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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Tuesday 26 November 2013**



# House of Commons

*Tuesday 26 November 2013*

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

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Oral Answers to Questions

### HEALTH

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### Support for Carers

1. **Duncan Hames** (Chippenham) (LD): What steps he is taking to improve signposting to support and information for carers by health bodies and local authorities. [901258]

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Norman Lamb):** The Care Bill will require local authorities to ensure that information and advice is available to their local populations, including carers, and to co-operate with health bodies in fulfilling this function. The Bill will extend carers' rights to an assessment of their needs so that carers receive appropriate support and signposting to local services.

**Duncan Hames:** I welcome those measures in the Care Bill to support carers, but for them to benefit from that support, they first need to be identified. It is estimated that only one in 20 carers of people with cancer, for example, receives a carer's assessment. How does the Minister propose to get local authorities to work with the NHS and other health bodies to identify carers and ensure that their needs do not go unnoticed?

**Norman Lamb:** The Care Bill will introduce a right to an assessment for all carers, which I think is an incredibly important advance for them. We are also giving money—£1.5 million—to the Royal College of General Practitioners and other bodies, including nursing bodies, to raise awareness of the vital role of carers in working with GPs to improve the care of those who need it.

**Barbara Keeley** (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab): I think the Minister is missing the point, though, in that carers of people with cancer do not have contact with local authorities. Macmillan Cancer Support found that half of those carers are not getting any support at all and do not know where to go for it. They do have contact, however, with GPs and hospital doctors, so what is the Minister going to do to make sure that GPs and hospital doctors identify carers and make sure that they get that support and advice?

**Norman Lamb:** First, I pay tribute to the work of Macmillan. It does brilliant work, and this is a really important campaign because it will raise awareness. I do not think I am missing the point, because raising awareness among front-line professionals is critical, and local authorities will also have a duty through the Care Bill to co-operate with the health service and, of course, to integrate or join up care, all of which is in the interests of carers.

**Alison McGovern** (Wirral South) (Lab): Carers—and, I hope, the Minister—local authorities and GPs will be distressed by this week's report of care companies being investigated by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, almost half of which were found not to be paying the minimum wage. How does tackling that problem at the heart of our care system fit into the Minister's plans to help support carers?

**Norman Lamb:** I completely share the hon. Lady's concern about care companies that do not pay the minimum wage. All care companies should meet their obligations in law to pay the minimum wage. HMRC has done a lot of work, focusing on the care sector, and I have been absolutely clear that there is an obligation for those care companies to meet their requirements under the national minimum wage legislation. We cannot get good care on the back of exploiting low-paid workers.

#### Compassionate Care (NHS)

2. **Alec Shelbrooke** (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): What steps he is taking to ensure that compassionate care is at the heart of the NHS. [901259]

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):** Last week, we published a full response to the Mid-Staffs public inquiry and set out our ambition to transform the quality of compassionate care in the NHS. We have already put in place a robust new inspection regime and measures to make it easier for doctors and nurses to speak out when they are concerned about standards of care or safety.

**Alec Shelbrooke:** Compassionate care goes right through from surgeons to GPs. Will my right hon. Friend comment on evidence that epileptic women of child-bearing age are not being shown the compassion necessary during pregnancy from their GPs or neurologists and are not having the risks of taking their epilepsy medication outlined to them? To date, such medication has caused more than 20,000 birth defects.

**Mr Hunt:** I thank my hon. Friend for highlighting this important issue. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency regularly reviews the evidence relating to anti-epileptic drug use, particularly sodium valproate products, and we check what information is available to doctors so that it can be passed on to patients. I am concerned about the issue my hon. Friend raises, so I have asked NHS England's national director of patient safety, Dr Mike Durkin, to look into it carefully and get back to me.

**Nick Smith** (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): New York has raised the age for buying tobacco products to 21. As a public health care policy, has the Department considered that matter?

**Mr Hunt:** As the hon. Gentleman will know, we are constantly reviewing all policies that could reduce tobacco use among young people. Smoking is the No. 1 killer, so dealing with it would be the best way of reducing this country's premature mortality rates, which are far too high.

23. [901280] **Jonathan Lord** (Woking) (Con): Does the Secretary of State agree that transparency is critical in improving hospital standards and that, following the Government's latest measures in response to the Francis report, the health cover-ups by the previous Government will never be allowed to happen again?

**Mr Hunt:** The Labour party does not like to hear this, but the reality is that micro-managing the NHS through top-down targets failed to deal with the problems of compassionate care. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that the best way to deal with this is through total transparency, so that when we are sure there is a problem, the public find out about it quickly and it is dealt with quickly.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): Compassionate care must be central to the NHS. The Health Minister in Northern Ireland has launched "Quality 2020", a strategy that is intended to improve care in Northern Ireland. What discussions has the Secretary of State had with the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Health Minister about this issue?

**Mr Hunt:** We are in close touch with all the devolved Administrations about the changes that we are making in the NHS in England, and, interestingly, we are experiencing different levels of engagement. We have had very good discussions with the Northern Ireland Health Minister about some of the changes, but those in Wales are still refusing to commission a Keogh report on excess deaths, which I think shows that Labour in Wales has not learnt the lessons of transparency.

#### Accident and Emergency Health Specialists

3. **Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): What steps he is taking to train and retain more accident and emergency health specialists in the UK. [901260]

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):** I have asked Health Education England to consider how we can improve the structure and skill mix of the emergency medicine work force to deal with long-standing shortages in staff at both consultant and trainee levels. Along with the Emergency Medicine Taskforce, we are considering a number of options, such as increasing the non-doctor work force and the number of emergency nurse practitioners.

**Mr Sheerman:** Just what is going on in medical education in this country? We train doctors, but some never work as doctors, and others move abroad. Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust has advertised and advertised again, but it cannot recruit accident and emergency staff. It certainly cannot recruit any who have been trained in this country, or who have been trained in paediatrics. What is going wrong with medical education here?

**Mr Hunt:** The hon. Gentleman has raised some important issues. We do face big challenges. We have increased the number of doctors in the NHS by 6,600 over the last three years, but it is still very difficult to attract as many people as we need to disciplines such as A and E.

I know that Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust is especially concerned about A and E staffing. I had a very good meeting with representatives of the College of Emergency Medicine last week to discuss A and E consultants' terms and conditions and, in particular, their antisocial working hours. We are giving the matter close consideration, but I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we need to do better in this regard.

**Mr Philip Hollobone** (Kettering) (Con): While it is important to recruit and retain more A and E specialists, part of the problem is that a third of the patients who are dealt with in A and E departments could receive better treatment closer to their homes. What can the Secretary of State do to encourage that?

**Mr Hunt:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. One of the biggest mistakes made in health care over the past decade was the introduction of the disastrous changes in the GP contract in 2004, which broke the personal link between GPs and their patients. Hard-pressed A and E departments, including the one at Kettering hospital, say that one of the things that will make the biggest difference to them is the provision of a named GP for the over-75s, so that they know that someone is responsible for those people when they are not in hospital.

**Fiona Mactaggart** (Slough) (Lab): Is it not the chaotic and overstretched nature of many A and E departments that makes A and E an unattractive discipline for people to work in? Ever since the closure of the A and E department at Wycombe general hospital in my constituency, Wexham Park hospital has been unable to cope. What will the Secretary of State do about that?

**Mr Hunt:** We have gained more than 600 additional A and E doctors over the last three years, so the numbers are rising. However, the best thing that we can do for A and E staff is to give them a sense that we are addressing the long-term challenges that they face. The issues of integration with social care and delayed discharges are being addressed through the health and social care integration transformation fund, but we must also ensure that there are better primary care alternatives. The named GP for the over-75s will make a big difference in that regard.

**Margot James** (Stourbridge) (Con): My local hospital, Russells Hall, is experiencing considerable difficulty in recruiting A and E consultants. Would not a good alternative approach be to train more paramedics to serve on ambulances and provide more effective and robust triage at emergency centres, so that patients can be redirected when necessary?

**Mr Hunt:** As ever, my hon. Friend speaks very wisely about this subject. In his review of A and E services, which was published a couple of weeks ago, Professor Keogh said that paramedics could deal with 50% of 999 calls on the spot, without taking people to hospital. I

think that there is a big role for ambulance services that are prepared to upskill. It is also important for us to ensure that they have the necessary information. One of the main changes that we intend to make next year will ensure that they have access to the GP records of the people whom they pick up, so that they can give those people the care that they need in their own homes.

**Mr Jamie Reed** (Copeland) (Lab): The president of the College of Emergency Medicine has said that the Government's reorganisation has made A and E recruitment worse; the chief executive of the NHS Confederation has said that A and E pressures have been compounded by three years of structural reforms; yesterday, we learnt that the number of nurses choosing to leave their profession had jumped by more than one quarter under this Government; and the Health Secretary himself admits he is worried by the fall in nurse numbers on this Prime Minister's watch. I hope he listens carefully so that he can answer precisely: will he today give the House a guarantee that every A and E in the country will have enough nurses this winter?

**Mr Hunt:** Will the hon. Gentleman think about what he has said? He said he was against a reorganisation that got rid of 8,000 managers and put 6,600 doctors on to the front line. That is why we are doing nearly a million more operations every year and why waiting times for longer waits are shorter than they were under Labour. We are recruiting more doctors because we are putting money into the front line.

**Miss Anne McIntosh** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): It takes seven years to train a doctor, but, for whatever reason, the new GP contract is looking to end seniority pay in six years. Is my right hon. Friend not concerned that that will lead to a mass retirement of doctors at the end of that six-year period in 2020?

**Mr Hunt:** We have to make the GP profession attractive to younger GPs as well. The money we save from getting rid of seniority pay will go back into practices, but it should not be given to people just for length of service; it should be related to quality of service too, which will make the GP profession much more attractive.

### Ambulance Handover Times

5. **Rosie Cooper** (West Lancashire) (Lab): What recent assessment he has made of ambulance handover times at accident and emergency departments. [901262]

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Norman Lamb):** Patient handover is a key part of delivering good emergency care. Systems are in place to ensure efficient handover, but we recognise that it sometimes takes longer than the recommended 15 minutes, particularly during peaks of demand. We are taking the issue of handover delay seriously, which is why we have introduced financial sanctions for unacceptable delay.

**Rosie Cooper:** Southport and Ormskirk hospital in my constituency has one of the longest handover times in the north-west, with ambulances queuing outside the hospital and patients lying on stretchers for hours. How does that offer the patient-centred care and dignity that

the Government keep promising but failing to deliver? What can the Minister do to make it better for my constituents?

**Norman Lamb:** That sort of experience is not acceptable and has to be addressed, and I am sure the hon. Lady will welcome the encouraging news that the sanctions in the national contracts that clinical commissioning groups enter into with hospitals have resulted in a 38% reduction in delays, comparing the first two weeks of last November with the first two weeks of this November, which is the first period during which we measure winter pressures on handovers. That sign of a significant increase is to be welcomed.

**Mr Simon Burns** (Chelmsford) (Con): As an east of England MP, the Minister will be aware of the problems with the East of England ambulance service and handover times at Broomfield hospital. While I warmly welcome the initiative, through the contract, to bring pressure to bear to reduce handover times to 15 minutes, will he join me in paying tribute to the new management of the ambulance service for what it is doing, through its assessments and monitoring, to deal with this problem?

**Norman Lamb:** I have had a similar experience at the Norfolk and Norwich hospital. It is clear that the number of delays in the east of England has reduced substantially, and I pay tribute to everyone involved. Getting urgent care right requires collaboration between ambulance trusts, acute care and GPs and social care workers on the ground. Significant improvements have been made in the east of England, as well as across the rest of the country.

**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): The Minister surely knows that deteriorating ambulance handover times are just one of a growing number of signs highlighting what is going wrong with A and E on this Government's watch. Now we see the Secretary of State and his Ministers in full panic mode after denying for months that there was a problem. The question is: why was the Health Secretary the last person in the entire NHS to realise that there was an A and E crisis?

**Norman Lamb:** It seems as if Labour is always desperately in search of a crisis, even if there is none to be found. If the hon. Gentleman had listened to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for West Lancashire (Rosie Cooper), he would have heard me say that there had been a 38% improvement in waiting times for ambulance handovers between last November and this November. I am sure that he will welcome that.

**George Freeman** (Mid Norfolk) (Con): I congratulate the Minister and the Government on the work that is being done to integrate social and NHS care. Does my hon. Friend agree that, for the many elderly patients moving between hospital care and community social care, integrated patient records across the two areas will significantly improve elderly care? Will he meet me and campaigners following Health questions to discuss my ten-minute rule Bill?

**Mr Speaker:** The link is a strained and tenuous one, but carry on.

**Norman Lamb:** My hon. Friend deserves credit for that one. Of course I would be happy to have a chat with him. He makes a point about integrated care records. We should be focusing on ensuring that we do much more to keep frail and elderly people out of hospital in the first place. The system that we have inherited is dysfunctional, and the shift towards integrated care is exactly what needs to be done.

#### Out-of-hospital Care (Elderly People)

6. **Mark Menzies** (Fylde) (Con): What progress his Department has made on improving out-of-hospital care for frail elderly people. [901263]

13. **Sir Tony Baldry** (Banbury) (Con): What progress his Department has made on improving out-of-hospital care for frail elderly people. [901270]

17. **Nick de Bois** (Enfield North) (Con): What progress his Department has made on improving out-of-hospital care for frail elderly people. [901274]

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):** Improving the quality of out-of-hospital care is the biggest strategic long-term change that we need to make in the NHS. It will help to make the NHS sustainable. Reforming the GP contract is the first step, but we also need to make major progress on integrating the health and social care systems.

**Mark Menzies:** I welcome the Government's announcement of named GPs for older people. What does the Secretary of State envisage that will mean for my older constituents?

**Mr Hunt:** My hon. Friend is not the only person to welcome that change. After months of telling the House that this was nothing to do with the A and E problems, the shadow Health Secretary said on the "Today" programme that he welcomed the change and that it would make a difference to A and E. So I welcome the return of the prodigal son with great pride and pleasure. For my hon. Friend's constituents, this will mean that there will be someone in the NHS who is responsible for ensuring that they get the care package that they need. That is incredibly important, because when people are discharged from hospitals, the hospitals worry about whose care they will be under. This change will provide that crucial link and make a real difference.

**Sir Tony Baldry:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that the 2004 GP contract did enormous damage to the relationship between GPs and their patients, and that the recent changes agreed with GPs should ensure much more proactive care of our most vulnerable constituents and ease pressure on A and E departments?

**Mr Hunt:** I agree with my hon. Friend, and I am pleased that the shadow Health Secretary also agrees with him in welcoming the reversal of that disastrous contract. The personal relationship between doctor and patient is at the heart of what the NHS stands for, and at the heart of that is a responsibility to ensure that people get the care they need. That is what we need to get back, and I think that the change will make a big difference to my hon. Friend's constituents.

**Nick de Bois:** Enfield CCG is working closely with Enfield council to try to deliver integrated health and social care, particularly for the elderly and the frail. Noting our higher-than-average elderly age demographic in the borough, will the Secretary of State take steps to ensure that those efforts are supported with extra funding?

**Mr Hunt:** My hon. Friend knows that the funding arrangements are decided independently of the Government, by NHS England, which will make its decision at a board meeting before Christmas. He is absolutely right to suggest that the funding formula should reflect not only social deprivation but the age profile of constituents, because the oldest people are of course the heaviest users of the NHS.

**Liz Kendall** (Leicester West) (Lab): The Health Secretary claims that he wants the NHS to be the best in the world at looking after the elderly. Nice rhetoric, but the reality is that we now have the highest-ever number of elderly people trapped in hospitals because they cannot get the health and social care they need at home. We now have the equivalent of five hospitals full of elderly people who do not want to be there, and that is costing the taxpayer £20 million a month. Is not the truth that care of the elderly is getting worse, not better, on his watch?

**Mr Hunt:** The truth is that the previous Government had 13 years to integrate the health and social care systems, but they failed. We are doing that, and we are also providing named GPs to the most vulnerable people, so that, hopefully, they do not have to go to hospital in the first place. That is doing a lot more for older people than the hon. Lady's Government ever did.

**Mr Stephen Dorrell** (Charnwood) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that successive Governments over 30 years have talked about the importance of joining up the different bits of the health care system and joining that up with social care? Is not the difference between this Government and their predecessors that, through health and wellbeing boards, the integrated care fund, named GPs and the pioneers programme that he has announced, this Government are actually doing it, rather than just talking about it?

**Mr Hunt:** I have to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend, because he has been talking about the integration of health and social care for a lot longer than I have, and he is absolutely right. I would add to his list one other really important thing we are doing: we are making sure that whatever part of the system someone is in, doctors can access their GP medical record—with their permission—because that information is vital in showing their allergies, medical history and previous admissions. Breaking down the barriers that prevent that from happening is one of the things that has not been picked up but is in the GP contract.

#### NHS (Winter Pressures)

7. **Graham Evans** (Weaver Vale) (Con): What steps his Department has taken to ease the short and long-term impact of winter pressures on NHS services. [901264]

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):** In the short term, a record £400 million has been assigned to help the NHS cope with winter pressures

this winter, with £250 million announced in August—much earlier than before. For the long term, we will provide better out-of-hospital care for the frail elderly, by restoring the link between GPs and older patients, and looking to integrate the health and social care systems.

**Graham Evans:** Will my right hon. Friend join me in praising the outstanding work of Age UK and, in particular, Age UK Cheshire, which serves my constituency? It is raising older people's awareness of seasonal impacts on health and offering support to prevent unnecessary pressures on the health service.

**Mr Hunt:** I am delighted to do that. As these are the last Health questions before Christmas, all of us would want to pay tribute to the voluntary organisations that do an extraordinary job of making sure that vulnerable older people do not get lonely over the Christmas period. It is heroic what they do—when we are with our families, they are looking after other people—and we should salute them all.

22. [901279] **Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): One way to ease the pressure on the NHS is by not handing the £2.2 billion underspend back to the Treasury. Will the Secretary of State consider using it for the NHS?

**Mr Hunt:** I wish the hon. Lady had been as diligent in asking that question of Labour Ministers, who also handed back underspends to the Treasury when they were in power.

**Steve Baker** (Wycombe) (Con): Along with county colleagues, I wrote to the Secretary of State on this subject, because Buckinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust is relatively underfunded compared with the rest of the country and it is in special measures following the Keogh review. Further to the answer that he gave to the earlier question, when can we expect the NHS England funding settlement to reflect more equitably the age of the public?

**Mr Hunt:** I commend my hon. Friend for the campaigning he does for high standards in his local trust. That has not been easy because, as he says, there have been a lot of problems there, although I hope he thinks that we are beginning to turn a corner. The decision on the funding allocations will be made by NHS England before Christmas, and the things that he says will, of course, be taken into account.

**Luciana Berger** (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab/Co-op): Yesterday we learned that the number of people suffering from hypothermia has soared by almost 40% on this Government's watch. This morning the Office for National Statistics revealed that the number of older and vulnerable people who died unnecessarily last winter jumped by 29%. For every person who tragically loses their life over the winter months, eight more are admitted to hospital, putting huge strains on our crisis-ridden accident and emergency services. Will the Secretary of State please tell us what he is going to do about it?

**Mr Hunt:** I do not think I have yet answered a question across the Dispatch Box from the hon. Lady, so I welcome her to her post. I just say that she should be careful what she chooses to turn into a political

football, because hypothermia admissions, as Public Health England said in August, are very closely linked to the number of cold days over a winter and the length of that winter. We had a particularly difficult winter last year, but the number of winter deaths was nearly 20% higher under the previous Government, when the right hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) was Health Secretary.

### Social Care Budget Changes

8. **Mrs Mary Glendon** (North Tyneside) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effects of social care budget changes on attendances at accident and emergency departments. [901265]

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Norman Lamb):** Joining up health and social care is an absolute priority for this Government. The NHS will provide £900 million this year and £1.1 billion next year to support social care services with a health benefit and to promote joint working. In 2015-16, we will introduce a £3.8 billion pooled budget for health and social care. The number of bed days lost because of delays attributable to social care was nearly 50,000 lower in 2012-13 than it was in 2011-12.

**Mrs Glendon:** In the first two years of this Government, there was a frightening 66% increase in the number of people aged 90 and over coming into accident and emergency in a blue-light ambulance. When will the Minister accept that cuts to elderly care have increased pressure on the NHS, and are a major cause of the A and E crisis?

**Norman Lamb:** First, it is worth us all recognising that there is an increase in the number of frail elderly people in our society living with chronic conditions and that that is putting additional pressure on accident and emergency departments. The numbers have increased by over a million a year since 2010. However, the fact that there has been a reduction of 50,000 in the number of delayed discharges demonstrates that the social care system is doing incredibly well, and we should pay tribute to social care workers across the system who are doing so well to ensure that that improvement is taking place.

**Andrew George** (St Ives) (LD): Bottlenecks in A and E are certainly not new, and they are not aided by the mantra that acute hospitals should be able to manage with fewer acute beds. On my hon. Friend's point about shared and integrated planning, is he prepared to go further and push the Government in the direction of shared and integrated budgets as between health and social care?

