation	0	0	0
Confidentiality clause	0	0	0	<i>Royal Botanical Gardens Kew</i>			
Judicial Mediation	0	0	0	Compromise Agreement	1	0	0
<i>Commission for Rural Communities</i>				Confidentiality clause	0	0	0
Compromise Agreement	1	1	1	Judicial Mediation	0	0	0
Confidentiality clause	1	1	1	<i>Sea Fish Industry Authority</i>			
Judicial Mediation	1	1	1	Compromise Agreement	0	0	0
<i>Consumer Council for Water</i>				Confidentiality clause	0	0	0
Compromise Agreement	0	0	0	Judicial Mediation	0	0	0
Confidentiality clause	0	0	0	<i>Sustainable Development Commission</i>			
Judicial Mediation	0	0	0	Compromise Agreement	2	2	2
<i>Environment Agency</i>				Confidentiality clause	2	2	2
Compromise Agreement	17	15	6	Judicial Mediation	2	2	2
Confidentiality clause	17	15	6	<i>Covent Garden Market Authority</i>			
Judicial Mediation	0	0	0	Compromise Agreement	0	2	0
<i>Gangmasters Licensing Authority</i>				Confidentiality clause	0	2	0
Compromise Agreement	1	1	1	Judicial Mediation	0	0	0
Confidentiality clause	0	0	0	¹ Abolished March 2013. It would incur disproportionate cost to provide this data.			
Judicial Mediation	0	0	0	² Abolished March 2011. It would incur disproportionate cost to provide this data.			
<i>Joint Nature Conservation Council</i>				Training			
Compromise Agreement	0	0	0	Priti Patel: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 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. [155428]			
Confidentiality clause	1	0	0	Richard Benyon: The information required to answer this question in full is not held in a way that would allow all aspects of it to be answered other than at disproportionate cost.			
Judicial Mediation	0	0	0	The following tables show the data that is available:			
<i>Marine Management Organisation</i>				<i>Core DEFRA</i>			
Compromise Agreement	1	0	0	£			
Confidentiality clause	1	0	0				
Judicial Mediation	0	0	0				
<i>National Forest Company</i>							
Compromise Agreement	0	0	0				

Core DEFRA

	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Officials	1	1	1	1	1
Total cost	£2,814,175.24	£2,355,472.11	£2,447,333.37	£1,617,912.45	£1,736,050.00
10 highest spend	1	1	1	1	1

¹ The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

² These are figures for spend logged under training account codes. This expenditure could be for a variety of reasons from actual training courses to booking course venues.

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board

	£				
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Officials	1__	1__	1__	1__	1__
Total cost	1__	1__	1__	36,239	47,549
10 highest spend	1__	1__	1__	1__	1__

¹ The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

Commission for Rural Communities

The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

Consumer Council for Water

	£				
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Officials	1__	1__	1__	1__	1__
Total cost	² 86,941	² 68,417	² 37,256	² 34,279	30,033
10 highest spend	1__	1__	1__	1__	1__

¹ The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

² Figures include costs incurred as a result of attending training courses such as accommodation expenses. To disaggregate these from total spent on the actual courses could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Environment Agency

	£				
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Officials	1__	1__	1__	1__	1__
Total cost	1__	1__	² 2,546,240	² 4,431,208	² 6,011,267
10 highest spend	1__	1__	1__	1__	1__

¹ The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

² These figures are the total annual spend on Learning and Development for the Environment Agency. This covers a wide range of types of development and includes associated costs such as booking course venues. To disaggregate these figures could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Gangmasters Licensing Authority

	£				
	2008-09	2009-10-	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Officials	1__	1__	1__	1__	1__
Total cost	² 49,014.28	² 49,418.24	² 23,001.09	² 18,360.22	² 18,884.80
10 highest spend	1__	1__	1__	1__	1__

¹ The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

² Figures include costs incurred as a result of attending training courses such as accommodation expenses. To disaggregate these from total spent on the actual courses could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee

	£				
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Officials	1__	1__	1__	1__	1__
Total cost	56,491	53,209	77,559	85,345	66,535
10 highest spend	1,527.50	2,006.65	2,191.38	3,060.00	1,214.10
	1,360.00	1,756.63	1,590.00	3,060.00	1,194.00
	1,134.58	1,116.25	1,285.00	1,700.00	1,050.00
	1,103.33	1,116.25	1,285.00	1,194.00	948.00
	985.83	992.87	1,285.00	1,125.00	948.00
	887.97	810.75	1,140.00	1,080.00	948.00
	881.25	803.00	1,086.50	954.00	939.60
	869.08	750.00	992.87	954.00	760.00
	837.20	701.50	900.00	948.00	720.00
	805.00	690.00	889.13	948.00	720.00

¹ The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

Marine Management Organisation

	£				
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Officials	² —	² —	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —
Total cost	² —	² —	³ 263,000	³ 336,000	³ 260,000

¹ The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

² This body was not operating during these years.