**Norman Lamb:** I thank my hon. Friend for that question. We are creating a pooled budget in 2015-16 with this £3.8 billion fund. I can remember in opposition frequently making the case for integrated care and not really getting much of a positive response from the then Government. As the Chair of the Select Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for Charnwood (Mr Dorrell), said, the great thing is that this Government are actually doing it.

### Veterans

9. **John Glen** (Salisbury) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to improve the health of veterans. [901266]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Dr Daniel Poulter)**: We have made excellent progress in improving the health care of our veterans by investing £22 million to support their physical and mental health. The Government have also made available £35 million of the LIBOR bank fines to support veterans and armed forces projects.

**John Glen**: I thank the Minister for that response. Will he outline the steps being taken to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach between those commissioning services for veterans, including Salisbury district hospital, which does so much to service the veterans in Wiltshire, so that that they get the right revenue at the right time and do not go into deficit?

**Dr Poulter**: My hon. Friend is right to highlight the importance of co-ordinating veterans services, and getting the continuity of care right between a soldier or a member of the armed forces leaving the armed forces and being looked after by the NHS. I hope he will be reassured to hear that in terms of specially commissioned services, we now have nine super-prosthetic centres available for veterans who have lost limbs, 10 specialist mental health teams looking after veterans, a 24-hour mental health support line for veterans and many other measures. We are also making IVF available to veterans who have lost genitalia as a result of combat injuries.

**Ms Gisela Stuart** (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): Given that health is a devolved matter, is the Minister satisfied that the Administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are providing similarly sufficient services for our veterans?

**Dr Poulter**: Obviously, we work closely with the devolved Administrations on all such matters. We have UK armed forces, and with health being a devolved responsibility, it comes to each part of the United Kingdom to put in place the right support. On the whole, that is done very well, but I am particularly proud of the efforts the Government have made on veterans' mental health and on specialist prosthetic centres, which can be commissioned by the devolved Administrations if they wish to make such facilities available.

**Penny Mordaunt** (Portsmouth North) (Con): Many veterans are young men and women, and I know from my own constituency case work that a tremendous burden is often placed on elderly parents in caring for them, especially if they are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Does the Minister agree that better integration between medical services in the armed forces and the NHS will benefit those families as well as the veterans themselves?

**Dr Poulter**: My hon. Friend speaks with considerable knowledge of the subject from her tradition and strong record of service. She will know that an important aspect of providing proper support for veterans is ensuring

that we give their families the right support. We are working very closely with armed forces families and services charities to ensure that we do exactly that. That is why we have also put in place mental health first aid support for the families of servicemen and women to ensure that families know how to support veterans when they run into difficulties with post-traumatic stress disorder.

### Children's Hospices

10. **Stephen Gilbert** (St Austell and Newquay) (LD): What assessment he has made of the effectiveness of section 64 grants in supporting children's hospices. [901267]

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Norman Lamb)**: We are aware how vital the annual grant of more than £10 million is to children's hospices and we have pledged to continue it while we work with hospices to develop a per patient funding system to ensure that hospice services from 2015 can be funded locally and on an equitable and transparent basis.

**Stephen Gilbert**: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. Since the introduction of the grant in 2006, children's hospices now reach 75% more children and families and provide vital services. Can he assure me that the funding agreement will be in place by 2015?

**Norman Lamb**: Let me first pay tribute to the amazing work of so many children's hospices around the country. I know that Little Harbour in St Austell in my hon. Friend's constituency has benefited from the grant and, indeed, from the increase in the grant last year. It is absolutely the intention both to work with hospices to get this right and to introduce the new system in 2015.

**Mr Andrew Turner** (Isle of Wight) (Con): Will the Minister join me in sending condolences to Gemma and Aaron Rolf and Jack, the parents and brother of six-year-old Sophie Rolf, who had an inoperable brain tumour and died, sadly, yesterday? Sophie and her family raised thousands of pounds to bring children's facilities to the Earl Mountbatten hospice on the island. Those facilities were recently opened and will be a lasting tribute to a very special little girl.

**Norman Lamb**: Absolutely. I offer my condolences to the family of Sophie. The remarkable selfless fundraising done by such families does much to provide care for others and that will be a remarkable legacy for a fine young girl.

### Cross-border Health Care (Wales/England)

11. **Glyn Davies** (Montgomeryshire) (Con): What discussions he has had with NHS hospital trusts on taking account of the interests of patients in Wales who depend on hospitals in England. [901268]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Jane Ellison)**: As my hon. Friend knows, officials from NHS England frequently meet the Welsh Government to discuss the issue of health care provided in England for Welsh patients. He will know that NHS England has

a duty to consider the likely impact of any commissioning decision it makes on people who reside in an area of Wales that is close to the border.

**Glyn Davies:** Does my hon. Friend agree that when commissioners for NHS hospital trusts in Shropshire are considering where to locate services, account must be taken of the needs of patients in Montgomeryshire, the vast majority of whom are dependent on Shropshire hospitals, particularly the Royal Shrewsbury hospital?

**Jane Ellison:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight the fact that cross-border health care is an area of great concern. There is a requirement to take note, as he says. The work is ongoing and I am happy to have those discussions with him.

**Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC):** It is not only patients local to the border who access treatment in England. Patients from as much as 90 or 100 miles away in the west of Wales—for example, young babies—access treatment on the Wirral. However, does the Minister agree that it is in the interests of hospital trusts in England to take patients from Wales, as it has been demonstrated that they often make the difference between a viable and non-viable service?

**Jane Ellison:** Of course, it is possible, depending on clinical need, for clinicians to recommend treatment in England. The hon. Gentleman knows that there are ongoing discussions, some of which are quite difficult, but the intention is obviously to ensure that we get the best health care for everyone. I would urge the Welsh Government, in particular, to consider ways in which they can review how arrangements are made in Wales. There have been calls for a review of hospitals in Wales, not least the one today from the Royal College of Surgeons.

**Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con):** Hospitals such as the Royal Shrewsbury hospital, dealing with patients from both sides of the border, have historically incurred additional administration costs in dealing with the two separate authorities. What work is the Minister doing to find out what the costs are and whether she can help meet them in the future?

**Jane Ellison:** We are aware of those additional costs, and I know that my hon. Friend recently met my right hon. and noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health. We are very conscious of those costs and of the difficult decisions. It is the subject of on-going negotiation between the Welsh Government and NHS England.

### Orthopaedic Surgery

12. **Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con):** What lessons he has learnt from the findings of the report of Professor Timothy Briggs on improving the orthopaedic surgery published in September 2012, entitled “Getting it right first time”. [901269]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Jane Ellison):** In 2012 Ministers welcomed the publication of the report and acknowledged that its recommendations

could help build on improvements in orthopaedic care. I believe that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met Professor Briggs.

NHS England is now responsible for securing high-quality outcomes. Peter Kay, the national clinical director for musculoskeletal services, is also supportive of the report’s findings.

**Andrew Selous:** Growing numbers of orthopaedic consultants accept that collaboration across networks of hospitals could improve the quality of orthopaedic care, which frankly has not always been good enough in the past. Will my hon. Friend accept the recommendations of the “Getting it right first time” report?

**Jane Ellison:** We know that NHS England has welcomed Professor Briggs’ recommendations. They are contributing to a substantial body of work on orthopaedics, with the sole objective of improving outcomes for patients. I am sure that my hon. Friend will welcome the fact that this year for the first time data about surgical outcomes have been published at both hospital and consultant level, with the objective of driving up quality and supporting patient choice.

### “Our Children Deserve Better”

14. **Paul Burstow (Sutton and Cheam) (LD):** What steps he has taken in response to the findings of the report by the Chief Medical Officer, “Our Children Deserve Better: Prevention Pays”, published in October 2013. [901271]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Dr Daniel Poulter):** The chief medical officer’s report warmly welcomes the Government’s commitment to increasing health visitor numbers and support in the early years, and I shall be working with the children and young people’s outcomes forum to inform future improvements in children’s health.

**Paul Burstow:** My hon. Friend the Minister will know that about half the burden of mental health disease can first be identified during the teenage years. In her report, the CMO says that our information about the prevalence of childhood mental health problems and the level of under-diagnosis of mental health problems among that population is out of date. When will the Government commission the next survey? The last one was done in 2004. Is it not time to do another?

**Dr Poulter:** My right hon. Friend raises important issues. I should like to pay tribute the work that he did in expanding children’s talking therapies and IAPT—improving access to psychological therapies—services to make better provision for mental health support. He is right to highlight, as the CMO did, the fact that we do not have enough data on children’s mental health. That has been a historical problem, and we are looking at ways to improve the data so that we can use them to improve health outcomes in mental as well as physical health.

**Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con):** In Devon and Cornwall since the beginning of this year there have been three occasions when children as young as 12 and 13 with acute mental illness have been detained in police

cells instead of an appropriate place of safety, and 25 occasions when children of 17 and under have been so detained. Will the Minister meet me to discuss how we can end this appalling situation and make sure that all children who are detained under section 136 are seen in an appropriate location?

**Dr Poulter:** My hon. Friend is right to highlight this problem, which is unacceptable. My hon. Friend the Minister of State is looking into it. A lot of anecdotal evidence is stacking up that this practice is happening. We do not find it acceptable, and I or my hon. Friend will be happy to meet her to discuss the matter further and ensure that it is stopped.

### NHS Walk-in Centres

15. **Karl Turner** (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab): How many NHS walk-in centres have (a) closed and (b) restricted their opening hours since May 2010. [901272]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Dr Daniel Poulter):** The information is no longer collected centrally. Since 2007, under the changes introduced by the previous Government, the local NHS has been responsible for walk-in-centres, and it is for local commissioners to decide on the availability of these services.

**Karl Turner:** Official NHS figures show that attendances at accident and emergency departments have increased more than three times faster under the Tory-led Government than under the Labour Government. Does the Minister regret allowing so many walk-in centres to close?

**Dr Poulter:** As I outlined, there are not any official figures, because the data are now held locally. Monitor carried out a survey of some trusts, but that is not a measure of all trusts. The hon. Gentleman wants to look at the reasons why there have been changes to walk-in centres. There was a reduction in central funding of over 90% under the previous Government. I believe that the right hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) was a Minister at the time; if the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull East (Karl Turner) wants to look at the reasons for that, he should perhaps ask his right hon. Friend why he reduced central funding for walk-in centres by 90%.

**Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): In 2005, under the Labour Government, Crawley hospital had its accident and emergency department closed. Now we have an urgent treatment centre that has increased its operating hours and the services that it provides. What advice can the Department give to clinical commissioners about how we can expand urgent treatment centres?

**Dr Poulter:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight that these are local decisions that need to be made by local commissioners, because what looks good in Crawley will be very different from the needs in Bradford. That was the very reason that underpinned the previous Government's decision to transfer responsibility for these services to local commissioners, but we often need more co-located services, because the Monitor survey picked up the fact that in the past, far too often, walk-in centres were isolated in the community; people

did not know how to access them, or when they could do so. Monitor also recognised that there was duplication of effort, and sometimes patients who needed to be seen in accident and emergency were treated, inappropriately, in walk-in centres.

**Mr Speaker:** I am deeply obliged to the Minister, but we must leave time for Mr Mowat.

### Alternative Therapies

16. **David Mowat** (Warrington South) (Con): What recent consideration he has given to banning the use of NHS funds for provision of alternative therapies. [901273]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Jane Ellison):** As my hon. Friend will know, the provision of alternative and complementary therapies is decided by clinical commissioning groups, which obviously must take into account local health needs and priorities.

**David Mowat:** I thank the Minister for that answer. Many parts of the NHS are under intense, relentless financial pressure, so how can it be right that we spend millions of pounds a year on remedies that have no scientific basis, other than through their placebo effect?

**Jane Ellison:** My hon. Friend is quite right to highlight that value for money is very important. It is for local commissioners, not the Department, to decide how funding is spent to meet the needs of the populations whom they serve, but crucially, clinical commissioning groups are responsible for achieving value for money as regards the services that they commission, as well as for delivering improvements in the quality of care, and better outcomes for patients.

### Topical Questions

T1. [901248] **Simon Danczuk** (Rochdale) (Lab): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

**The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt):** I need to correct the record. In the House on 30 October, I said that it took 21 minutes longer for the average person to be seen in A and E under the previous Government—a figure that was repeated by the Prime Minister in Prime Minister's questions. My Department made a statistical mistake: it turns out that under Labour, the average person took not 21 but 44 minutes longer to be seen. I apologise for underestimating the improvements made under this Government.

**Simon Danczuk:** When people have mental health problems, waiting too long for talking therapies can lead to poor recovery, relationships falling apart, and job loss. What progress has the Minister made in establishing and delivering maximum waiting times for talking therapies?

**Mr Hunt:** The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right: this is a big priority for the Government. We are a big fan of talking therapies. We have taken huge strides in improving take-up, but there is still a long way to go, and we are looking at introducing access standards, so that there is a maximum time beyond which no one has to wait.

T3. [901251] **John Pugh** (Southport) (LD): What measurable progress is being made in improving data sharing, not just between hospitals and general practitioners, but between the NHS and social services, to avoid bureaucracy and additional cost?

**Mr Hunt:** My hon. Friend has taken a great interest in this topic, and he is absolutely right to do so, because if we are to give integrated, joined-up care, in which people deal with NHS professionals who know about them, their medical history, their allergies and all the other important things, it is vital that, if they give their consent, their medical record can be accessed. That needs to be from GP surgery to hospital to social care system. Under the named GP policy that we have announced, there is a big opportunity for care homes to access GP records and keep them updated daily, so that GPs are kept in daily contact with how some of the most vulnerable people are doing.

**Andy Burnham** (Leigh) (Lab): Today I want to put to the Secretary of State new evidence that the A and E crisis is deepening, and having a serious knock-on effect on ambulance services. Information from police forces reveals that cases in which police cars have to ferry patients to A and E are far more widespread than people realise; in some areas, it happens on a daily basis. One ambulance service is now using retained firefighters to attend calls, and—this is how bad things have got—another ambulance service has seen a 350% increase in the number of 999 calls attended by taxis. Does the Secretary of State think that it is ever acceptable that when a patient dials 999, a taxi turns up?

**Mr Hunt:** I am afraid that that is utterly irresponsible. We are hitting our A and E target, and we are hitting our ambulance standard. When the right hon. Gentleman was Health Secretary he missed the ambulance standard for October, November, December and January. He is trying to talk up a crisis that is not happening. He should think about people on the front line and, just for once, put patients before politics.

**Andy Burnham:** The country will have heard the complacency from the Secretary of State. He needs to explain why he spent Friday afternoon making panicked phone calls to hospitals up and down the country that were missing their A and E target. He did not condemn the use of taxis, which is unacceptable but is happening on his watch because ambulances are trapped at A and E, unable to hand over patients. That means that 999 response times have got worse and large swathes of the country, right now, are without adequate ambulance cover. Is it not time that the Secretary of State was honest with the public and admitted the scale of the crisis facing the NHS this winter, and took action now to prevent it from engulfing other emergency services?

**Mr Hunt:** We will take no lessons in complacency from the party that did so little to sort out excess deaths in hospitals such as Mid Staffordshire, Morecambe bay, Basildon and Colchester, and many other hospitals. The truth is that, compared with when he was Health Secretary, we see nearly 2,000 more people every single

day within the four-hour standard. We are doing much, much better: we have more A and E doctors, and the NHS is doing extremely well. I know that for him it is always politics first and patients second but, for once, he should be responsible and think about the people on the front line.

T4. [901252] **Neil Carmichael** (Stroud) (Con): In contrast to the previous Government's lack of focus, what have this Government done about hospital infection control, with particular reference to data management systems?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Dr Daniel Poulter):** My hon. Friend makes an important point, and I hope that he will be reassured that under the current Government, clostridium difficile and MRSA rates are both about 50% lower than they were under the previous Government. We will continue to make sure that we reduce unacceptable hospital infections.

T2. [901249] **Rosie Cooper** (West Lancashire) (Lab): Following Francis and Keogh, and in creating a more open and accountable NHS, will the Secretary of State, in the spirit of total transparency that he favours, order foundation trusts to publish all their board papers, have exactly the same publishing requirements as non-FTs, and hold all their board meetings in public?

**Mr Jeremy Hunt:** I absolutely encourage that transparency. In fairness, the hon. Lady will accept that this Government have done more to improve transparency in the NHS than any Government have ever done. I would encourage all FTs to be transparent about their board meetings, but they are independent organisations, and we have learned—[*Interruption.*] Well, this was legislation that her Government introduced, and we have learned that it is important to give people autonomy and independence, because they deliver a better service for patients.

T6. [901254] **Dr Julian Huppert** (Cambridge) (LD): Cambridgeshire and Peterborough clinical commissioning group receives one of the lowest amounts of funding per head in the country. The Government's own fair shares formula, which takes account of factors such as population, age and deprivation, says that we should have £46.5 million more each year. I know that it is not his decision, but does the Minister think that the new formula should be implemented?

**Dr Poulter:** My hon. Friend makes some important points about the funding formula. He will know that for the first time this year, it will be set independently by NHS England, and I am sure that it will take on board the points that he has made. He will recognise, however, that there are many other determinants of the funding formula, such as deprivation, which it will want to look at and take into account.

T5. [901253] **Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): The last time I asked the Secretary of State about the £30 million-worth of cuts forced on hospitals in Brighton and Sussex, he said that it was all down to local discretion. Does he admit that behind his rhetoric about protecting the NHS budget there still lies a real

4% cut to the centrally dictated national tariff? Does he acknowledge, therefore, that hard-working nurses and doctors have to do more with less money while patients suffer? Will he reverse those cuts?

**Mr Jeremy Hunt:** Can I explain to the hon. Lady that the reason for the 4% efficiency savings is that, although we protected the budget in real terms, demand for NHS services has gone up by 4% year in, year out, so we need to find those efficiencies? Within that, it is incredibly important that we do not make false economies in relation to the number of nursing staff, which is why last week's announcement on our response to the Francis report will make a big difference, and we have already begun to see more nurses.

T7. [901255] **Jonathan Evans** (Cardiff North) (Con): Given the more than 30% increase in the past five years in the cost to the NHS of prescribing stoma appliances, what action is the Minister taking to promote training for stoma patients in alternative management techniques, such as colostomy irrigation?

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Jane Ellison):** My hon. Friend may know that specialist NHS stoma nurses offer a range of support and advice to help patients adapt to life with a colostomy, and this advice can cover colostomy irrigation, if appropriate. This is supplemented with patient literature on colostomy, which is widely available in the NHS.

**John Cryer** (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): Further to question 15, I understand that responsibility for walk-in centres has been devolved. Why does that necessarily prevent central Government from collecting those figures centrally? It is pretty staggering that a Minister should turn up and say, "Well, the decisions are made locally so we just don't bother finding out."

**Dr Poulter:** That is a question that the hon. Gentleman had much better address to his own Front Bench, who made the decisions to devolve these responsibilities locally. When it comes to commissioning health services, we believe it is down to doctors and nurses, who are now leading clinical commissioning on the front line, to determine which services are appropriate in local areas. There were clearly concerns about the way that urgent care centres had previously been commissioned. That is why so many of them are now being relocated and co-located in accident and emergency departments.

T8. [901256] **Mr John Baron** (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): The Secretary of State is well aware that the all-party group on cancer has campaigned long and hard for the monitoring of one and five-year survival rates as a means of promoting earlier diagnosis, cancer's magic key. Is he confident, though, that the mechanisms are sufficient to ensure that those clinical commissioning groups that are underperforming in relation to their one and five-year survival rates will face concrete action to improve earlier diagnosis, given the recent OECD report suggesting that 10,000 lives a year could be saved in this country if we matched European average survival rates?

**Jane Ellison:** My hon. Friend is right to champion early diagnosis and he has raised these issues in the House on many occasions and with me. Improving

cancer survival is a key priority for this Government. We aim to save an additional 5,000 lives each year by 2014-15. Clinical commissioning groups have a duty on early diagnosis. It is part of their crucial outcomes indicators set, and they will be held to account for that because we cannot deliver those improvements in cancer outcomes without early diagnosis.

**Helen Jones** (Warrington North) (Lab): When the Government decided to slash council budgets and, therefore, adult social services, did they know what effect that would have on hospitals, particularly A and E, and decide to carry on anyway, in which case they are too callous to be running the NHS, or did they not know, in which case they are too stupid to be running the NHS?

**The Minister of State, Department of Health (Norman Lamb):** Throughout this Parliament we have ensured that extra funding has gone into social care to recognise the fact that council budgets have been under strain. The point that I made earlier—that there has been a 50,000 reduction in delayed discharges to social care—demonstrates just how well they are doing under significant pressure.

T9. [901257] **Andrew Stephenson** (Pendle) (Con): What progress have the Government made in driving up standards and transparency in hospitals, social care and general practice?

**Norman Lamb:** The Government's response to the Francis report demonstrated that openness and transparency are critical. As a result of the steps that we have proposed, this will be the most open health system anywhere in the world. That is something we should be very proud of.

**Robert Ffello** (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Lab): I need to press the Minister on this. Does he really expect people to believe that cutting £1.8 billion from local authority care budgets—Stoke-on-Trent has lost a third of its overall funding—will have no impact on the A and E crisis?

**Norman Lamb:** Labour still seems to be in complete denial about the crisis in public finances that we inherited in 2010 owing to failures by the Government whom the hon. Gentleman supported in managing public finances. What we are doing is introducing a £3.8 billion fund to pool health and social care. It amounts to a substantial shift of resources to preventing ill health and it will do exactly what we need to do for social care.

**David Morris** (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): May I thank the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich (Dr Poulter), for recently opening a walk-in centre in Morecambe? May I also set the record straight, because the centre had been closed under the previous Government? Does he not think that it is a shocking indictment that in 2006 the NHS was cut by 9% in the region—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. First, topical questions are supposed to be brief. Secondly, the Minister is not responsible for what happened in 2006. We will have a very brief reply and then perhaps we can move on.

**Dr Poulter:** It was a great pleasure to open the walk-in centre in Morecambe, which was led by local commissioners to meet local clinical need.

**John Healey** (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): The European Union has just agreed a trade deal with Canada that excludes health care, so will the Secretary of State ensure that the proposed EU trade and investment agreement with the US also excludes health care?

**Mr Jeremy Hunt:** We are looking at that very closely. We are big supporters of having a free trade deal between the EU and the US, but we do not want to do anything that would affect the fundamental principles, values and practices of the NHS.

**Stuart Andrew** (Pudsey) (Con): The new review into children's heart units feels very different, and I am pleased that everything is on the table. However, I was concerned to learn that the task and finish group has decided to meet in private. Given the group's importance in decision making, and remembering the experience of the Safe and Sustainable review, does my hon. Friend agree that, in the interests of openness and confidence, the group should meet in public?

**Jane Ellison:** My hon. Friend has been a great and sustained champion of that cause in this House and in speaking up for his local hospital and his constituents. NHS England is clear that all substantive decisions on the new review on congenital heart disease will be made by its full board, which meets in public, so there is no question of a major decision being taken in private. With regard to the sub-groups, including the one he mentioned, their papers and minutes are all published, but for practical reasons none of them meets in public, and that is normal practice. However, all major decisions will be taken in public by the full board.

**Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): The Minister will know that following the neuromuscular services review an explicit commitment was made to fund a care adviser and paediatric consultant post for the west midlands. Is he willing to meet me, patients and representatives of the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign to discuss the service and that commitment?

**Norman Lamb:** I would be happy to do so. I understand that NHS England is scheduling a meeting with Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, which I hope will make some progress in ensuring that there is sufficient co-ordinated care for people with muscular dystrophy in the west midlands.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** I fear that this will almost certainly be the last question. Karen Lumley.

**Karen Lumley** (Redditch) (Con): In the past two weeks I have had to visit accident and emergency units in Redditch and in north Wales, unfortunately with members of my family. Although health is a devolved matter in Wales, will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State invite his counterpart in Wales to spend some time at the great A and E unit in Redditch to see for himself the stark differences between the two services?

**Mr Jeremy Hunt:** I would be delighted to do so. He will see the impact of not cutting the NHS by 8%, which is what Labour has done in Wales, which means that in this country we are hitting our A and E targets and in Wales they have not hit them since 2009.

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry to disappoint colleagues, but we must move on. Demand usually outstrips supply.

## Electronic Patient Records (Continuity of Care)

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

12.33 pm

**George Freeman** (Mid Norfolk) (Con): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to allow patients access to and ownership of their own electronic patient records; to require medical professionals to maintain and share electronic patient records as part of individual care plans; and for connected purposes.

Mr Speaker, do you know your NHS health number? How many colleagues in the House know theirs? I ask because it is an important little number, for reasons I want to expand on, a number that opens a door on to a whole new world. It is the world of personalised medicine and patient empowerment.

As you are aware, Mr Speaker, from your support for medical research charities, medicine and health care are being transformed by an explosion of new technologies around the world. We are living through a biomedical revolution every bit as profound as the agricultural and industrial revolutions that came before us. Health care is moving from being something done to us by Government to something we do for ourselves. It is a revolution that is transforming the traditional world of drug discovery, in which I worked before coming to the House.

The UK is pioneering a new model of patient-centred biomedical research. Across the world, the life sciences industry is radically reconstituting itself around what everybody is coming to recognise as the most important asset of all—the ability to work with patients and their clinicians, and with biopsies, patient records and data, to design a new generation of targeted and personalised medicines.

This model of targeted medicine unlocks the biggest prize of all—a new model of reimbursement where, instead of sitting in smoke-filled rooms every five years to negotiate prices for one-size-fits-all blockbuster drugs which neither we nor the industry can afford, we get to be the country getting drugs at reduced prices, reflecting the value we have delivered through our NHS infrastructure. That is why the Prime Minister's leadership in grasping this opportunity through the life sciences strategy matters so much, as do the vision and the measures contained within it—the £1 billion a year investment in the National Institute for Health Research, the catalyst fund, the patent box, the NHS open data initiatives, and now the £100 million Genomics England project. Ultimately, linking clinical and genomic data and using the power of modern computing provides the opportunity to turn the NHS from a major driver of the structural deficit into a major driver of growth in life sciences and a catalyst for public sector innovation, reform, and patient and citizen empowerment. This really matters.

But there is a problem—in fact, a series of problems. The data are not yet integrated. Connecting for Health was a disaster. The landscape is getting better, but it is still very patchy. The best GPs are streets ahead of the worst. Hospital records are very fragmented. There is almost no proper integration of patient records with the care system. Electronic patient records are not yet mainstream in our health or care sectors for patients nor clinicians. This matters, not just because it is holding

back our ability to lead in research, but here today for patients too. We need only look at Mid Staffs and Winterbourne View to see that our inability properly to monitor patient treatment and care is having a profound impact on patients.

The Bill has two simple provisions. Clause 1 would provide for ownership of and access to our patient records and health data to empower patients in everyday health care and in research. Clause 2 would create a new statutory duty of care on NHS professionals to use and update the information and to ensure that the next professional on the patient's care pathway is using properly maintained patient records.

The Bill is intended to have a number of key effects. First, it would reassure patients by establishing in law that ultimate control lies with us, the patients—that these are our data and we are clear that they belong to and are controlled by us, not the Government or the European Union, whose latest data protection laws risk holding back this revolution in medicine. We need to raise awareness of the power of patients to access our own data. We need to change the culture inside the NHS so that patients who request data are not sneered at or resented as troublesome but treated as enlightened health care citizens taking an interest in and responsibility for our own or our loved ones' life prospects.

The Bill would allow us to log on and check our medical histories, including prescriptions, dates of when we saw who, and key medical information—or to check for a loved one using their NHS number—and to check and submit any changes or additional information, any side effects or symptoms, and our compliance. This is crucial information lying at the heart of modern medicine. We could use our EPR—electronic patient record—to plug into the exploding world of online health apps, which are transforming health care with devices such as in-house diagnostics and watchstrap heart and blood pressure monitors that can automatically upload data to our electronic health record and transmit it to our clinician. We could use the EPR to give permission for our data to be used in any NHS medical research and/or to enter clinical trials. Ninety-nine per cent. of patients say, when asked, that they would not only be happy for their data to be used in trials but are amazed that they are not already.

On the health care side, the Bill would mean that every health care professional would have a duty to use the EPR system and keep our records up to date, and to record treatment and ensure that the records are passed on to the next person on the care pathway. Thus the EPR becomes not a boring chore but the central tool for ensuring continuity of care. If a person or their loved one, or a constituent, passes from GP to hospital to community care sector and back again, as do an increasing number of elderly patients, in particular, it would be easy for them, their loved ones and their doctors and carers instantly to track and monitor their status, condition, diagnosis and treatment, and whose care they are in.

In a few years' time it will be unimaginable to think of health records and patient monitoring as it is today, with paper records, cardboard boxes, partial digitisation, fragmentation across hospitals, and community care a black hole. It will be as unimaginable as the world of banking before electronic and telephone banking empowered millions of banking consumers to take more

responsibility for their finances. The same revolution is happening in health care. Of course, there are a number of issues, challenges and things to get right as regards the sharing of data. I am aware of those and I am working on them with opinion leaders as we draft the Bill to make sure that we get this right.

Without the measures in this Bill there is a clear and present risk of the UK—far from leading in this world of personalised medicine; far from winning in the global race for investment; and far from the NHS pioneering new models of health care and productivity and patient empowerment—becoming a backwater and talking the talk but not walking the walk.

In the past two weeks since I made public the Bill's aims, it has already secured extraordinary support from a wide range of key opinion leaders in the field, including more than 50 medical research charities, leading professor clinicians at the front line of UK research medicine, the NHS data commissioner and the Ethical Medicines Industry Group, which is not big pharma, but small, emerging companies pioneering the new treatments and diagnostics that are all too often locked out by our current system of NHS innovation rationing.

Most important of all is the support of patients, whose data, NHS and health care we are discussing. Patients have had to be patient for too long. They include Graham Hampson Silk, who has told me that this revolution in research-based medicine saved his life. Ten years ago, he was given six months to live—yes, Members heard me correctly. His life has been saved by the team of clinicians and NHS staff at Birmingham royal infirmary and the Institute of Translational Medicine, led by the inspiring Professor Charlie Craddock, who is here today. He found a drug in development in the USA, raised money through local fundraising to fund a trial for Graham and is now pioneering personalised cancer treatment here in the NHS with NHS patients and their data, so that every patient becomes a research patient, helping prevent the next generation from suffering unnecessarily.

I commend this Bill to the House.

*Question put and agreed to*

*Ordered,*

That George Freeman, Charlotte Leslie, Dr Phillip Lee, Mr Dominic Raab, Jesse Norman, Geoffrey Clifton-Brown, Damian Hinds, Dr Sarah Wollaston, Nick de Bois, John Glen, Dr Julian Huppert, Rosie Cooper and Natascha Engel present the Bill.

George Freeman accordingly presented the Bill.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 17 January 2014, and to be printed (Bill 134).*

## Gambling (Licensing and Advertising) Bill

*Consideration of Bill, not amended in the Public Bill Committee.*

### New Clause 1

#### FACILITIES FOR REMOTE GAMBLING

'(1) Section 235 of the Gambling Act 2005 (gaming machines) is amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (2)—

(a) in subparagraph (h)(ii), leave out “and”, and

(b) after paragraph (i) insert—

“(j) a machine is not a gaming machine by reason only of the fact that it is remote gambling equipment (within the meaning of section 36) which is made available for use in a casino.”.

(3) After subsection (4) insert—

“(4A) The Secretary of State may by regulations provide for the maximum number of machines to which subsection (2)(j) applies that may be made available for use in a casino.”.—(*James Duddridge.*)

*This amendment clarifies that a remote gambling terminal provided in a casino is not a gaming machine and provides for the Secretary of State to be able to make regulations setting the maximum number of such machines which may be made available in a casino.*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

12.42 pm

**James Duddridge** (Rochford and Southend East) (Con): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Mr Speaker:** With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

New clause 2—*Licence compliance, stipulations and control*—

'(1) Notwithstanding the regulation of spread betting by the Financial Conduct Authority, operators licensed for remote gambling by the Gambling Commission shall, to ensure their continued fitness as such, be obliged to comply with Condition 15.1 of the Consolidated Licensing Conditions and Codes of Practice 2011 (or its equivalent from time to time) in relation to all areas of their gambling operations, including spread betting and any other operations not within the jurisdiction of the Gambling Commission.

(2) In the event of any breach of subsection (1) which the Gambling Commission believes calls into question the fitness of the relevant operator, the Gambling Commission may require the operator to provide an explanation of such breach within one month and may, if not satisfied with such explanation, revoke the operator's licence.'

New clause 3—*Kite mark*—

'(1) The Gambling Commission shall require all licensed online gambling operators to display a standard kite mark on all their promotional materials, websites and webpages, to indicate that such operators are licensed by the United Kingdom Gambling Commission.

(2) The Gambling Commission shall design and determine the form of the kite mark, which will provide a link to information and advice on its website for customers.'

New clause 4—*Remote gambling licensees and customer protection*—

'Holders of licences for remote gambling operations shall be required to participate in a programme of research into and treatment of problem gambling in accordance with arrangements to be determined by the Secretary of State in regulations in the

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form of a statutory instrument approved by both Houses of Parliament, and a levy for that purpose may be imposed under section 123 of the Gambling Act 2005.’

*New clause 5—Reporting of suspicious activities and power to obtain financial information—*

‘(1) In order to promote consistency of sports betting regulation, regulation of remote sports spread betting operators and of all sports spread betting as defined herein shall be transferred from the Financial Conduct Authority to the Gambling Commission, which shall thereupon—

- (a) have power to require and obtain from its licensees including spread betting organisations information concerning actual or potential suspicious activities in relation to sporting events, and to share such information with the relevant sports governing body;
- (b) have power to require and obtain information on financial transactions by licensees which it reasonably suspects might be germane to the investigation of suspicious betting activity, money laundering or other criminal activities, or the protection of vulnerable individuals.’

(2) “Sports spread betting” shall for this purpose mean spread bets in relation to sports as governed under Schedule 6, Part 3 of the Gambling Act 2005.’

*New clause 6—Consultation on self-exclusion—*

‘Having regard to the significance of the remote gambling market in relation to potential problem gambling, the Secretary of State shall consult on a system of standardised self-exclusion for the gambling industry, to include means of addressing exclusion from remote gambling access in the context of other gambling media.’

*New clause 7—Dormant accounts—*

‘(1) The Secretary of State shall consult on appropriate ways to require licensed remote gambling operators to disclose (as a condition of their licence) the amounts held by them by way of—

- (a) winnings of UK customers unclaimed for a period of more than one calendar year; and
- (b) sums in dormant accounts of UK customers.

(2) A dormant account shall for this purpose be an account which has been inactive for at least one calendar year.’

*New clause 8—Discussions between gambling regulatory bodies and sports governing bodies—*

‘The Secretary of State shall have power to make regulations, to be laid before and approved by both Houses of Parliament, stipulating the manner and time of regular meetings between any and all of the gambling regulatory bodies and sports governing bodies.’

*New clause 9—Advertising watershed—*

‘The Secretary of State shall consult on the current regulatory position concerning advertising of gambling before the nine o’clock watershed and shall lay before the House a report of the findings not later than the final sitting day before the summer recess 2014.’

*New clause 10—Application of the horserace betting levy—*

‘In article 2 of the Gambling Act 2005 (Horserace Betting Levy) Order 2007/2159, for paragraph 3 substitute—

“(3) Subject to paragraph (4), expressions used in sections 24 to 30 of the 1963 Act shall have the meanings given to them by section 55(1) of the 1963 Act (as that provision had effect immediately before 1st September 2007).

(4) For the purposes of paragraph (3), the definition of ‘bookmaker’ as set out in section 55(1) of the 1963 Act (as that provision had effect immediately before 1st September 2007) shall be modified by—

- (a) replacing the comma at the end of paragraph (b) of the definition of ‘bookmaker’ with ‘; or’; and

(b) after paragraph (b) of the definition of ‘bookmaker’ inserting—

‘(c) holds a remote gambling operating licence under the Gambling Act 2005 which authorises that person to provide facilities for betting;’.’.

*New clause 11—Power to extend the horserace betting levy to overseas bookmakers—*

‘(1) The Secretary of State may by regulations amend any provision or provisions of the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (c 2) (at a time when the provisions listed in section 15(1)(a) to (c) of the Horserace Betting and Olympic Lottery Act 2004 (horserace betting levy system) have not been entirely repealed by order under that section), the Gambling Act 2005 and/or the Gambling Act 2005 (Horserace Betting Levy) Order 2007/2159 for the purposes of ensuring that each person who holds a remote gambling operating licence under the Gambling Act 2005 which authorises that person to provide facilities for betting shall be—

- (a) liable to pay the bookmakers’ levy payable under section 27 of the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (c 2); and
- (b) subject to the provisions of section 120 of the Gambling Act 2005 (as modified in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005 (Horserace Betting Levy) Order 2007/2159) if that person is in default of such bookmakers’ levy.

(2) Regulations under this section must be made by statutory instrument.

(3) A statutory instrument containing regulations under this section may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.’

*New clause 12—Financial blocking—*

‘After section 122 (information) of the Gambling Act 2005, insert—

“122A (1) The Commission may give a direction under this section if the Commission reasonably believes that a person or organisation who does not hold a remote gambling licence is providing remote gambling services in the United Kingdom.

(2) A direction under this section may be given to—

- (a) a particular person operating in the financial sector;
- (b) any description of persons operating in that sector; or
- (c) all persons operating in that sector.

(3) A direction under section (1) may require a relevant person not to enter into or continue to participate in—

- (a) a specified transaction or business relationship with a designated person;
- (b) a specified description of transactions or business relationships with a designated person; or
- (c) any transaction or business relationship with a designated person.

(4) Any reference in this section to a person operating in the financial sector is to a credit or financial institution that—

- (a) is a United Kingdom person; or
- (b) is acting in the course of a business carried on by it in the United Kingdom.

(5) In this section—

“credit institution” and “financial institution” have the meanings given in Schedule 7, paragraph 5 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008;

“designated person”, in relation to a direction, means any of the persons in relation to whom the direction is given;

“relevant person”, in relation to a direction, means any of the persons to whom the direction is given.”.’.

*This New Clause allows the Gambling Commission to prevent a person or organisation without a remote gambling licence from accessing the UK market by financial transaction blocking.*

New clause 13—*Comparison of codes and technical standards in white listed jurisdiction with UK*—

“(1) The Commission shall review the social responsibility provisions of the codes of practice and technical standards of—

- (a) EEA states; and
- (b) the places to which section 331(2) of the Gambling Act 2005 has applied.

(2) The Commission shall amend the codes of practice and technical standards issued in pursuance of section 24(2) of the Gambling Act 2005 so that the code and technical standards reflects the strongest social responsibility provisions identified in subsection (1).

(3) In this section “social responsibility provisions” means a provision of the code identified as—

- (a) ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way.
- (b) protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling; and
- (c) making assistance available to persons who are or may be affected by problems related to gambling.”.

*This New Clause requires the Gambling Commission to review the codes of white listed jurisdictions to establish which has the most comprehensive and sophisticated provisions to protect problem gamblers and to ensure that the UK codes and technical standards provide as robust standards for consumer protection.*

New clause 14—*Self-exclusion for remote gambling*—

‘After section 89(1) (remote operating licence) of the Gambling Act 2005, insert—

“( ) The Commission shall hold a list of persons who have registered to be excluded from remote gambling.

( ) It shall be a condition of a remote operating licence that an operator must exclude any person who has registered for self-exclusion with the Commission.”.’.

*This New Clause would give the power for the Commission to hold a list of those who wish to self-exclude. It would be a condition of a remote operating licence that individuals on the list must be excluded.*

Amendment 1, in clause 1, page 2, line 11, at end add—

“(8) The Secretary of State shall publish a report to Parliament one year after the commencement of this Act, and annually thereafter, on the enforcement activity of the Gambling Commission in respect of unlicensed operators attempting to provide facilities for gambling in the UK.”.

**James Duddridge:** New clause 1 seeks to allow online as well as offline gambling in casinos. In other words, it seeks for casinos to be able to provide people with the type of gambling offered by smartphones and tablets.

I think in all candour that the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has an old-fashioned view of the world—one that was once true and where there was a clear division between on and offline gaming. I suspect there is also an element of divide and rule involved. The gambling industry is a powerful body and it would be attractive to regulate both forms of gaming separately and get them to compete actively against one another.

The reality is different: online and physical provision of services have been merged in many industries. It is possible to order a product online from Asda and then collect it from a bricks-and-mortar store. It is possible to visit the clothing department at Marks & Spencer and order boxer shorts online for delivery. The on and offline worlds have merged in a number of environments. I hope that my examples are not an advertisement for those two institutions.

**Mr Speaker:** I would not accuse the hon. Gentleman of advertising for one moment. It is always of great interest to the House to learn about his personal arrangements.

**James Duddridge:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. For a moment, I feared that I was getting my knickers in a twist.

My constituency of Rochford and Southend East is home to three, soon to be four, casinos, which are bricks-and-mortar or physical ones. Such establishments employ thousands of people nationally. Locally, 277 people are employed in the existing three casinos, which will go up to about 400 when the fourth casino is launched. About 80% of the staff have been issued with personal licences by the Gambling Commission, while 100% of them receive annual training in responsible gambling, so they are well qualified.

Reports, such as an excellent one from GamCare, have outlined the details of the significant work that the industry is already doing, with much greater protection of vulnerable individuals being provided in casinos than online. I do not necessarily want more gambling, but I want more of the existing gambling to take place in such licensed and heavily regulated environments.

I am glad to say that new clause 1 is supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Maldon (Mr Whittingdale), the Chair of the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport, who did an awful lot of work with the Committee on pre-legislative scrutiny of the Bill; by the hon. Member for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe), an ex-Minister with responsibility for gambling, who is well respected, particularly in relation to gambling problems and the care of those with such problems; by the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Mr Leech), which shows that all parties support this cross-party issue; and by my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Philip Davies), who is a guru of all things gambling.