³ Figures include costs incurred as a result of attending training courses such as accommodation expenses. To disaggregate these from total spent on the actual courses could only be done at disproportionate cost.

National Forest Company

	£				
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Officials	¹ —				
Total cost	7,413	3,985	9,213	5,486	14,065
10 highest spend	¹ —				

¹ The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

Natural England

	£				
	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Officials	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —
Total cost	² 1,158,723	² 1,480,170	² 1,221,962	² 340,068	² 547,385
10 highest spend	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —

¹ The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

² Figures include costs incurred as a result of attending training courses such as accommodation expenses. To disaggregate these from total spent on the actual courses could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

	£				
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Officials	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —
Total cost	² 107,209	² 100,882	² 89,364	² 158,940	² 122,427
10 highest spend	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —	¹ —

¹ The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

² Figures include costs incurred as a result of attending training courses such as accommodation expenses. To disaggregate these from total spent on the actual courses could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Seafish Industry Authority

	£				
	2008-09	2009-1-0	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Officials	¹ —				
Total cost	61,370.09	33,605.04	1,428.60	10,165.95	27,531.58
10 highest spend	¹ —				

¹ The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

Sustainable Development Commission

	£				
	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13
Officials	¹ —	22	28	² —	² —
Total cost	¹ —	12,575.41	13,721.29	² —	² —
10 highest spend	¹ —	1,897.50	925	² —	² —
	¹ —	1,610	700	² —	² —
	¹ —	999.00	665	² —	² —
	¹ —	942.40	558.13	² —	² —
	¹ —	665	500	² —	² —
	¹ —	595	500	² —	² —
	¹ —	540	500	² —	² —
	¹ —	540	500	² —	² —
	¹ —	488.15	500	² —	² —
	¹ —	488.15	500	² —	² —

¹ The figures are either not held or held in a way that to provide an accurate answer would be at disproportionate cost.

² This body was not operating during this year.

Tyres: Waste Disposal

Mr Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate has been made of how many waste tyres are currently stockpiled across the UK; and what information his Department holds on the locations where these are held. [160664]

Richard Benyon: It is not possible to determine how many tyres are stockpiled in England.

There are 60 sites that have environmental permits that allow the treatment, including recycling, of waste tyres. This does not include transfer stations and civic amenity sites, where small numbers of tyres may be accepted for storage and then subsequent onward transport.

Tyres are also managed at an additional 4,450 sites that are registered with the Environment Agency as exempt from the need for an environmental permit. These sites are not required to submit records of the waste handled. Both permitted and exempt sites are subject to limits on the quantity of waste tyres stored and/or processed, but the Environment Agency does not have data on the total quantity of tyres stockpiled at these sites.

The Environment Agency is also aware of 47 sites that are handling waste tyres illegally without the relevant environmental permit or exemption. The Environment Agency is actively investigating these sites with a view to taking appropriate enforcement action.

Ministerial Correction

Wednesday 26 June 2013

EDUCATION

Teachers

Andrew Selous: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to achieve gender balance in teaching in primary and lower schools.

[160640]

[Official Report, 20 June 2013, Vol. 564, c. 797-98W.]

Letter of correction from David Laws:

An error has been identified in the written answer given to the hon. Member for South West Bedfordshire (Andrew Selous) on 20 June 2013.

The full answer given was as follows:

Mr Laws: The Government has made it clear that it would like to see the proportion of male trainees growing over time. The most recent Initial Teacher training (ITT) census in November 2012 showed a record number and percentage of male graduates entering ITT.

The proportion of qualified male teaching staff in nursery and primary (including lower) education increased from 16% to 19% between 2010 and 2011. Workforce figures for 2012 are not yet available.

In July 2012 the Teaching Agency (TA) launched the Primary Experience Programme, which allowed male graduates interested in primary teacher training to have

10 days' work experience in a school. 1,000 places have been made available in schools across the country and the programme's impact is currently being assessed by the National College for Teaching and Leadership.

The TA also regularly puts male graduates in touch with a range of inspirational male primary teachers, to get an insight into teachers' motivations, career choices, challenges and the rewards of day-to-day life in a classroom.

The correct answer should have been:

Mr Laws: The Government has made it clear that it would like to see the proportion of male trainees growing over time. The most recent Initial Teacher training (ITT) census in November 2012 showed a record number and percentage of male graduates entering **primary** ITT.

The proportion of qualified male teaching staff in nursery and primary education increased from 16% to 19% between 2010 and 2011. Workforce figures for 2012 are not yet available.

In July 2012 the Teaching Agency (TA) launched the Primary Experience Programme, which allowed male graduates interested in primary teacher training to have 10 days' work experience in a school. 1,000 places have been made available in schools across the country and the programme's impact is currently being assessed by the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL).

The **Teaching Agency also put** male graduates in touch with a range of inspirational male primary teachers, to get an insight into teachers' motivations, career choices, challenges and the rewards of day-to-day life in a classroom.

ORAL ANSWERS

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