Bricks-and-mortar casinos are highly regulated. They are at the top of the regulatory pyramid in gambling. They are one of the safest places to be in Southend because of the security; they are certainly one of the safest places in which to gamble. I therefore find it hard to understand why casinos are restricted from offering a full range of products to their customers.

A bricks-and-mortar casino can advertise online products inside its premises, but it is not allowed to provide a remote gaming machine for customers to play inside its walls. That anomaly certainly needs to be corrected. Bizarrely, if it had a small area outside, customers—rather like having a fag at the back of a pub—would be able to gamble there, but they cannot do so inside.

**Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con):** Given that the Government have told us that the Bill’s whole rationale is to protect gamblers, can my hon. Friend think of any reason why they would not want to support his new clause?

**James Duddridge:** In an ideal world, I would hope that the Government supported new clause 1, or tabled a suitable amendment in the House of Lords or, in the broadest sense, took note. The argument against the new clause is one made against several others in the group, which is that it will add complexity when, for good reason, we want to move quickly. New clause 1 is quite tightly worded, however, and for a little complexity, it would give a lot of benefit.

[James Duddridge]

Some people have been critical of my speech on Second Reading and my contributions in Committee, fearful that I was promoting irresponsible gambling, but that is a lazy and incorrect interpretation of my view and new clause. I am not attempting to liberalise regulation within casinos—that could not be further from the truth—but to get a level playing field to allow online customers to play online games in casinos with proper protection.

**Mr John Leech** (Manchester, Withington) (LD): I pay tribute to the hon. Gentleman for tabling the new clause. Does he agree that making online gambling available in casinos is far better than people spending hours and hours in the completely uncontrolled environment of their own bedrooms?

**James Duddridge:** I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman, who makes his point eloquently. That arrangement is better for those who have a developing problem, because they have the support of professionals who are there to monitor their behaviour. There is nothing to stop someone sitting in their bedroom and gambling away a fortune while drinking half a bottle of Scotch, but that would not be allowed at a roulette table. Under my new clause, someone gambling in that way would be stopped by staff within the casino, so the hon. Gentleman's point is absolutely true.

**Paul Farrelly** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): We have tried to avoid complexity in the Bill because there is the prospect that it might be challenged. However, it will not be challenged on the grounds that it clears up a simple anomaly, which is what new clause 1 would do. I thoroughly support the new clause. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is odd that we have gone through extensive pre-legislative scrutiny, but the Government have ignored this central recommendation of the Culture, Media and Sport Committee?

**James Duddridge:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman. It is disappointing that more has not been taken on from the pre-legislative scrutiny. Otherwise, what is the point of having it? However, the Government have been right to resist the obvious temptation to tag too many things on to the Bill. There is a balancing act to be done, but some kind of enabling legislation in the Bill would allow the tinkering to take place later and with more consultation.

Customers should be allowed to choose what they want to do and where they want to do it. Customer choice is moving in favour of gambling in casinos and the legislation should not stand in the way of that. In many ways, the new clause is deregulatory.

**Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a powerful case. I hope that the Minister listens to it sympathetically. His experience corresponds to my experience of speaking to organisations in my constituency that deal with the problem of gambling. It is much better if gambling happens in a regulated environment. Does he agree that his approach is consistent with the approach that the Government have adopted in promoting drinking in pubs because they are a safe and controlled environment in which to indulge in a

practice that is lawful, but that can be abused? It is better to do such things in a controlled environment than at home.

**James Duddridge:** My hon. Friend draws a strong parallel and teases out the point that if something is done in the open in society, there is greater protection than if it is done in private, whether it be drinking or gambling.

The Minister has been exceptional in listening to the concerns that have been raised. There has been a strong dialogue with the industry and the Culture, Media and Sport Committee. I hope that she reflects on the debate and is able to assist us. The ideal response would be for her to say that new clause 1 is absolutely perfect and fabulously crafted, that there are no errors whatsoever, and that the Government are desperately thankful for all our work and will accept it immediately. I suspect that that will not be the case. It is not normal practice for a lowly Back Bencher to craft a perfect amendment that takes all points into consideration.

If the new clause is flawed, perhaps the Minister will consider bringing forward a consultation on the issue and setting a time scale for it. It would be unsatisfactory if consultation was offered, but it did not happen for several years and the report sat on the shelf for several months afterwards. In addition to considering a timed consultation, will she go into a bit more detail about what will happen if the consultation shows that the substance of the new clause is needed? We will not have another gambling Bill in the next couple of years, so if primary legislation is required, it needs to go into this Bill. That might not happen today, but it could happen in another place. There is significant concern in the industry that there is no mechanism for making this change through secondary legislation if a consultation shows that it is the right change to make.

I look forward to hearing the Minister's comments. I will be happy if she restricts herself to commenting on the Bill, rather than my shopping habits. I thank hon. Members for their help in drafting the clause and for their support.

**Mr Gerry Sutcliffe** (Bradford South) (Lab): I will speak in support of new clause 1 and other new clauses in the group. I refer colleagues to my declaration in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, which states that I am a trustee of the Responsible Gambling Trust.

I support new clause 1 for the reasons set out so ably by the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge). The Culture, Media and Sport Committee discovered that the Gambling Act 2005 had been the first piece of legislation on this matter for more than 40 years. It was controversial to say the least. The provisions on the casino industry were messed about with a bit in the final stages of the passage of that Act. I have always felt that there has been a problem with how casinos have been treated. The former Minister for Sport, Richard Caborn, admitted in evidence to the Select Committee that we did not get everything quite right in the casino legislation. That was a brave thing for him to say, but he was right.

As the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend East has said, we are unlikely to see another gambling Bill in the next two years or even longer. It has taken

three years for this small Bill to reach this stage. Although I accept that the Government do not want to widen the Bill's remit, it is important to put things right that have been wrong. The Government want better regulation and to help businesses to create more jobs. The hon. Gentleman was right to point to the impact that the casino industry and the gambling industry in general have on the economy and on jobs. Gambling is an important industry, but it attracts unwelcome attention from the likes of the *Daily Mail*, who do not want to see people enjoying gambling. Gambling is an integral part of our way of life. One need only look at the people who bet on the national lottery and at how people enjoy horse racing and sports betting in general.

New clause 1 sets out what needs to happen in casinos. Casinos are the most regulated and, I would argue, the safest environments in the gambling sector. I hope that the all-party support for new clause 1 will give the Minister some cover in arguing elsewhere that it is important to put this anomaly right. The hon. Member for Rochford and Southend East said that we might not press the new clause today, but there is a strong feeling among Members that something must happen during the passage of the Bill. That is a strong message for the Minister. I hope that she will hear it and support the proposal. We look forward to hearing what she has to say about the timetable of meetings that she will have with the casino industry and what she intends to do during the passage of the Bill through the other place.

I will briefly mention some of the other new clauses. The purpose of the Bill is consumer protection. I fully agree that it is important that there is consumer protection. There is a school of thought which says that the Bill is about raising tax revenues. I hope that that is not the case. I know that the hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies) will speak about tax revenues and what would be a fair rate of tax.

There is an important relationship between sports and the betting industry. That is why I support new clause 5, which was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Clive Efford). It relates to the reporting of suspicious activity and the power to obtain financial information. The relationship between sports and gambling is unique. The problem is that there is no sports betting right. Sports governing bodies have no control over the bets that gambling companies offer on their sports. For instance, in football, there might be betting on the number of times the ball goes out of play or on the number of corners. The concern is that such bets can lead to match fixing and betting irregularities. The Government need to consider this issue, with regard to the scandals in cricket and football that have emerged in recent months and years.

New clause 7 relates to dormant accounts. The Minister heard people's feelings on that matter loudly and clearly in Committee. There is money on the table that could go into sports or into research, education and treatment. I look forward to hearing what she has to say about that.

I also wish to consider the advertising watershed. I was the Minister responsible for introducing the clauses on advertising and advice about betting and gambling, and our view was that such advertising would be shown around horse races and sports matches. We did not envisage so much advertising for sports betting before the 9 pm watershed. As I said in Committee, I am a big

fan of Ray Winstone, but he almost pressures people into betting in those adverts. There is a need to consider advertising in terms of the watershed and gambling, as in new clause 9.

1 pm

Perhaps the most important provisions for the sector are new clauses 10 and 11 on the horserace betting levy, and the British Horseracing Authority is keen to ensure that we address that issue in the Bill. I was impressed that both sides of the equation—the betting and horse racing industries—came together, and we have a new four-year arrangement on the levy. However, when the Bill is enacted it will be a nonsense if people offshore do not contribute to that levy, and it is important to pursue that issue. Now that there is an agreement for the next four years, there will be a tendency to put the issue to one side, but I think that would be a grave mistake for both racing and betting. We have an important opportunity to try and put things right, and those who are offshore should certainly contribute to the horserace betting levy when they come onshore. That levy maintains support for the horse racing industry, which is important to many Members of the House, whether they have a race course in their constituency or are involved in promoting horse racing through a variety of support mechanisms.

The all-party racing and bloodstock industries group recently visited Wincanton and looked at the yard of Paul Nicholls, a race horse trainer. We saw the impact of racing on that local community. Not only were the horses being trained by a well-respected trainer, there were other jobs supporting the horse, and veterinary surgeons. That is why the horserace betting levy is important and should be supported.

I have experienced the frustrations in negotiations between both sides, but I urge the Minister to consider the issue because it is important for the industry to move forward in the knowledge that it will get the money it deserves. As I understand it, even if the Bill is enacted, contributors will not contribute until the end of December next year, so there is an opportunity to ensure that the levy is updated and supported by those who need to contribute, to ensure that racing can move forward.

I think this is an excellent Bill and we considered each clause appropriately in Committee. There is cross-party support for new clause 1, and I hope the Minister will accommodate requests for that in support of the casino industry. As the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend East said, this is not about promoting more gambling or being irresponsible. The industry takes its responsibilities seriously, which is why more than £5 million has been raised for the Responsible Gambling Trust for research, education and treatment. It is important that such work continues, but those in the industry are getting frustrated by regulations that seem to hit them hardest, even though they are perhaps the ones that protect gamblers the most. I hope we can support the new clauses before the House, and I wish the Bill well.

**Philip Davies** (Shipley) (Con): As ever, it is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe) who, as people have said, is an expert in these matters and did an excellent job when he was the Minister responsible for them. I agree with his comments about new clause 1, although I think he was

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characteristically—and perhaps unnecessarily—generous to his Front-Bench colleague, the hon. Member for Eltham (Clive Efford), about his new clauses.

Before I go any further I refer Members to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge) on new clause 1, which is absolutely spot on and follows the conclusions we reached in the Culture, Media and Sport Committee during pre-legislative scrutiny. His point about the clear anomaly in this area is right. It seems ridiculous that somebody can play on a tablet or remote machine three paces outside the door of a casino, but is not allowed to do so three paces inside that door. It is about time legislation in that area caught up with modern technology. We cannot allow the law to be so behind the times; some of us may be considered luddites, but the law should not exist to protect luddites in such a way.

**Paul Farrelly:** Before the hon. Gentleman goes on to being under-generous to the shadow Minister, does he agree that throughout this debate, the Government have yet to give a reason for why they are rejecting a provision such as new clause 1 to remove that anomaly?

**Philip Davies:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman; he is absolutely right and I am sure we all look forward to the Minister's response. I hope we can look forward to hearing her accept new clause 1. It seems that Governments often refuse to accept amendments and new clauses simply because they have been tabled by a Back Bencher rather than the Government. It would be to the Government's credit if they were to accept that the new clause is sensible and has cross-party support and support from the Select Committee that scrutinised it. The new clause does not add a great deal of complexity to the Bill; it is fairly straightforward and would be easy to implement. When the Minister responds, I hope she will say that she has listened to the argument and realised that we should pursue this sensible measure.

**Mr Nuttall:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way on that point. Clause 5 provides that

“Section 1(4) to (7)...come into force on the day on which this Act is passed...The other provisions of this Act come into force” on whatever day the Secretary of State determines by way of statutory instrument. Does my hon. Friend agree that there is therefore no reason why the new clause could not be inserted in the Bill and the Secretary of State could trigger it at some point in the future?

**Philip Davies:** My hon. Friend is right and if the Minister felt it necessary, she would be able to do that. The other point that has been well made is that we are not likely to have another suitable Bill in the foreseeable future to deal with this issue. To be honest, it would be unacceptable for the Minister simply to give the House some warm words and agree to look into it at some future date, as that would, in effect, be kicking it into the long grass for an indeterminate time. If we are going to implement this measure, as seems sensible, there seems to be no reason why we cannot just crack on and do it now. I support new clause 1, and if the Minister will not accept it, I encourage my hon. Friend the Member

for Rochford and Southend East to push it to a vote. I think he will see that the new clause finds a great deal of favour in the House, although I hope it does not come to that.

The next group of new clauses are tabled by the hon. Member for Eltham and I consider them a combination of the unnecessary and the undesirable. I will attempt a quick canter round the course for each of them. I do not intend to delay proceedings for long, but it is worth setting out why I would not agree to any of the new clauses, and why I hope that the Minister will follow suit.

New clause 2 on licence, compliance, stipulations and control of spread betting seems completely unnecessary, and I hope the Minister will reject it on those grounds. New clause 3 has an interesting idea about ensuring there is a kitemark on all licensed and legitimate websites. I understand why some might think that idea superficially attractive, but my view is that the new clause is completely pointless. A kitemark does not attract people to a particular gambling website or company—it tends to be the odds being offered that attract people to those websites or companies. I admire the naivety, I suppose, of the shadow Minister who thinks that if we put a kitemark on the bottom of every licensed website, every punter in the country will ignore all better odds available and just bet blindly because of the kitemark. It would be nice if the world worked that way, but that is cloud cuckoo land. It is completely naive and unnecessary.

New clause 4 concerns remote gambling licensees, customer protection and making sure licensees participate in a programme of research into and treatment of problem gambling. I do not have a problem with that; it is quite desirable that all of those companies participate in providing finance to research problem gambling and to provide treatment. The issue with the new clause putting that into statute is that it is already happening on a voluntary basis by the gambling industry. The hon. Member for Bradford South knows all about this because he was involved in it.

**Mr Sutcliffe:** The hon. Gentleman is quite right that this would provide statutory underpinning. One of the difficulties is that it is a voluntary arrangement. A large percentage of the companies contribute, but there are a few notable exceptions. One thing that might flow from the clause is that the Minister might be able to support the Responsible Gambling Trust in getting those companies that do not contribute to do so.

**Philip Davies:** I take his point and, as Minister, he basically got the gambling companies to agree to the voluntary levy, which raises around £5 million or £6 million a year. It was he who said that if they did not do it voluntarily, he would legislate to ensure that they did it. How voluntary that would have made it is a different matter; we can debate the definition of “voluntary”. The upshot is that the companies are doing this and are doing so on a voluntary basis. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right; not every single gambling company contributes and it relies on some of the larger ones—such as Ladbrokes and William Hill—to make what might be considered a disproportionate contribution to raise the required amount. But the money that is being requested is being raised each year. We do not really need new clause 4; the money that people are seeking, properly, for the treatment of problem gamblers and

research into problem gambling is already being raised. New clause 4 is unnecessary. If the money were not being raised, I could see the point.

**Dame Angela Watkinson** (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that the percentage of gamblers who could be called “problem gamblers” is very small? It is important that they have the proper treatment and that establishments are aware of the problem and have active policies. However, the vast majority of gamblers are controlled.

**Philip Davies:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The proportion of gamblers who are problem gamblers is 0.9 per cent, according to the latest research. Obviously it is right that anyone who has an addiction to or a problem with gambling has treatment made available to them to try to help them. That is what we should be focusing on and the gambling industry is contributing to ensure that that is the case. It is a small number, but that does not detract from the problems it causes for those individuals and their families. That is why it is right that that finance is provided.

The gambling industry provides finance to people who have a problem with gambling in a way that other industries do not; for example, for alcoholics or for people with an addiction to tobacco. I do not notice the cream cake industry producing a voluntary levy to deal with the problem of obesity. The gambling industry, to its credit, does make this contribution and we should recognise that it does, even if it is for a small number of people.

New clause 5 is about the reporting of suspicious activities and the power to obtain financial information by the Gambling Commission. I do not think that this is necessary. As far as I am aware from all the evidence that we have had from the Gambling Commission, it gets the information that it requests from gambling companies, so I do not see that there is a problem. It seems to be a solution looking for a problem. I have not heard evidence from the Gambling Commission that it has not been able to access the relevant information from the people that it regulates and licences.

On the issue of match fixing and sports betting there are two points that make the new clause undesirable as well. The first thing, which never comes out, is that bookmakers are the victims of match fixing, not the cause of it. It is usually people involved in a particular sport, or referees or umpires, who conspire in effect to defraud bookmakers. On the principle that the polluter should pay, it seems bizarre to say that the bookmakers are being ripped off by people involved in sport and that we should therefore penalise bookmakers for being the victims of the crime. The people who should be paying to clean up their sports are the sports. It is the participants, umpires or referees who are causing the problem and causing a cost to the bookmaker.

**Mr Sutcliffe:** I am with the hon. Gentleman most of the way, but part of the problem is that the sports are not in control of the types of bet that can be put on their sport. That is how players—particularly young players—can be corrupted. There is an issue in terms of the relationship between betting and sports and it would be better if the sports had control over what could be bet upon.

**Philip Davies:** I never like disagreeing with the hon. Gentleman, not least because he is a constituent of mine and it might jeopardise my chances of him voting for me at the next election. But to say that bookmakers offer products that therefore encourage sportsmen to fix matches is like blaming retailers for shoplifting by putting products on display. It is a bizarre way of looking at things and it is certainly not the way I look at it.

The other point on match fixing—for example, all the issues recently in cricket, with no-balls being bowled and issues related to the Pakistan team—is that much of the money gambled was not with legitimate bookmakers in the UK but with illegal bookmakers in the far east. All the proposals in new clause 5 will not make a blind bit of difference because much of the activity is not taking place with legitimate bookmakers. It is completely pointless and I hope for that reason the Minister will reject it.

New clauses 6, 7 and 9 in effect ask the Government to legislate to be able to consult on something. It seems bizarre that we would put into law a requirement on the Government to consult. The Government can consult on all these issues without legislating to do so. I suspect that, as all these issues are important, the Minister will be consulting the industry and others on an ongoing basis. It is rather bizarre that these new clauses should seek to put into a Bill a statutory obligation for the Minister to consult. If we started going down that line and placing in Acts of Parliament requirements on Ministers to consult, legislation would look very bizarre in this place. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will reject all those new clauses, too.

It is sad that the Labour party is once again resorting to its nanny state instincts on the advertising watershed. This ludicrous idea of a watershed for advertising is a complete nonsense particularly when children are not even allowed to gamble. If the issue is that children are gambling, the best way to deal with it is to enforce the existing law that prevents children from gambling. I am wholly opposed to children gambling. I am one of the few Members who believe that it is wrong for 16-year-olds to play the national lottery; I think it should not be played until people are 18, which is the right age for people to be allowed to gamble. If the issue that the hon. Member for Eltham is trying to address is one of children gambling, we should make sure that the law as it stands is enforced.

I have heard the argument that we need to deal with “marketing grooming”—the idea that people are subjected to adverts when they are very young, so that when they become adults, they are addicted to the product before they have even started. I used to work in marketing for Asda, and the idea that any company would spend its marketing budget to try to get a new customer eight years down the line is one of the most ridiculous things I have ever heard in my entire life. I would like to meet anyone working for any marketing department that has that as its strategy, as I have never encountered any such person. Most business organisations cannot see beyond the end of their nose; they certainly cannot see beyond the end of the financial year in which they are operating. The idea that they would use marketing on TV to boost their sales in five or eight years’ time is absolutely ridiculous. New clause 9, therefore, is not only unnecessary; it is completely ridiculous.

[Philip Davies]

New clauses 10 and 11 relate to a horse racing levy. I spoke on that on Second Reading, but given that most of my speeches—or probably all of them—are not memorable, I will briefly repeat for the benefit of Members why I think these provisions are unnecessary. First, I think the Minister will confirm that extending the Bill to include a levy would introduce a legal problem, or certainly a complication, that might scupper the Bill in its entirety. It is not worth risking the Bill as a whole to introduce the levy.

As I mentioned on Second Reading, it seems to me as an onlooker that what tends to happen if any Government have to determine the levy—let us hope that we keep the current position of an agreement being reached between bookmakers and the racing industry without the intervention of Ministers—is that they look to produce a certain figure that they think should be raised by the gambling industry to pay towards the levy. Most Ministers would think £75 million was a roughly appropriate sum. The formula for the levy is then worked out to generate the £75 that the Government think should go to the industry.

All that will happen by forcing through these new clauses is that the Government will still come to the conclusion that the gambling industry should pay about £75 million, and will adjust the formula accordingly to make sure that that amount is raised in this way rather than in another way. The new clauses are completely unnecessary and I do not think they will generate an extra penny piece for racing and the racing industry. To risk legally scuppering the whole Bill to put in a provision that will not make any difference is pointless.

**Mr Sutcliffe:** Will the hon. Gentleman go through what he believes the legal impediments are? If he is referring to the European Union, it appears that the French have overcome any problems emanating from that. Is he arguing that the advice of the DCMS lawyers is inappropriate?

**Philip Davies:** As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am no lawyer and no legal expert. I am regurgitating the Government's position when they said that this might cause a legal problem. We have seen in the past how legal decisions taken by the European Court of Justice on gambling issues related to the levy came as a great surprise to all concerned at the time. We are not in a position to be clear about what the result of any legal challenge would be. All we could be clear about is that there would be a legal challenge, at which point the result would become uncertain. I do not see any great gain—to be honest, I do not see any gain—in precipitating such a legal challenge. For that reason, I hope that new clauses 10 and 11 will be rejected.

New clause 12 is about financial blocking for illegal sites. Superficially, it seems attractive that measures should be taken to try to stop people gambling through sites that are not properly licensed or illegal. The problem with new clause 12, however, is that other countries have shown that financial blocking does not work. Other countries have tried to restrict online gambling and tried to make licences available only to a few operators, but this has failed in every single country that has tried it. It fails because there are ways around financial blocking—by

using PayPal and other methods, for example, which cannot be blocked by the banks. It does not work. New clause 12 is well meaning, and I understand why the shadow Minister wishes to pursue it, but it is pointless because it simply will not work.

New clause 13—the last of the new clauses proposed by the hon. Member for Eltham—is also unnecessary, so I hope that the Minister will reject all the shadow Minister's new clauses. Although I do not doubt his motives in bringing them forward—the motives are good—I think that they are either unnecessary or undesirable.

New clause 14 was tabled by the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), who represents the Democratic Unionist party. Again, I think it has much to commend it on a superficial level and I understand exactly what he is trying to do and why he is trying to do it. Again, too, the motives are very good. I doubt whether many people would disagree with the principle of what is suggested. The hon. Gentleman wants to make sure that there is a register of people who should be self-excluded. The self-exclusion is done through the Gambling Commission and would then apply to every operator who had a licence with it. If someone is self-excluded once, they are self-excluded with everybody. We would like to get to that scenario.

The problem with putting this provision into statute is that it will put many gambling operators in a very difficult position. Once someone who has self-excluded goes on to gamble, the gambling operator would be breaking the law, but the new clause does not provide for a sufficient “due diligence defence”. If someone self-excludes and tries to use different names, different addresses, different bank accounts and slips through the net in what way, my worry would be that, through no fault of their own, they will be in breach of the law.

If we are to go down the line of the new clause—as I say, I have no problem with the principle and view it as a desirable outcome for someone self-excluded from one operator to be self-excluded across the industry—without some kind of due diligence defence, it could put gambling operators in an impossible position. We would be asking them to do something that would be impossible to achieve if someone were determined to get round it. Perhaps the other place could consider the problem and I would be happy for the Minister to look further at it. As the new clause stands, however, I cannot support it.

I would like to think that, unusually for me, my amendment 1 is non-controversial and could easily be accepted by the whole House. It simply requests:

“The Secretary of State shall publish a report to Parliament one year after the commencement of this Act, and annually thereafter, on the enforcement activity of the Gambling Commission in respect of unlicensed operators attempting to provide facilities for gambling in the UK.”

One of my concerns about the Bill—certainly one I expressed on Second Reading—is that it might lead to an increase in the number of people gambling with unlicensed operators, with the tax bill encouraging some companies to go outside of the licensing regime. The Treasury forecast of how much tax will be collected—about 20%—seems to confirm the danger that 20% of gambling will take place with unlicensed operators. If we are to go down the route suggested by the Bill, we need to focus the Gambling Commission's attention on stopping gambling with unlicensed operators.

**Justin Tomlinson** (North Swindon) (Con): May I suggest to my hon. Friend—who is making a characteristically powerful speech—that it is a question not just of tax, but of advancing technology? Who would have thought, a few years ago, that there would be such a big growth in online gambling? There will always be something new coming forward, and this just helps to sharpen the mind.

1.30 pm

**Philip Davies:** I agree with my hon. Friend, and I take it from what he has said that he agrees with my amendment. The fear has been expressed, both in the Treasury's forecast and during the debate, that the number of people gambling with unlicensed operators could increase. I therefore think it only right for the Government to present a report to the House once a year—it need not be an oral report; it could be in written form—to update us on what the Gambling Commission has been doing and how successful it has been, so that we can decide whether it is dealing properly with a problem that we all fear may arise.

**Paul Farrelly:** The hon. Gentleman said that the report need not be in written form, but the amendment says:

“The Secretary of State shall publish a report to Parliament”.

That implies that it should indeed be a written report. Will the hon. Gentleman provide some guidance for the Government and the Gambling Commission by saying a few words about what he expects to be its form and content?

**Philip Davies:** I think that the hon. Gentleman misheard me. I actually said that the report need not be oral, and could be written. The amendment is worded as it is because otherwise there could simply be a written report with no accompanying oral statement.

I should like the Gambling Commission to explain, in its own words, exactly what actions it has taken to try to close down unlicensed operators in order to prevent people from gambling with them; to update us on how successful it has been; and to give us an idea of how big the issue remains each year. That will enable us to decide whether the legislation that we have passed has succeeded, or whether we need to revisit it. If we are to proceed with the Bill, all of us will want to ensure that people gamble only with properly licensed legal operators, and any measure that focuses the minds of the Gambling Commission and the Government on that can only be a good thing.

**Paul Farrelly:** Does the hon. Gentleman think it advisable for the Gambling Commission to give us an annual running commentary on its estimate of the percentage of the market that is captured by licensed operators and the percentage that is lost to unlicensed operators? That might help the Treasury to determine the amount of the necessary tax levy, which will clearly be crucial in the context of how much of the gambling market is captured by licensed operators in the future.

**Philip Davies:** I am not entirely sure whether an annual report constitutes a “running commentary”, but if it does, then yes, I do want a running commentary on the steps that the Gambling Commission is taking, how

effective those steps are proving to be, and how big the market is. Only if we know that will we know whether the Bill has been successful or whether we need to change it in some way.

When I table an amendment, I can often understand why the Government would not accept it, but I genuinely cannot understand why they would not accept this amendment, which is modest and which goes to the heart of some of the concerns that have been expressed about the Bill. On the basis, I hope that the Minister will accept my amendment and new clause 1, but will reject the new clauses tabled by Opposition Members.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): I am very pleased to have an opportunity to speak about new clause 14, and, indeed, about the other new clauses.

Some Members have suggested that the Government's basic objective is to close a the tax loophole that led numerous online gambling companies to relocate from the United Kingdom to white-listed or European economic area jurisdictions back in 2007. However, the Government have made clear that that is not the case, arguing that the Bill is actually all about consumer protection, and I am very pleased that they are focusing on that issue.

On the face of it, the Bill requires all online gambling providers that are located beyond the UK but are accessed by the UK market to have UK licences. That too is good news, but it seems to me that the Government's good intention breaks down on two bases. It is all very well to have good intentions, but those good intentions must be translated into specific rules and legislation if we are to help problem gamblers, who are vulnerable people. I had the impression in Committee that both Government and Opposition were in favour of that, and I therefore think that all Members should feel able to support new clause 14.

First, as has been said in earlier debates, although the Bill presents companies outside the UK with a carrot in the form of the offer of advertising, it does not provide any kind of stick. There is nothing to prevent companies without licences from continuing to access the UK market; they just cannot advertise. That first failing feeds directly into the second. If there is nothing to prevent companies without licences from accessing the UK market, the primary practical implication of the Bill will be that there is more advertising for online gambling, which has increased hugely in recent years in any event. There is a risk that a Bill that was supposed to be about better consumer protection will quickly become, to a significant extent, the “Liberalisation of Gambling Advertising Bill”, although I am sure that that is not the intention.

The prospect of further advertising liberalisation for online gambling is particularly worrying, because online gambling has one of the highest “problem prevalence” figures. To understand the basis for public concern about that prospect, we need to have an understanding of the very real issue of problem gambling, which is a profoundly destructive addiction that ruins lives and, on occasion, ends in suicide. According to the gambling prevalence survey of 2010, there are approximately 450,000 problem gamblers in the UK today. However, if we are to understand that problem fully, we must remember that no man—or woman—is an island, and that each of those people is likely to be connected to family members who feel the destructive impact of problem gambling on

[Jim Shannon]

their lives as well. Problem gambling goes beyond the problem gamblers themselves; it affects their families too, which means that the 450,000 figure can quickly increase to some 2 million.

In Committee, the hon. Member for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe) expressed concern about those with gambling addictions, and suggested that the Secretary of State for Health should look into the possibility of money from the gambling profession being set aside to help people with addictions. I am sure that many of us agree with that valuable suggestion, which served as another indication of the concern about the Bill that was felt by all members of the Committee. When we focus on remote gambling, we discover that while the average problem prevalence figure is 0.9%, the figure relating to online slot machines is over 9%. On a monthly basis, it shoots up even further, to over 17%. That problem will continue unless we establish robust legislation to deal with it.

Before the Bill was published, concern had already been expressed about discrimination in the provision of less credible care for online problem gamblers than for terrestrial online gamblers with respect to “self-exclusion”, which is one of the key measures to help problem gamblers. Problem gamblers have the option of going to a gambling provider and excluding themselves from the services of that provider for a fixed period such as six months. That works in practice, because, as with other addictions, while people have weak days, they also have strong days. On a strong day, problem gamblers will be able to get around the five betting shops in their town to exclude themselves and thus ensure that they are protected from accessing gambling from the place where they live for a full six months, during which time they can build up their defences, obtain help, and decide what they want to do when the self-imposed period of exclusion ends.

What is the problem with that? The key problem is that, while in an offline context there is a credible opportunity for problem gamblers to benefit from a key tool that has been developed for them, there is no such credible opportunity online. As I have said, it is quite possible for a problem gambler to self-exclude from all five betting shops in his town on a strong day, but the same is not true online. The problem gambler could self-exclude from five online gambling sites that he can access from his or her bedroom, but could still have access to hundreds of other sites from that bedroom. It would be physically impossible for the online gambler to self-exclude from all online gambling opportunities that are accessible to him in his bedroom.

In short, we offer the offline problem gambler a credible form of protection through self-exclusion, but deny it to the online gambler. I believe that that anomaly must be addressed, because it is not just at a time when providing a credible one-stop shop is technologically possible. A one-stop shop self-exclusion mechanism, as set out in new clause 14, would mean that people have only to self-exclude from online gambling once by registering with the Gambling Commission. The commission would keep a list of all those who had self-excluded, and all those in receipt of an online gambling licence from the commission would be required to respect the list. This idea, which has been backed by many academics, was discussed in Committee, but is worth repeating today.

Dr Sally Gainsbury, author of “Internet Gambling: Current Research Findings and Implications”, published by Springer in its *SpringerBriefs in Behavioral Medicine*, series 2012, states that “a significant limitation” of self-exclusion

“is the lack of collaboration between different online gambling sites and venues, so that excluded individuals may find it easy to gamble at another site or venue.”

She argues that the technology is available and points to its feasibility, particularly in the UK, owing to the current existing licensing conditions and code of conduct upheld by the Gambling Commission. In demonstrating that the provision of a one-stop shop facility is technologically possible, Dr Gainsbury highlights a program called VeriPlay.com, developed by Bet Buddy, which allows the secure exchange of anonymous data and has been successful in some parts of the world.

The hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies) referred to due diligence and the support across the House on this subject. I believe we have to start somewhere, and we should start here today. The bones might come from the House of Lords, but new clause 14 would give this House the opportunity to decide in what direction we want to go, and if we want to go in the direction of helping these problem gamblers and vulnerable people, new clause 14 would be a step in the right direction. The Bet Buddy system enables operators to check whether someone is on a centralised list of players who have self-excluded. Dr Gainsbury argues that collaborative efforts would help strengthen self-exclusion, and research presented to the Canadian-based Responsible Gambling Council in 2011 by British-based GamCare and the university of Salford, along with Bet Buddy, endorsed the proposal—further examples of support from within the gambling sector and also, I hope, from the Gambling Commission.

The arguments I have made for a one-stop shop in terms of non-discrimination hold at the moment, but with the proposal in the Bill to make people in the UK—and therefore problem gamblers in the UK—more aware of online gambling opportunities, the failure to provide a credible model of self-exclusion for those gambling online becomes much more serious. We already effectively discriminate against online problem gamblers in the care that we offer by providing them with a far weaker self-exclusion opportunity than that afforded to other problem gamblers. The Bill not only gives us an opportunity to put that right, but massively compounds the imperative for us to do so by introducing new arrangements that will make problem gamblers more aware of online gambling opportunities.

Given that online problem gambling has one of the higher problem prevalence figures, that one of the key accepted tools to help problem gamblers—self-exclusion—does not work as effectively online as it does in a terrestrial context, and that it is technologically possible to make good this shortcoming through the provision of a one-stop shop self-exclusion mechanism, the only possible reason for inaction can be a lack of political will within the House. I am sure that that is not the case. Given that we are proposing to make life even more difficult for online problem gamblers by making them more aware of online gambling opportunities and that we have the opportunity to introduce new compensatory measures to help them, a failure to act could only be the result of a terrible failure of moral will. Why is there a

political and moral will to address online safety challenges in other contexts, but not in this context? Given that doing so would help thousands of online problem gamblers, what possible justification can there be for not backing new clause 14 as a step in that direction?

1.45 pm

When this issue was discussed in Committee, the Minister's response seemed to be twofold. First, she said that the matter was "complicated", and secondly she said the industry was working hard and that she wanted to give it more time. First, I know it is complicated—online regulation is complicated—but it is also technologically possible, for the reasons I have explained. The question is not whether it is complicated, but whether we care about, and can we be bothered to help, the thousands of problem gamblers in this country and their families whose lives are being ruined by online gambling and to whom we currently do not afford the same protections as terrestrial gamblers. Like others Members, I see people in my surgeries who have addictions, whether it be to alcohol, gambling or something else. Whenever someone takes a stand and says, "I've got a problem", that is the first stage, but they cannot beat it on their own; they need help, and all of us—Government bodies and ourselves—have to gather around and help. That is what I am trying to do with new clause 14.

Secondly, what is the industry doing specifically about a one-stop shop for self-exclusion? That is a direct question to the Minister. I am not aware of any one-stop shop initiatives, so I would be delighted if she could tell me of some. At the end of the day, our response to new clause 14 will depend simply on whether we care about online problem gamblers, with their higher online problem prevalence figure—about the fact that they are currently denied access to a form of self-exclusion that is as robust as terrestrial self-exclusion, and that the Bill proposes to make them more aware of online gambling opportunities. If we care, mindful of the technological possibility of what new clause 14 proposes, we should find the political will and make it happen, as we have in other efforts to promote online safety. If we do not care, we will make excuses and move on. I hope the Government will support the new clause, and I look forward to the Minister's response. I intend to press new clause 14 to a vote.

**Mr Leech:** I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate and would like to make some brief points about several new clauses, particularly new clause 1, which stands in my name and that of the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge) and colleagues from the Culture, Media and Sport Committee.

One of the recommendations of our Select Committee's pre-legislative scrutiny was to allow British casinos to offer their online gaming products on their premises. It is nonsense that people can play on remote internet sites using mobile phones or other mobile devices in their own homes or anywhere else, while a casino may advertise its own online products in the casino but is not allowed to make customers aware that the product is available from an internet-linked computer inside the casino or to advertise its online sites on or around an internet-linked computer. Given that casinos have the most rigorously controlled premises, it is absurd that that anomaly remains.

New clause 1, in the name of the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend East, would make it clear that a remote gambling terminal provided in a casino was not a gaming machine and would give powers to the Secretary of State to regulate the number of remote machines allowable in a casino. On Second Reading, the Minister argued that the proposed change would undermine existing regulatory controls on gaming machine provisions, but the new clause would ensure that the effective size of the virtual part of the casino remained controlled, while giving added protections to customers gambling online in the casino environment. I understand why the Government might be reluctant to support the new clause, because there is a danger that casinos could be encouraged to promote the online sections of their casino at the expense of the bricks and mortar parts simply to reduce their tax, so the new clause must go hand in hand with the introduction of a tax regime that creates a level playing field for the onshore gambling industry.

I would like also to speak briefly to amendment 1, which stands in the name of my Select Committee colleague, the hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies). Given his comments and line of questioning to the Gambling Commission in Committee, Members could be forgiven for thinking that he was trying to cause a little mischief with this amendment, but I am sure that that was not the case. In fact, there is a lot of sense in ensuring that Parliament receives some feedback from the commission on how successful enforcement action has been and whether additional measures, perhaps along the lines of new clause 12, which stands in the name of the hon. Member for Eltham (Clive Efford), might be required to avoid a proliferation of gambling on unlicensed sites. I hope the Minister will be able to reassure the House that we will be updated on the effectiveness of enforcement. Will she tell us how that is to be achieved if it is not to be specifically covered in the Bill?

On new clause 3, there is some sense in making customers aware of whether a site is licensed or not. The hon. Member for Shipley was rather uncharitable in describing the shadow Minister as naive in proposing the new clause. I agree that punters are likely to be looking for odds rather than for a kitemark when deciding whether to place a bet, but from a consumer protection perspective, it is preferable that customers go into this with their eyes open, and that they know whether they will be covered by the protection provided by a licensed operator or whether they are running the risk of not getting a pay-out from some dodgy unlicensed operator. Will the Minister tell us how she will ensure that customers will be made aware of whether an operator is licensed by the Gambling Commission?

On new clause 7, the Minister will be aware that my right hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Mr Foster) produced a report for the Government on dormant accounts. Following that report, what action do the Government plan to take on dormant accounts and on the potential for using the money in them for the benefit of the gambling public?

**Robert Neill:** I do not have the same degree of hands-on experience of the gambling industry as some hon. Members who have spoken—unless we count my past part-ownership of a greyhound, which offered little financial success

[*Robert Neill*]

but a certain amount of entertainment value. I support new clause 1, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge) and others. He has made the case for it very powerfully, and I hope that the Government will take it on board. He and I have been known to shop in the same establishments and outlets, but I can assure the House that we are not advocating a one-size-fits-all policy. I hope that the Minister will take the new clause on board.

The hon. Member for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe) has pointed out that we are unlikely to get another legislative opportunity to adopt this provision. During my two and a half years as a Minister at the equivalent level of the Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone and The Weald (Mrs Grant), I was repeatedly told by my advisers in the civil service that although this or that measure was a good idea, there was no legislative vehicle with which to achieve it. Good, sensible reforms can often miss the bus owing to the lack of such a vehicle, and I merely point out to the Minister that we have a bus available here and it would be sensible to make use of it.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): I echo what the hon. Gentleman is saying. In that spirit, does he agree that we should take this legislative opportunity to adopt the amendments on the horseracing levy?

**Robert Neill:** I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, and I have some sympathy with his argument. There might be other ways of achieving his aims, however, and I hope that the Minister will touch on them when she responds to the debate.

I pointed out in an earlier intervention that new clause 1 would be consistent with Government policy on alcohol. Alcohol and gambling are lawful, enjoyable activities but, because they can hold some risk for certain vulnerable people, society accepts that it is reasonable that they should be used or engaged in under certain controls and in controlled environments. Throughout my time as pubs Minister, I actively promoted the value of the public house as a safe place in which to enjoy alcohol. My hon. Friend's new clause adopts the same principle; if someone is gambling using a tablet, a casino will offer a more controlled environment in which to do so than their home. I hope that the Minister will reflect on that point.

New clause 13 has been tabled by the hon. Member for Eltham (Clive Efford). I am not sure that its format provides the answer, but I hope that the Minister will reflect on the serious issue that the hon. Gentleman raises. A great deal of offshore gambling that is currently regulated by the white-listed countries will move back into the UK jurisdiction and the UK's Gambling Commission will have responsibility for it. We need to ensure that there is no diminution in the standards of consumer protection or of any other aspects of regulation. Is the Minister satisfied that the Gambling Commission has the capacity, resources and expertise effectively to carry out the greater degree of regulation that will be required of it under the new arrangements?

Will the Minister also take on board the fact that some of the white-listed jurisdictions—I am thinking particularly of the Alderney gambling commission and

that of Gibraltar—have built up a considerable degree of expertise in the fields of public protection, regulation and enforcement? It would be a tragedy if that expertise were lost. What steps will she take to ensure that, if firms migrate from the white-listed jurisdictions to the UK, the Government will work with them to move that expertise across so that it can remain available to protect the interests of the consumer and the taxpayer?

There is concern that a period of dual regulation could exist during the transitional period, during which firms are registered in a white-listed jurisdiction and in the UK. I hope that we can reflect on that fact, perhaps while the Bill is in the other place, and ensure that no confusion arises over who is responsible for what during that time. I urge the Minister to commit to working more closely with the white-listed jurisdictions to ensure that their expertise in this area is not lost.

**Clive Efford:** Notwithstanding the views of the hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies), the new clauses and amendments have allowed us to have a wide-ranging debate on gambling, and to explore concerns about this area of regulation. That is only fit and proper. The hon. Gentleman's amendment 1 is a sensible proposition; I have no objection to his proposal for a report that would give us an opportunity to keep an eye on what was going on. We often pass legislation that simply drifts off into the ether and seldom comes back to us, and we rarely have the chance to see how our work is functioning out there. I therefore welcome his sensible suggestion.

Sadly, I cannot say the same about new clause 1. I will listen carefully to what the Minister says about it, and I entirely respect the views of the Select Committee. I understand its point about the anomaly of someone being able to gamble on a hand-held device outside a casino but unable to do so perhaps only a few paces away inside the building. I have looked at some of the websites and seen the sums of prize money increasing at an alarming rate. Sometimes, total prizes of £8 million are advertised. The proposed change for casinos would therefore represent a very big step. If there is a case for such a change, we should consider it in more detail.

**Mr Sutcliffe:** Has my hon. Friend had a chance to read the briefing from the National Casino Industry Forum? It deals with the way in which casinos would implement and monitor the proposed change, if new clause 1 were to be accepted. It has been stated that our casino industry is the most regulated of the lot, and I would say it is also the safest of the lot. I understand my hon. Friend's fears about new clause 1, but because of the way in which the industry is regulated and the way in which it protects people with gambling problems, I do not share his concerns.

**Clive Efford:** I have seen that document. I agree with my hon. Friend: the UK gambling industry is highly regulated and highly regarded. I have a great deal of respect for the way in which it conducts its affairs, and I would not suggest for a minute that it would not deal with this new area of the market in a responsible way, were the new clause to be accepted. The proposal does, however, represent a major step forward, because unlimited prizes would be offered on machines—albeit remote gambling machines—inside casinos. We have regulated

on that cautiously in the past. If we are to take that step, it would need consideration in separate legislation or a change in the licensing rules, whichever is required. Having looked at these websites, I think that we need to consider the matter further and that it would not be appropriate to take this step in this Bill.

2 pm

New clauses 2 and 5 stand in my name and deal with spread betting, the licensing of remote gambling, and compliance. The Gambling Commission needs to have all the weapons it can possibly have at its disposal. New clause 2 would allow the Gambling Commission to take into consideration the performance of an operator that is licensed in the UK in respect of activities that take place outside the Gambling Commission's jurisdiction. The Gambling Commission could take that significant power unto itself so that it could consider whether that operator is fit and proper to operate in the UK.

I listened to what the hon. Member for Shipley said about spread betting, but I fundamentally disagree with him. There is a gaping anomaly in the current regulations: licence condition 15.1 simply does not apply to spread betting operators. That is a very important area of the regulation, because it requires the operator to share information about any suspicious activity with the national governing body for the relevant sport. This is an important area of activity because it allows the governing bodies to have some influence over how their sport is being policed and what is being done to address things, and to share information where they suspect that fixed betting may be taking place.

New clause 5 is a slight change from the proposal we discussed in Committee—I have changed it out of deference to the hon. Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge), whose eagle eye spotted a possible defect in the drafting of the earlier proposal. New clause 5 therefore makes specific reference to schedule 6 to the Gambling Act 2005, which defines what a sport's governing body is and what sports would be covered by this new clause. Schedule 6 defines the governing bodies of sport, national and international, that the Gambling Commission is committed to sharing information with. It also allows for the transfer of betting data and customer information between the Gambling Commission and sports bodies without the need to worry about issues such as data protection. Schedule 6 was updated by the Government ahead of the London Olympics, when the Government did a lot of work in establishing an anti-corruption betting framework and wanted to be able to share information with the International Olympic Committee.

My proposal is supported by a wide range of sports governing bodies. In Committee, the Minister said in response to this issue:

“gambling operators, whether they provide spread betting or fixed odds betting services, should be subject to obligations to report suspicious market activity.”—[*Official Report, Gambling (Licensing and Advertising) Public Bill Committee*, 19 November 2013; c. 99.]

That is exactly what my new clause would do, so I urge her to reconsider her position. If she is not minded to accept the new clause, will she confirm that there is a timetable for the Financial Conduct Authority to adopt condition 15.1? Will that be done ahead of this Bill reaching the Lords? Will a plan of action be in place so

that we can consider exactly what the FCA is doing in this area of licensing, where there appears to be a gap? The Minister also said that she would write to the FCA to follow up on what action it has taken since the sports bodies first wrote to it more than three years ago. Has she yet written and made inquiries? Will she place a copy of the correspondence in the Library?

On the kitemark and new clause 3, I say to the hon. Member for Shipley that if he were to look on the websites, he would have to accept, as the Gambling Commission does, that what is on them at the moment is a mess. We are talking about tiny writing that is confused with a lot of other information at the bottom of the sites. He undersold my new clause, because I was not suggesting that the kitemark should be at the bottom; I suggested it should be in a prominent position at the top of the websites, where people can find it easily. It should not just be a symbol. It will be a tool that will connect people with the Gambling Commission and all sorts of information about what to do if they are not happy with the service they have been provided with; who regulates and on what basis; and how to get help if they have problems with gambling. There will be a link to all other sorts of sites that will assist people. Having a common feature such as a symbol that is used regularly on all websites and that regular punters will recognise will be an important tool for consumers, so I just beg to differ with the hon. Gentleman on that issue.

**Philip Davies:** If these sites are illegal and, as is probable, in some far-flung part of the world, what would prevent people from just putting the kitemark on there themselves?

**Clive Efford:** It would have to be policed, would it not? Like anything else that is happening on the internet, it would have to be policed. The ultimate argument the hon. Gentleman is making is: what is the point in regulating at all? I think we are getting to the root of his position on all these issues.

On research and treatment, the figure of 0.9% has been used a lot. The 2010 gambling prevalence survey identified that for problem gambling in respect of online slots the figure rises to 9%—we are dealing with online gambling here, so we are talking about almost one in 10 and something that is very serious. The overall figure of 0.9% equates to 450,000 people and we should take note of that, because it equates to 700 people per constituency. It is not the insignificant number it may seem when we say 0.9%—we see that when we talk in terms of 700 people per constituency.

**Mr Sutcliffe:** I agree with the point my hon. Friend is making, and nobody would want to underestimate the issues relating to problem gambling. The industry has a voluntary levy and it raises more than £5 million. Is it not the case that the health service provides no budget at all to deal with problem gambling, whereas it does make provision to deal with problem drinkers and those dealing with other addictions?

**Clive Efford:** My hon. Friend is right about that. Of course, a significant duty is levied on alcohol and tobacco, which does contribute towards providing public services, for just the reason he outlines. He rightly says that just about £5.7 million is spent on treatment and research,

[Clive Efford]

but the overall value of the gambling industry is about £6 billion. The online gambling industry is worth about £2 billion, so it is not unreasonable to expect that more could be contributed towards the treatment of problem gambling in the future.

I am getting a little bogged down, so I will not try to move quickly through my amendments. On self-exclusion, the Minister failed to convince us in Committee that she was going to be robust enough in ensuring that we will deliver a one-stop shop—a single exclusion system right across the gambling industry regulated by the Gambling Commission. We reached a point where I kept asking the same question and I got several evasive answers, so I put my simple question to her again: will she require the Gambling Commission to introduce a single, one-stop shop self-exclusion system across the gambling industry? That is what we are pushing her to do.

When we talk about dormant accounts, we are also talking about bets that are void because the horse did not run, about unclaimed winnings and about the accounts of people who have left money sitting in them for more than a year. That money should be put to use for good causes, such as treatment. I know that an element of it is used in that way, but we do not know how much. [Interruption.] If the hon. Member for Shipley, who is trying to intervene from a sedentary position, were to look at the report written by the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr Foster), he would see how difficult it is to identify how much money there is in those accounts. This is an opportunity for us to deal with that.

We are recommending financial blocking because it should be part of an overall package of measures that the Gambling Commission needs to have at its disposal. Much has been made of the Ofcom report, which concluded that financial blocking, as part of an overall basket of measures, could be an effective means of intervention, and we would certainly recommend that it should be so. Other countries use financial blocking and, taking on board the comments of the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Robert Neill), we ask that none of our standards fall below those of other white list countries.

Finally, the horserace betting levy is an extremely important element that we have debated during the passage of the Bill. The horserace betting industry suggests that racing is missing out on £20 million a year that could be made if online remote betting companies were contributing to the betting levy. New clause 10 redefines the definition of a bookmaker in the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 to bring those remote gambling companies into line with the onshore companies that currently pay the levy.

Rather than saying to the Minister here and now that we can pass a system under this Bill that would require everyone to pay the betting levy long into the future, we are suggesting in new clause 11 that there is all-party agreement on the betting levy and that we all accept the principle of it. In fact, several of her hon. Friends have attempted to take a private Member's Bill through on this specific issue. As we have said before, this is a rare opportunity to legislate in this area, and another such opportunity may be many moons away. In the meantime, the horse racing industry is missing out on vital income. The Minister has an opportunity in the legislation to

take reserve powers away, to consult on what would be a long-term acceptable method of raising the horserace betting levy into the future and to come back to the House with her conclusions. It would be the waste of an opportunity not to do that at this time. If she is not minded to set such a timetable for the betting levy, we will put this new clause to the vote.

I hear what the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) said about his amendment on self-exclusion and I know that he intends to put it to the vote. If he does, I will urge my hon. Friends to support his amendment as well.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Mrs Helen Grant):** I thank Members for a highly stimulating debate on a wide range of issues including casinos, enforcement, spread betting, consumer protection, dormant accounts, the advertising watershed and, of course, the levy.

I will start with new clause 1, which relates to casinos. We have heard important contributions from my hon. Friends the Members for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge), for Shipley (Philip Davies), for Manchester, Withington (Mr Leech), and for Bromley and Chislehurst (Robert Neill) and the hon. Member for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe). Members will not be surprised to hear that I have had several iPhones waved at me recently, with the implication that such devices can be played on trains and in bedrooms, so why not in casinos? Let me make it clear, those devices can be played in casinos, and can indeed be offered by casinos to customers but within the limits of the machine stakes and prize regulations.

2.15 pm

This debate is about the ability of casinos to promote and encourage the use of such devices—including their own—outside of those controls. It is because we are talking about promotion and encouragement to play such games in casinos that I remain firmly of the opinion that it is right to consider potential flexibility within the structure of the existing machine stakes and prize regulations. The amendment completely sweeps away those controls and places the devices fully outside those regulations. Let us not forget that we are talking about the promotion and encouragement to play unlimited stakes and prizes. This means a category A type gaming machine in a casino, which is promoted by the casino.

I have heard arguments from my hon. Friends the Members for Rochford and Southend East and for Bromley and Chislehurst and from the hon. Member for Bradford South that a separate case should be made for casinos because they are at the top of the regulatory pyramid. The fact that casinos are at the top of the pyramid is exactly why I want to consider properly whether there is merit in the regulations for flexibility that reflects technical developments. I said several times in Committee and on Second Reading that I shall undertake such consideration. I have written to the Casino Forum in such terms and my Department has already commenced discussions with the sector about flexibility and modernisation.

**Mr Sutcliffe:** I understand the point the Minister makes; it is quite proper that she speaks to the industry, but there is concern over the time scale. Is she going to

try to do this while the Bill is going through both Houses, or is she looking at another date? The concern is that if we miss this opportunity, the boat will have gone. Just so I can be clear, is she talking about trying to do this within the time frame of the Bill passing through both Houses?

**Mrs Grant:** That is a fair question that I am just about to come on to. I know that the hon. Gentleman wants progress here, and I am aware that people need us to get on with this and I assure him that it is my intention to get on. I am committed to bringing the conversations that we have already started to a conclusion by March 2014. That may be a little later that he would like, but I want to do this properly, because that is far better than not doing so. Furthermore, I reassure him and my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend East that primary legislation is not needed in relation to the casinos' aspirations. Those aspirations could be achieved by secondary legislation, if we felt that to be wise. For all those reasons I am firmly opposed to the new clause, because it removes important controls for consumer protection, which is what the Bill is about, and paves the way for unintended consequences.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley and the hon. Member for Eltham (Clive Efford) for their important suggestions about enforcement, including reporting on enforcement activity and financial transaction blocking. However, amendment 1 is unnecessary as the Gambling Commission already publishes annual information and data about its activities, including its regulatory and enforcement activities as well as industry statistics, which include those on betting integrity. I draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley to the Gambling Commission's 2012-13 annual review, which already details the enforcement activity it has undertaken. A further separate report would not significantly add anything to the material already published by the commission and would therefore involve unnecessary duplication. I know that he is a stickler, and I want to assure him that the commission is constantly improving its coverage of information and has assured me that it is willing to ensure that it includes information about its enforcement activities in relation to remote gambling as part of the material that it already publishes. For those reasons, I do not intend to accept my hon. Friend's amendment.

**Paul Farrelly:** Will the Minister give way?

**Mrs Grant:** I want to make some progress; I have too much to get through. When I have made some progress, I will come back to the hon. Gentleman.

New clause 12 would permit the Gambling Commission to introduce financial transaction blocking. The evidence on the effectiveness of financial transaction blocking is far from convincing and, as we heard in Committee, the industry clearly has doubts about its effectiveness. I do not wish to rule out the blocking of financial transactions in the future should it become appropriate or necessary and if we can see that it is effective. As the range of tools at the Gambling Commission's disposal has already been shown to be effective, I do not feel that it would be appropriate to seek that power in this Bill.

I thank hon. Members for raising the important issue of sporting integrity and the need to ensure that operators have an obligation to report suspicious market activity.

Although I am satisfied that strong and effective measures are in place to ensure that that happens, I am pleased to be able to confirm, to the shadow Minister in particular, that the Financial Conduct Authority will issue guidance to the two sports spread betting firms operating in the United Kingdom and that will reinforce the current arrangements. The new guidance provides an opportunity for the FCA to clarify the meaning of its rules and to state precisely what it requires of the sports spread betting firms. That will allow greater consistency in how suspicious market activity is reported.

**Clive Efford:** I want to clarify what the Minister has just said about the FCA and what is being confirmed. She said, I think, that the FCA was confirming the current arrangements, which are far from satisfactory. Will it adopt all the requirements of licence condition 15.1?

**Mrs Grant:** No, I did not say that at all. In evidence given in Committee, the FCA clearly said that it would consider publishing further guidance to the two spread betting operators that it regulates. The FCA has come back since then and said that it will do that. I am sure that the shadow Minister is aware of the teeth that such guidance has, particularly if it is specific. If there is a breach of guidance, that will clearly have serious consequences for those who have breached it. In my opinion, this is a highly proportionate response to an issue that, although important, does not require intervention through primary legislation. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that there is absolutely no evidence that the regulation of sports spread betting by the FCA has compromised sporting integrity. I do not believe there is a case for a fundamental change to the arrangements and it is right to allow the FCA, which is an independent regulator, to get on with issuing the guidance. If appropriate, the FCA will, of course, assess its effectiveness in due course. I encourage the authority to do that very quickly.

New clause 3 would require a kitemark to be displayed on licensed operators' websites. I continue to argue that we are all batting for the same aim. I support the arguments made by the hon. Member for Eltham in Committee and today that providing clarity for consumers that they are using a Gambling Commission-regulated site is an important element of consumer protection. I hope that it would provide a strong element of promotional advantage to the operators licensed by the Gambling Commission. As I said in Committee, I will follow through on my intention to see progress on the work that the commission has already commenced to ensure that consumers can quickly and clearly establish that they are transacting with a GB-licensed site. I certainly do not intend to get involved in clarifying with the commission how many centimetres the logo should measure or what colour it should be. It is reasonable to leave the regulator to get on with that. Accordingly, I see no need for a new clause to achieve the end result that we clearly all want.

New clause 4 would end the voluntary approach to operator contributions for research into, education on and treatment for problem gambling, making it compulsory for all operators licensed by the Gambling Commission. The voluntary arrangements were revised only recently, in 2012, and I am satisfied that they are working. I will, of course, continue to monitor the effectiveness of the voluntary arrangements and therefore do not intend to accept the new clause.

[Mrs Grant]

New clause 6 would enshrine in statute a one-off commitment to consult on standardised self-exclusion. At present, the Gambling Commission's licence conditions and codes of practice include the requirement for remote licensees to put into effect procedures for self-exclusion. We recognise that operators could do more by co-operating and working together to help players self-exclude from local gambling premises and online sites, but the industry is already taking steps. A good example is the imminent harm minimisation conference being organised by the Responsible Gambling Trust. I expect to see progress on player protection over the coming months, including the development of better tools to help players to gamble safely. If we are still having this conversation in 12 months' time, there will be little alternative but to embark on a process of mandating controls.

New clause 14, tabled by the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), would enshrine in statute the requirement for the Gambling Commission to hold a list of those who wish to self-exclude. It would be a condition of the remote operating licence that individuals on the list must be excluded. A one-stop shop might be an appropriate goal and I know that it would do considerable good, but I do not wish to make a commitment to pursue that option alone—given the complexities and practicalities involved—when other elements of harm minimisation might be even more significant, such as player feedback and information on betting habits as well as in-play alerts on losses. We should also not lose sight of the fact that self-exclusion is just one tool in a suite of player protections. I urge the industry to make the fastest possible progress. The shadow Minister pressed me on this point in Committee and has done so again today, and I am prepared to commit to driving all the parties to make good their commitments on developing and implementing player-protection measures and to consider using the powers I have, including the imposition of licence conditions, if I am not satisfied.

New clause 13 seeks to ensure that the social responsibility provisions adopted by the Gambling Commission reflect the highest possible standards. As I said in Committee, I am confident that the British regulatory system is a model of international best practice and the commission's requirements are robust and of the highest standard. I do not accept that the commission lags behind in its social responsibility requirements.

**Robert Neill:** I understand the Minister's point, but is she satisfied that, regardless of the quality of the standards, there is the capacity in the system effectively to enforce those standards on a larger scale? What can she say about not losing expertise from the white-listed countries?

**Mrs Grant:** My hon. Friend makes a good point, but I must tell him that I am absolutely satisfied that the Gambling Commission has all the tools it needs at its disposal properly to enforce the regulations. There will, of course, always be grey areas, but when the commission comes up against them, it is up to it to make proper decisions according to risk and proportionality.

The Gambling Commission is internationally respected. It engages extensively with overseas regulators, participates in international and European regulatory forums and

hosts numerous visits each year from overseas regulators who are keen to learn from it. The new clause is therefore unnecessary and I do not intend to accept it.

**Clive Efford:** I am grateful to the Minister, who is being very generous in giving way as I know she has a lot to get through. The issue is that although it is easy to self-exclude from, for example, four betting shops on the high street, there are a multiplicity of ways of gambling on the internet without a single system of self-exclusion—that is, a one-stop shop. Is that the minimum standard that she will require?

**Mrs Grant:** I have made it clear that the industry has made various commitments, and I want it to get on with what it has said it will do. There are issues and complexities with the one-stop-shop method of self-exclusion. I will keep it under review and if I am not satisfied within a reasonable period that the Government are not doing everything we should be doing, I will look at it again.

2.30 pm

I thank hon. Members for their suggestions about dormant betting accounts in new clause 7. I have noted the strength of feeling both today and in earlier debates, especially the comments of the shadow Minister and the hon. Member for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe) about the opportunities that might be afforded to grass-roots sports, and I will take those comments into account when considering my right hon. Friend's report at the appropriate time. For the reasons I have given, I do not think that the time is right. We want the Bill to go through first. I am not prepared to accept the new clause.

I thank the hon. Member for Bradford South for highlighting the subject of gambling advertising in new clause 9. The Government acknowledge the growth of gambling advertising since 2007, following the introduction of greater freedoms. As I made clear in Committee, I am already examining what impact that might be having on the licensing objectives of the Gambling Act 2005 and whether the current arrangements, including the 9 pm watershed, remain adequate.

The research that I mentioned in Committee, which was published by Ofcom last week, is an important step in clarifying the extent to which advertising has grown and where that growth has been concentrated. It also reveals the extent to which children and adults are exposed to gambling advertising. The research also shows that, while advertising has increased, the scheduling restrictions have been effective in limiting the exposure of children to gambling advertising, and that the vast majority of sports betting advertising is after the watershed.

While I find it reassuring that the scheduling restrictions have limited the exposure of children to gambling advertising, the Government continue to pay close attention to developments in the gambling advertising market and are working closely with Ofcom, the Gambling Commission and the Advertising Standards Authority. The Secretary of State and I met last month with my officials and several of those organisations to discuss the situation.

I can assure hon. Members that the Government take the issue very seriously indeed and are already working to assess the adequacy of the current arrangements. For this reason, there is no need to accept new clause 9, but I will ensure that Parliament is kept informed of our assessment of the impact of gambling advertising and,

should I uncover evidence in the course of this work that suggests that advertising codes no longer provide effective protections, I will not hesitate to act.

Last but not least, new clauses 10 and 11 would extend liability to pay the horserace betting levy to offshore bookmakers who hold a remote gambling operating licence from the Gambling Commission. I have made my commitment to consider levy reform abundantly clear, but let me repeat yet again that I want to take the opportunity—the hon. Member for Bradford South used the word “opportunity”—that has been created by the financial stability of the four-year voluntary arrangement to take a proper look at levy reform and consult widely on the sustainable, enforceable and legally sound options that emerge. We must look beyond extending a system that is agreed to be out of date and consult properly before any measures are put in place.

I am resisting the new clauses for two principal reasons. First, I do not believe that we should assume that genuine levy reform lies in merely extending the existing levy scheme. No one has disputed the view that it no longer reflects the modern betting and racing industries. The new clauses would not achieve genuine levy reform; they would merely extend the current system. Secondly, as I have said previously, any extension of the levy to offshore bookmakers as a result of the new clauses would require EU Commission approval because the levy is a state aid scheme. I will not implement the proposals, for which we do not have EU approval in respect of state aid. Nor am I convinced that we should seek EU approval for an extension of the current levy when we do not know that it will satisfy the need for proper reform. I am not prepared to act in a way that could jeopardise the stability provided by the recent voluntary arrangement.

I have also been urged to take a power to extend the levy at a future point, but that assumes that all that we might wish to do is extend the existing system, and that would not be genuine levy reform. Even if we took such a power, we could find that it was too narrowly scoped to enable us to achieve what we wanted—for example, to meet the EC requirements for any reform scheme to be state aid compliant.

**Clive Efford:** There is agreement among Members on both sides of the House about this, and many Government Back Benchers have supported a private Member’s Bill that would have a similar effect. We are suggesting not that we solve the problem now but that she takes a reserve power and comes back to the House. In the meantime, we should allow the levy to be applied to remote gambling operators, because in the intervening period the horse racing industry is missing out on £20 million per year. When will she regulate if not now?

**Mrs Grant:** I think I have made it clear to the shadow Minister that I am happy to look at this; I will consult on any workable proposal that is put to me which is sustainable, enforceable and legally sound, but we have to do it properly. I am not prepared to cut corners—we owe that to betting and to racing. We have waited 50 years; we now have a four-year opportunity and I am determined to make the most of it.

Horse racing is enjoyed by millions of people and is the second most attended sport in Britain after football. It supports 85,000 jobs across the country and contributes

to local economies both through employment and by attracting a considerable number of visitors. We owe it to racing and the betting industries to get this right, and hon. Members will have repeatedly heard my determination to do exactly that. That is why it is important to get levy reform right and not to accept either of the new clauses, which could so easily set limits on what can be achieved.

For all the reasons that I have stated, I cannot accept any of the new clauses or amendment 1.

**James Duddridge:** While I am clearly disappointed that new clause 1 was not accepted, we have had an interesting debate and moved things forward a little. The Minister will continue to have discussions with the industry. I was concerned about how long those would take, and the Minister has assured me and other hon. Members that this process will come to a conclusion in March 2014. I expressed some concerns about whether we would be able to take this forward in secondary legislation. The Minister has asserted that that would not be a problem. Time did not permit her to go into detail, but I take her at her word. Perhaps she will look at how it will happen again, and reflect on the suggestion made by the hon. Member for Bury North (Mr Nuttall) that an amendment should be tabled in the House of Lords that would permit her to make this change if at the end of the consultation the Minister believed it was the right thing to do.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Clause, by leave, withdrawn.*

### New Clause 11

#### POWER TO EXTEND THE HORSERACE BETTING LEVY TO OVERSEAS BOOKMAKERS

(1) The Secretary of State may by regulations amend any provision or provisions of the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (c 2) (at a time when the provisions listed in section 15(1)(a) to (c) of the Horserace Betting and Olympic Lottery Act 2004 (horserace betting levy system) have not been entirely repealed by order under that section), the Gambling Act 2005 and/or the Gambling Act 2005 (Horserace Betting Levy) Order 2007/2159 for the purposes of ensuring that each person who holds a remote gambling operating licence under the Gambling Act 2005 which authorises that person to provide facilities for betting shall be—

- (a) liable to pay the bookmakers’ levy payable under section 27 of the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (c 2); and
- (b) subject to the provisions of section 120 of the Gambling Act 2005 (as modified in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005 (Horserace Betting Levy) Order 2007/2159) if that person is in default of such bookmakers’ levy.

(2) Regulations under this section must be made by statutory instrument.

(3) A statutory instrument containing regulations under this section may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.’.—(*Clive Efford.*)

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

*Question put, That the clause be read a Second time.*

*The House divided: Ayes 213, Noes 271.*

**Division No. 138]**

**[2.39 pm**

#### AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane  
Abrahams, Debbie

Alexander, Heidi  
Ali, Rushanara

Anderson, Mr David  
 Ashworth, Jonathan  
 Austin, Ian  
 Bailey, Mr Adrian  
 Bain, Mr William  
 Banks, Gordon  
 Barron, rh Mr Kevin  
 Beckett, rh Margaret  
 Begg, Dame Anne  
 Benn, rh Hilary  
 Benton, Mr Joe  
 Berger, Luciana  
 Betts, Mr Clive  
 Blackman-Woods, Roberta  
 Blears, rh Hazel  
 Blenkinsop, Tom  
 Blomfield, Paul  
 Blunkett, rh Mr David  
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
 Brennan, Kevin  
 Brown, Lyn  
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
 Brown, Mr Russell  
 Bryant, Chris  
 Buck, Ms Karen  
 Burden, Richard  
 Byrne, rh Mr Liam  
 Campbell, Mr Alan  
 Caton, Martin  
 Champion, Sarah  
 Chapman, Jenny  
 Clark, Katy  
 Clarke, rh Mr Tom  
 Clwyd, rh Ann  
 Coaker, Vernon  
 Coffey, Ann  
 Connarty, Michael  
 Cooper, Rosie  
 Corbyn, Jeremy  
 Crausby, Mr David  
 Creagh, Mary  
 Creasy, Stella  
 Cruddas, Jon  
 Cryer, John  
 Cunningham, Alex  
 Cunningham, Mr Jim  
 Cunningham, Sir Tony  
 Danczuk, Simon  
 David, Wayne  
 Davies, Geraint  
 Dobbin, Jim  
 Docherty, Thomas  
 Dodds, rh Mr Nigel  
 Donohoe, Mr Brian H.  
 Doran, Mr Frank  
 Doughty, Stephen  
 Dowd, Jim  
 Doyle, Gemma  
 Eagle, Ms Angela  
 Eagle, Maria  
 Edwards, Jonathan  
 Efford, Clive  
 Elliott, Julie  
 Ellman, Mrs Louise  
 Engel, Natascha  
 Evans, Chris  
 Farrelly, Paul  
 Field, rh Mr Frank  
 Fitzpatrick, Jim  
 Ffello, Robert  
 Flynn, Paul  
 Fovargue, Yvonne  
 Francis, Dr Hywel  
 Gapes, Mike  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 Gilmore, Sheila  
 Glindon, Mrs Mary  
 Goggins, rh Paul  
 Goodman, Helen  
 Greatrex, Tom  
 Green, Kate  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 Griffith, Nia  
 Gwynne, Andrew  
 Hain, rh Mr Peter  
 Hamilton, Mr David  
 Hamilton, Fabian  
 Hanson, rh Mr David  
 Havard, Mr Dai  
 Healey, rh John  
 Hendrick, Mark  
 Hermon, Lady  
 Heyes, David  
 Hillier, Meg  
 Hilling, Julie  
 Hodge, rh Margaret  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Hoey, Kate  
 Hood, Mr Jim  
 Hopkins, Kelvin  
 Hosie, Stewart  
 Howarth, rh Mr George  
 Hunt, Tristram  
 Irranca-Davies, Huw  
 Jackson, Glenda  
 Jamieson, Cathy  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Johnson, rh Alan  
 Johnson, Diana  
 Jones, Graham  
 Jones, Helen  
 Jones, Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Susan Elan  
 Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald  
 Keeley, Barbara  
 Kendall, Liz  
 Lammy, rh Mr David  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Lazarowicz, Mark  
 Leslie, Chris  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Llwyd, rh Mr Elyfn  
 Long, Naomi  
 Love, Mr Andrew  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lucas, Ian  
 MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan  
 Mactaggart, Fiona  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Mann, John  
 Marsden, Mr Gordon  
 McCabe, Steve  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McClymont, Gregg  
 McCrea, Dr William  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McGovern, Jim  
 McKechin, Ann  
 McKenzie, Mr Iain  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 Meacher, rh Mr Michael

Meale, Sir Alan  
 Miller, Andrew  
 Mitchell, Austin  
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morris, Grahame M.  
 (Easington)  
 Mudie, Mr George  
 Munn, Meg  
 Murphy, rh Paul  
 Murray, Ian  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Nash, Pamela  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Osborne, Sandra  
 Owen, Albert  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pound, Stephen  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Raynsford, rh Mr Nick  
 Reed, Mr Jamie  
 Reed, Mr Steve  
 Reynolds, Emma  
 Riordan, Mrs Linda  
 Robertson, John  
 Roy, Lindsay  
 Ruane, Chris  
 Ruddock, rh Dame Joan  
 Sawford, Andy  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Sheridan, Jim  
 Shuker, Gavin  
 Simpson, David

Adams, Nigel  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Amess, Mr David  
 Andrew, Stuart  
 Arbuthnot, rh Mr James  
 Baker, Norman  
 Baker, Steve  
 Baldry, Sir Tony  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Barclay, Stephen  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Barwell, Gavin  
 Bebb, Guto  
 Beith, rh Sir Alan  
 Bellingham, Mr Henry  
 Benyon, Richard  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, Jake  
 Bingham, Andrew  
 Binley, Mr Brian  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blackwood, Nicola  
 Boles, Nick  
 Brake, rh Tom  
 Bray, Angie  
 Brazier, Mr Julian  
 Brine, Steve  
 Brokenshire, James  
 Brooke, Annette  
 Browne, Mr Jeremy  
 Buckland, Mr Robert  
 Burley, Mr Aidan  
 Burns, Conor  
 Burns, rh Mr Simon

Skinner, Mr Dennis  
 Slaughter, Mr Andy  
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew  
 Smith, Angela  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smith, Owen  
 Spellar, rh Mr John  
 Straw, rh Mr Jack  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Stuart, Ms Gisela  
 Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry  
 Swales, Ian  
 Tami, Mark  
 Thomas, Mr Gareth  
 Thornberry, Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Vaz, Valerie  
 Walley, Joan  
 Watts, Mr Dave  
 Weir, Mr Mike  
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Williamson, Chris  
 Winnick, Mr David  
 Wishart, Pete  
 Woodcock, John  
 Woodward, rh Mr Shaun  
 Wright, Mr Iain

**Tellers for the Ayes:**

**Nic Dakin and  
 Phil Wilson**

**NOES**

Burrowes, Mr David  
 Burstow, rh Paul  
 Burt, rh Alistair  
 Burt, Lorely  
 Byles, Dan  
 Cable, rh Vince  
 Cairns, Alun  
 Campbell, rh Sir Menzies  
 Carmichael, Neil  
 Carswell, Mr Douglas  
 Cash, Mr William  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 Chope, Mr Christopher  
 Clappison, Mr James  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey  
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse  
 Collins, Damian  
 Colvile, Oliver  
 Crabb, Stephen  
 Crockart, Mike  
 Crouch, Tracey  
 Davies, David T. C.  
 (Monmouth)  
 Davies, Glyn  
 Davies, Philip  
 de Bois, Nick  
 Dinenage, Caroline  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Dorrell, rh Mr Stephen  
 Dorries, Nadine  
 Doyle-Price, Jackie  
 Drax, Richard  
 Duddridge, James

Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain  
 Dunne, Mr Phillip  
 Ellis, Michael  
 Ellison, Jane  
 Ellwood, Mr Tobias  
 Eustice, George  
 Evans, Graham  
 Evans, Jonathan  
 Evans, Mr Nigel  
 Evennett, Mr David  
 Fabricant, Michael  
 Fallon, rh Michael  
 Farron, Tim  
 Foster, rh Mr Don  
 Freer, Mike  
 Gale, Sir Roger  
 Garnier, Sir Edward  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Gauke, Mr David  
 George, Andrew  
 Gibb, Mr Nick  
 Gilbert, Stephen  
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl  
 Glen, John  
 Goodwill, Mr Robert  
 Grant, Mrs Helen  
 Gray, Mr James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Gummer, Ben  
 Gyimah, Mr Sam  
 Halfon, Robert  
 Hames, Duncan  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hancock, Matthew  
 Hancock, Mr Mike  
 Hands, Greg  
 Harper, Mr Mark  
 Harrington, Richard  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Hart, Simon  
 Harvey, Sir Nick  
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan  
 Hayes, rh Mr John  
 Heald, Oliver  
 Heath, Mr David  
 Hemming, John  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Herbert, rh Nick  
 Hinds, Damian  
 Hollingbery, George  
 Hollobone, Mr Phillip  
 Hopkins, Kris  
 Howarth, Sir Gerald  
 Howell, John  
 Hughes, rh Simon  
 Huppert, Dr Julian  
 Hurd, Mr Nick  
 Jackson, Mr Stewart  
 James, Margot  
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnson, Joseph  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Kelly, Chris  
 Kirby, Simon  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Kwarteng, Kwasi  
 Lamb, Norman  
 Lancaster, Mark  
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew

Lee, Jessica  
 Lee, Dr Phillip  
 Leech, Mr John  
 Leslie, Charlotte  
 Lewis, Brandon  
 Lewis, Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Lidington, rh Mr David  
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter  
 Lord, Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Luff, Peter  
 Lumley, Karen  
 Macleod, Mary  
 Main, Mrs Anne  
 Maude, rh Mr Francis  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McIntosh, Miss Anne  
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Patrick  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Milton, Anne  
 Mordaunt, Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, James  
 Mosley, Stephen  
 Mowat, David  
 Mulholland, Greg  
 Munt, Tessa  
 Murray, Sheryll  
 Neill, Robert  
 Newmark, Mr Brooks  
 Nokes, Caroline  
 Norman, Jesse  
 Nuttall, Mr David  
 O'Brien, rh Mr Stephen  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Ollerenshaw, Eric  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Ottaway, rh Richard  
 Parish, Neil  
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Perry, Claire  
 Phillips, Stephen  
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric  
 Pincher, Christopher  
 Prisk, Mr Mark  
 Pritchard, Mark  
 Pugh, John  
 Raab, Mr Dominic  
 Randall, rh Sir John  
 Reckless, Mark  
 Redwood, rh Mr John  
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob  
 Reeve, Simon  
 Reid, Mr Alan  
 Robathan, rh Mr Andrew  
 Robertson, rh Hugh  
 Rogerson, Dan  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Rudd, Amber

Rutley, David  
 Sanders, Mr Adrian  
 Sandys, Laura  
 Scott, Mr Lee  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Sharma, Alok  
 Shelbrooke, Alec  
 Shepherd, Sir Richard  
 Simpson, Mr Keith  
 Skidmore, Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, Julian  
 Smith, Sir Robert  
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline  
 Spencer, Mr Mark  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stephenson, John  
 Stewart, Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Stewart, Rory  
 Streeter, Mr Gary  
 Stride, Mel  
 Stunell, rh Sir Andrew  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond  
 Swinson, Jo  
 Syms, Mr Robert  
 Tapsell, rh Sir Peter  
 Thornton, Mike  
 Thurso, John  
 Tomlinson, Justin

Tredinnick, David  
 Truss, Elizabeth  
 Turner, Mr Andrew  
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew  
 Uppal, Paul  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Walker, Mr Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallace, Mr Ben  
 Watkinson, Dame Angela  
 Weatherley, Mike  
 Webb, Steve  
 Wharton, James  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, Mr John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Willetts, rh Mr David  
 Williams, Mr Mark  
 Williams, Roger  
 Williams, Stephen  
 Williamson, Gavin  
 Willott, Jenny  
 Wilson, Mr Rob  
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah  
 Wright, Jeremy  
 Wright, Simon  
 Yeo, Mr Tim  
 Zahawi, Nadhim

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Karen Bradley and**  
**Mark Hunter**

*Question accordingly negated.*

#### **New Clause 14**

##### **SELF-EXCLUSION FOR REMOTE GAMBLING**

'After section 89(1) (remote operating licence) of the Gambling Act 2005, insert—

“( ) The Commission shall hold a list of persons who have registered to be excluded from remote gambling.

( ) It shall be a condition of a remote operating licence that an operator must exclude any person who has registered for self-exclusion with the Commission.”. —(*Jim Shannon.*)

*This New Clause would give the power for the Commission to hold a list of those who wish to self-exclude. It would be a condition of a remote operating licence that individuals on the list must be excluded.*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

*Question put, That the clause be read a Second time.*

*The House divided: Ayes 223, Noes 283.*

**Division No. 139]**

**[2.53 pm**

##### **AYES**

Abbott, Ms Diane  
 Abrahams, Debbie  
 Alexander, Heidi  
 Ali, Rushanara  
 Anderson, Mr David  
 Ashworth, Jonathan  
 Austin, Ian  
 Bailey, Mr Adrian  
 Bain, Mr William  
 Banks, Gordon  
 Barron, rh Mr Kevin  
 Beckett, rh Margaret  
 Begg, Dame Anne

Benn, rh Hilary  
 Benton, Mr Joe  
 Berger, Luciana  
 Betts, Mr Clive  
 Blackman-Woods, Roberta  
 Blears, rh Hazel  
 Blenkinsop, Tom  
 Blomfield, Paul  
 Blunkett, rh Mr David  
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
 Brennan, Kevin  
 Brown, Lyn  
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas

Brown, Mr Russell  
 Bryant, Chris  
 Buck, Ms Karen  
 Burden, Richard  
 Byrne, rh Mr Liam  
 Campbell, Mr Alan  
 Caton, Martin  
 Champion, Sarah  
 Chapman, Jenny  
 Clark, Katy  
 Clarke, rh Mr Tom  
 Clwyd, rh Ann  
 Coaker, Vernon  
 Coffey, Ann  
 Connarty, Michael  
 Cooper, Rosie  
 Corbyn, Jeremy  
 Crausby, Mr David  
 Creagh, Mary  
 Creasy, Stella  
 Cruddas, Jon  
 Cryer, John  
 Cunningham, Alex  
 Cunningham, Mr Jim  
 Cunningham, Sir Tony  
 Danczuk, Simon  
 David, Wayne  
 Davidson, Mr Ian  
 Davies, Geraint  
 Denham, rh Mr John  
 Dobbin, Jim  
 Docherty, Thomas  
 Dodds, rh Mr Nigel  
 Donohoe, Mr Brian H.  
 Doran, Mr Frank  
 Doughty, Stephen  
 Dowd, Jim  
 Doyle, Gemma  
 Durkan, Mark  
 Eagle, Ms Angela  
 Eagle, Maria  
 Edwards, Jonathan  
 Efford, Clive  
 Elliott, Julie  
 Ellman, Mrs Louise  
 Engel, Natascha  
 Evans, Chris  
 Farrelly, Paul  
 Field, rh Mr Frank  
 Fitzpatrick, Jim  
 Ffello, Robert  
 Flynn, Paul  
 Fovargue, Yvonne  
 Francis, Dr Hywel  
 Gapes, Mike  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 Gilmore, Sheila  
 Glindon, Mrs Mary  
 Goggins, rh Paul  
 Goldsmith, Zac  
 Goodman, Helen  
 Greatrex, Tom  
 Green, Kate  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 Griffith, Nia  
 Gwynne, Andrew  
 Hain, rh Mr Peter  
 Hamilton, Mr David  
 Hamilton, Fabian  
 Hancock, Mr Mike  
 Hanson, rh Mr David  
 Havard, Mr Dai  
 Healey, rh John  
 Hendrick, Mark  
 Hermon, Lady  
 Heyes, David  
 Hillier, Meg  
 Hilling, Julie  
 Hodge, rh Margaret  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Hoey, Kate  
 Hood, Mr Jim  
 Hopkins, Kelvin  
 Hosie, Stewart  
 Howarth, rh Mr George  
 Hunt, Tristram  
 Irranca-Davies, Huw  
 Jamieson, Cathy  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Johnson, rh Alan  
 Johnson, Diana  
 Jones, Graham  
 Jones, Helen  
 Jones, Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Susan Elan  
 Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald  
 Keeley, Barbara  
 Kendall, Liz  
 Lammy, rh Mr David  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Lazarowicz, Mark  
 Leslie, Chris  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Llwyd, rh Mr Elyfn  
 Long, Naomi  
 Love, Mr Andrew  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lucas, Ian  
 MacNeil, Mr Angus Brendan  
 Mactaggart, Fiona  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Mann, John  
 Marsden, Mr Gordon  
 McCabe, Steve  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McClymont, Gregg  
 McCrea, Dr William  
 McDonagh, Siobhain  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McDonnell, Dr Alasdair  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McGovern, Jim  
 McKechin, Ann  
 McKenzie, Mr Iain  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 Meacher, rh Mr Michael  
 Meale, Sir Alan  
 Miller, Andrew  
 Mitchell, Austin  
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morris, Grahame M.  
*(Easington)*  
 Mudie, Mr George  
 Munn, Meg  
 Murphy, rh Paul  
 Murray, Ian  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Nash, Pamela  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Osborne, Sandra  
 Owen, Albert

Pearce, Teresa  
 Perkins, Toby  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pound, Stephen  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Raynsford, rh Mr Nick  
 Reed, Mr Jamie  
 Reed, Mr Steve  
 Reynolds, Emma  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Riordan, Mrs Linda  
 Ritchie, Ms Margaret  
 Robertson, John  
 Roy, Lindsay  
 Ruane, Chris  
 Ruddock, rh Dame Joan  
 Sawford, Andy  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Sheridan, Jim  
 Shuker, Gavin  
 Simpson, David  
 Skinner, Mr Dennis  
 Slaughter, Mr Andy  
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew  
 Smith, Angela  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smith, Owen

Spellar, rh Mr John  
 Straw, rh Mr Jack  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Stuart, Ms Gisela  
 Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry  
 Tami, Mark  
 Thomas, Mr Gareth  
 Thornberry, Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twigg, Stephen  
 Vaz, Valerie  
 Watts, Mr Dave  
 Weir, Mr Mike  
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Williamson, Chris  
 Winnick, Mr David  
 Wishart, Pete  
 Woodcock, John  
 Woodward, rh Mr Shaun  
 Wright, David  
 Wright, Mr Iain

**Tellers for the Ayes:**

**Nic Dakin and  
 Phil Wilson**

**NOES**

Adams, Nigel  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Amess, Mr David  
 Andrew, Stuart  
 Arbutnot, rh Mr James  
 Baker, Norman  
 Baker, Steve  
 Baldry, Sir Tony  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Barclay, Stephen  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Bebb, Guto  
 Beith, rh Sir Alan  
 Bellingham, Mr Henry  
 Benyon, Richard  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, Jake  
 Bingham, Andrew  
 Binley, Mr Brian  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blackwood, Nicola  
 Blunt, Mr Crispin  
 Boles, Nick  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Bradley, Karen  
 Brady, Mr Graham  
 Brake, rh Tom  
 Bray, Angie  
 Brazier, Mr Julian  
 Brine, Steve  
 Brokenshire, James  
 Brooke, Annette  
 Browne, Mr Jeremy  
 Buckland, Mr Robert  
 Burley, Mr Aidan  
 Burns, Conor  
 Burns, rh Mr Simon  
 Burrowes, Mr David  
 Burstow, rh Paul  
 Burt, rh Alistair  
 Burt, Lorely  
 Byles, Dan  
 Cable, rh Vince  
 Cairns, Alun  
 Campbell, rh Sir Menzies  
 Carmichael, Neil  
 Cash, Mr William  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 Chope, Mr Christopher  
 Clappison, Mr James  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey  
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse  
 Collins, Damian  
 Colville, Oliver  
 Crabb, Stephen  
 Crockart, Mike  
 Crouch, Tracey  
 Davies, David T. C.  
*(Monmouth)*  
 Davies, Glyn  
 Davies, Philip  
 de Bois, Nick  
 Dinanage, Caroline  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Dorrell, rh Mr Stephen  
 Dorries, Nadine  
 Doyle-Price, Jackie  
 Drax, Richard  
 Duddridge, James  
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain  
 Ellis, Michael  
 Ellison, Jane  
 Ellwood, Mr Tobias  
 Eustice, George  
 Evans, Graham  
 Evans, Jonathan  
 Evans, Mr Nigel  
 Evnnett, Mr David

Fabricant, Michael  
 Fallon, rh Michael  
 Farron, Tim  
 Foster, rh Mr Don  
 Fox, rh Dr Liam  
 Freer, Mike  
 Gale, Sir Roger  
 Garnier, Sir Edward  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Gauke, Mr David  
 George, Andrew  
 Gibb, Mr Nick  
 Gilbert, Stephen  
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl  
 Glen, John  
 Goodwill, Mr Robert  
 Gove, rh Michael  
 Grant, Mrs Helen  
 Gray, Mr James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Gummer, Ben  
 Gyimah, Mr Sam  
 Halfon, Robert  
 Hames, Duncan  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hancock, Matthew  
 Hands, Greg  
 Harper, Mr Mark  
 Harrington, Richard  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Hart, Simon  
 Harvey, Sir Nick  
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan  
 Hayes, rh Mr John  
 Heald, Oliver  
 Heath, Mr David  
 Hemming, John  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Hendry, Charles  
 Herbert, rh Nick  
 Hinds, Damian  
 Hollingbery, George  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Holloway, Mr Adam  
 Hopkins, Kris  
 Howarth, Sir Gerald  
 Howell, John  
 Hughes, rh Simon  
 Hunter, Mark  
 Huppert, Dr Julian  
 Hurd, Mr Nick  
 Jackson, Mr Stewart  
 James, Margot  
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnson, Joseph  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Kelly, Chris  
 Kirby, Simon  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Kwarteng, Kwasi  
 Lamb, Norman  
 Lancaster, Mark  
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew  
 Lee, Jessica  
 Lee, Dr Phillip  
 Leech, Mr John  
 Lefroy, Jeremy  
 Leigh, Sir Edward  
 Leslie, Charlotte

Lewis, Brandon  
 Lewis, Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Lidington, rh Mr David  
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter  
 Lord, Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Luff, Peter  
 Lumley, Karen  
 Macleod, Mary  
 Main, Mrs Anne  
 Maude, rh Mr Francis  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McIntosh, Miss Anne  
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Milton, Anne  
 Moore, rh Michael  
 Mordaunt, Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, James  
 Mosley, Stephen  
 Mowat, David  
 Mulholland, Greg  
 Munt, Tessa  
 Murray, Sheryll  
 Neill, Robert  
 Newmark, Mr Brooks  
 Nokes, Caroline  
 Norman, Jesse  
 Nuttall, Mr David  
 O'Brien, rh Mr Stephen  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Ollerenshaw, Eric  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Ottaway, rh Richard  
 Parish, Neil  
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Perry, Claire  
 Phillips, Stephen  
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric  
 Pincher, Christopher  
 Prisk, Mr Mark  
 Pritchard, Mark  
 Pugh, John  
 Raab, Mr Dominic  
 Randall, rh Sir John  
 Reckless, Mark  
 Redwood, rh Mr John  
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob  
 Reeve, Simon  
 Reid, Mr Alan  
 Robathan, rh Mr Andrew  
 Robertson, rh Hugh  
 Rogerson, Dan  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Rudd, Amber  
 Rutley, David  
 Sanders, Mr Adrian  
 Sandys, Laura  
 Scott, Mr Lee

Selous, Andrew  
 Sharma, Alok  
 Shelbrooke, Alec  
 Shepherd, Sir Richard  
 Simpson, Mr Keith  
 Skidmore, Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, Julian  
 Smith, Sir Robert  
 Soames, rh Nicholas  
 Soubry, Anna  
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline  
 Spencer, Mr Mark  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Stewart, Rory  
 Streeter, Mr Gary  
 Stride, Mel  
 Stunell, rh Sir Andrew  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Swales, Iain  
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond  
 Swinson, Jo  
 Syms, Mr Robert  
 Tapsell, rh Sir Peter  
 Thornton, Mike  
 Thurso, John  
 Timpson, Mr Edward  
 Tomlinson, Justin

Tredinnick, David  
 Truss, Elizabeth  
 Turner, Mr Andrew  
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew  
 Uppal, Paul  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Walker, Mr Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallace, Mr Ben  
 Watkinson, Dame Angela  
 Weatherley, Mike  
 Webb, Steve  
 Wharton, James  
 Wheeler, Heather  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, Mr John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Willetts, rh Mr David  
 Williams, Mr Mark  
 Williams, Roger  
 Williams, Stephen  
 Williamson, Gavin  
 Wilson, Mr Rob  
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah  
 Wright, Jeremy  
 Wright, Simon  
 Yeo, Mr Tim  
 Zahawi, Nadhim

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Jenny Willott and**  
**Gavin Barwell**

*Question accordingly negated.*

### *Third Reading*

3.4 pm

**Mrs Grant:** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I begin by thanking all those from across the House and outside who have taken part in the debates on the Bill. In particular, I thank the Chairmen of the Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) and the hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams).

The Bill has its origins in the previous Administration's review of the remote gambling regulatory framework. I thank the hon. Member for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe) in particular for his contribution during the Bill's progress. I thank the Culture, Media and Sport Committee for its thoughtful and thorough pre-legislative scrutiny, which was key in helping to strengthen the Bill.

I believe I am right in saying that the Bill enjoys support from across the House, although some believe that it does not go far enough. Several issues have been debated at various stages, including today, and several new clauses have been tabled. I have explained as carefully as I can the reasons we have chosen not to accept them. Although the Government have not accepted any amendments on these matters, as we do not believe the Bill is the right vehicle for such changes, we have noted the concern on these matters and hope to make progress on them through a non-legislative avenue.

The Bill is a prudential measure which will provide greater protection for consumers based in Great Britain. It will tighten current legislation to ensure that all remote gambling, whether provided in Britain or overseas,

[Mrs Grant]

is a licensed activity, subject to the Gambling Commission's standards and controls. I commend the Bill to the House.

3.6 pm

**Clive Efford:** In spite of all the amendments that we tabled, we welcome the Bill, as far as it goes. It brings an industry that has grown to £2 billion a year under the UK Gambling Commission as the licensing authority and, in respect of licensing, it will create a level playing field between remote gambling operators, those that have remained onshore and our high street betting shops.

The questions that we have raised will be tested by how well the Gambling Commission enforces the requirements that are laid out in the Bill and implicit in the licence. Aspects such as research, treatment, the protection or self-exclusion of individuals, enforcement tools using IP blocking, financial blocking, and possible change to the watershed will all be subject to enforcement by the Gambling Commission. We will have to remain vigilant and see how that is implemented to ensure that the Bill has the desired effect, as expressed by Members in all parts of the House.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford South (Mr Sutcliffe) for the work that he initiated in government. Shortly after the remote gambling regulations were put in place in 2007, he and the present Comptroller of Her Majesty's Household, the right hon. Member for Bath (Mr Foster), who is not in his place and to whom I pay tribute, identified the need for further regulation. It has taken some time for us to get to the point where we have the legislation before us, but we are here now and the Bill, as far as it goes, has support from all parts of the House, because we want to set the very highest standards here in the UK, which others will follow across the world in the regulation of remote and online gambling.

We certainly want the Gambling Commission to set the very highest standards so that people can enjoy the pastime of gambling in safety and in the knowledge that everything is being done to ensure that they can do so without fear of any harm. We commend the Bill and hope sincerely that everything required by it will be realised under the licensing regime applied by the Gambling Commission.

3.9 pm

**Philip Davies:** I, too, rise to support the Bill, although not necessarily for the reasons it was introduced. The Government introduced the Bill—if we believe what they say—for the purposes of regulation, but it seems to me that for the purposes of regulation it is completely unnecessary. In fact, it will probably make the regulatory system worse, because although virtually every gambling operator used by UK consumers is currently properly regulated, either here or in other places such as Gibraltar, the chances are—the Treasury's own forecasts show this—that as a result of the Bill around 20% of betting will take place with unlicensed and unregulated operators. As far as the regulation of gambling is concerned, the Bill represents a step backwards, rather than a step forwards.

However, I support the Bill for the real reason behind it, which the Government dare not say: it will allow them to tax gambling companies currently based in places such as Gibraltar and allow people in the UK who place bets with those companies to be subject to taxation. I think that is a perfectly legitimate thing for the Government to do, but I understand that for legal reasons within the EU they do not want to say it. I am pretty certain that is the reason for the Bill, and on that basis I support it.

I have one question for the Minister, which I hope she can answer. She will be relieved to know that it is not about sport. I was tempted to ask her the name of this year's winner of the grand national—a clue is that it was trained in my constituency—but I will resist that temptation. Will she give me a guarantee that the Bill will not lead to any empire building by the Gambling Commission, which could claim that it needs ever more resources, ever more money and ever bigger fees to do the regulation that will be expected of it as a result of the Bill? The Culture, Media and Sport Committee was keen to get assurances on that during our pre-legislative scrutiny. I hope that she will make it clear to the Gambling Commission that the Bill cannot be used as an excuse.

**Robert Neill:** My hon. Friend makes a fair point. Does he accept that one way to avoid the needless spread of bureaucracy would be for the UK's Gambling Commission to use some of the expertise that exists in the Alderney gambling control commission or Gibraltar's commission, where there is likely to be spare capacity? Using what is already there, rather than inventing new methods and posts, might be a way of achieving sensible regulation at a reasonable price.

**Philip Davies:** I very much agree with my hon. Friend. He gets to the nub of my concern about the Bill, which is that companies based in places such as Gibraltar are already particularly well regulated by the authorities there, which is why the Bill is complete nonsense from any regulatory or licensing perspective—it is clearly about taxation. Once we get over the emperor's new clothes situation, I hope that the Government will take my hon. Friend's advice, because the most effective way to license and regulate those industries will be by using the expertise that already exists.

Notwithstanding my concerns about empire building by the Gambling Commission, which I hope will not be a consequence of the Bill, and the fact that I consider the regulatory system for gambling to have taken a step backwards, I support the Bill and hope that the revenue raised will be useful in paying down our debts. The success or failure of the Bill will depend not on the legislation, but on the rates of taxation the Treasury places on the gambling industry as a consequence of it. The Treasury—I hope that the Minister will take this message back—must not stifle some of the smaller niche gambling companies, which employ many people in this country, because they would be finished off by a rate of 15%. The big gambling companies can look after themselves, but the smaller ones need a competitive rate. Otherwise, they will go out of business and we will end up losing jobs and tax revenue. Notwithstanding those concerns, I support the Bill.

3.14 pm

**Mr Sutcliffe:** It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Shipley (Philip Davies). We disagree on some things, but he is an excellent advocate for the horse racing and betting industries. We might draw different conclusions on the purpose of the Bill, but I think that we agree that it is important. I pay tribute to the Minister for bringing it forward. The process started, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Clive Efford) said, more than three years ago. I also pay tribute to the officials in the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, because it is important that they work with the Gambling Commission and the sector to understand the nature of the industry, which is very important to this country given the number of jobs it creates, the amount of tax that it pays and the investment it makes in the economy.

Opportunities to discuss the gambling industry in the House are few and far between. One of the difficulties is that some people take a blanket approach to gambling and oppose anything to do with it because they think that it is alien to our country, but in reality that is not the case. As we have seen with the success of the national lottery and national institutions such as the derby, the grand national and many other racing events, sport and gambling are interlinked.

The important thing about the Bill is that it offers a consumer safeguard, and in that respect it fills a gap in the previous legislation, the Gambling Act 2005. However, we have put a lot of trust in the Minister today—I do not doubt that it will be honoured—to do things we have asked her to do. We have asked her to look at the casino industry and, outside the scope of the Bill, the opportunity to put right some of the wrongs for that industry. I look forward to hearing what she has to say as a result of her consultation with the sector in due course.

I think that the Minister is wrong not to support the new clause on the horserace betting levy. The horse racing industry is important to the country. The problem is that if it takes four years to reach a conclusion for the next negotiations, some race courses and parts of the industry might not survive. I hope that she can give some momentum to that. I referred in Committee to the other place, and I am sure that when the Bill goes to the other place its Members who are even more committed to racing than we are in this House—if that is possible—will remind her of the levy's impact on the industry.

The Bill is a good one. I am grateful to the Minister for listening to the comments that have been put to her from both sides of the House. I look forward to its

passage through the other place. However, I feel that the House needs to look at the impact of gambling on society, because there are people who have problems, and the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) is right to raise those concerns. It might sound like a small percentage—0.9%—but my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham is right about the number of people affected, so there needs to be adequate research, education and treatment. I support the Bill.

3.17 pm

**Jim Shannon:** I thank the Minister for her response. Although we did not get the response we wanted, as the Minister acknowledged, she did make a commitment to consider pushing the industry in the direction in which we all want it to go. From the Government's point of view, and that of the Opposition, I think that the overall consensus is that we need to help those who need help. That is where I and many others come from in relation to problem gamblers and vulnerable people.

With regard to new clause 14, I hope that when the Bill goes to the other place, with due diligence—to use that terminology—perhaps something might be added that this House can endorse. I would be glad to see such a move in the right direction. I would also be pleased to see money from dormant bank accounts going to help those with gambling addictions—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. The debate is on Third Reading, not the clauses.

**Jim Shannon:** I understand that, Mr Deputy Speaker—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. It is not about understanding it; the point is that you have to talk about it. I am not too worried about the understanding.

**Jim Shannon:** I stand corrected, Mr Deputy Speaker. I understand it very well and I will now get it right.

When the Bill returns to the House, I hope that we will have an opportunity to address all those issues. I look forward to legislation that empowers problem gamblers and vulnerable people to get help when they need it most. If we can achieve that, we will have achieved a lot.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.*

## London Local Authorities and Transport for London (No. 2) Bill [Lords]

### Third Reading

3.19 pm

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Third time.

I do not wish to detain the House for too long because the Bill has been subject to very detailed scrutiny at all its stages in this House and in the other place. I hope that, like the two previous London Local Authorities and Transport for London Bills, this Bill will be passed this afternoon, giving the councils and Transport for London very useful powers that I am sure will be welcomed by everyone who lives in London.

London councils and boroughs bring forward proposals for Bills, and this one started out in May 2007. At that time, I was sitting as deputy leader of Brent council, where we gave the Bill some detailed scrutiny. After the proposals were refined in summer 2007, the Bill was finally lodged in November 2007. It can therefore be said that it has had a long gestation period of some six years.

I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope) and his colleagues, my hon. Friends the Member for Shipley (Philip Davies) and for Bury North (Mr Nuttall) and others, who have subjected the Bill to very detailed scrutiny. It is fair to say that it has been a long process. My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch has sought tirelessly, not only on this private Bill but on others promoted by London local authorities and, indeed, authorities throughout the land, to ensure that such Bills are given detailed scrutiny, as is entirely appropriate. It may be said that they get far more scrutiny than legislation proposed by the Government that is much more important, if that is possible. I am sure that his constituents will rest easy knowing that his assiduous work on this Bill on their behalf means that when they next visit this great city there will be less clutter on the streets, apart from electricity charging points, safer skips and cleaner air as a result of the increase in the use of electric vehicles that will no doubt arise.

**Mr Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his generous remarks. This Bill started off with 39 clauses and now has 20. Does he accept that other legislation we pass in this House would invariably be much better if it were similarly truncated?

**Bob Blackman:** I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. Before the Bill started, 15 clauses were removed by the Lords Select Committee that considered it, 10 of which formed one part of the Bill, and three were dropped by the promoters in agreement with people who objected. Detailed elements of the Bill have been subjected to tidying up and making sure that they are appropriate to the times we live in.

I thank the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Stephen Hammond), and the hon. Member for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood) for their contributions to this debate.

Finally, I would like to mention something that will no doubt cause great distress to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch and his colleagues and perhaps some joy and relief to others, including our Whips. I have been told that apart from a short four-month period in 1991, ever since the first London local authorities Bill was deposited in November 1988 there has been at least one such Bill before Parliament. When this Bill obtains Royal Assent, as I trust it now will, that continuous record will end. The torch is being carried on to some extent by TfL with a Bill that is currently in the Lords, but for the London boroughs, for the moment, that is it. As it happens, tomorrow is the day by which private Bills must be deposited in Parliament. I have it on very good authority that a London local authorities Bill will not be deposited.

With that, Mr Deputy Speaker, I thank you and your colleagues for your forbearance and hope that the House will see shortly see fit to give this worthy Bill a Third Reading.

3.24 pm

**Mr Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): We have up to three hours in which we could debate the Third Reading of this Bill—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Lindsay Hoyle):** Order. I might be able to help the hon. Gentleman. As we all know, Third Readings never drag on for that long, and I would be tempted to put the Question way before then, so he ought to get his points in and not detain the House for too long. I know that he is desperate to get on to the Second Reading of the next Bill.

**Mr Chope:** As always, you anticipate my remarks, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The whole process of private legislation should perhaps be revisited by the Procedure Committee, because this Bill shows that too often Bills are brought to this House and presented without being sufficiently thought through in advance. Great chunks of the Bill have been removed as a result of the scrutiny that this House has given to it. I know, Mr Deputy Speaker, that on Third Reading we do not talk about what is not in a Bill but only what is left in it. However, it is important to put it on record that all the provisions relating to pedicabs, for example, which were very controversial, have been completely removed. As I indicated in my intervention on my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman), a Bill that originally had 39 clauses now has only 20, so it is much tighter.

There have also been a significant number of amendments. I commend my hon. Friend for the constructive way in which he has dealt with the points that have been raised. Obviously he and I have not agreed about everything, but where we have been able to agree we have amended the Bill accordingly.

**Sir Greg Knight** (East Yorkshire) (Con): Has my hon. Friend not rather destroyed his own argument? If the Bill has been improved in the process of scrutiny that already exists, surely there is no need for the Procedure Committee to look at our procedures.

**Mr Chope:** As my right hon. Friend is a former distinguished Chairman of the Procedure Committee, his intervention will probably carry considerable weight. I can understand why the Committee might not want to get involved in looking at private legislation. However,

quite a lot of right hon. and hon. Members' time has been taken up with this legislation, and the implication of my remarks was that some of that time could have been spared if the contents of the Bill had been thought through more carefully in advance before it was presented. I have noticed a distinct drying up of the number of private Bills being brought before the House. I hope that the thorough scrutiny to which they have been subject has become part of a deterrent process whereby people realise that one cannot just dream up some idea, put it in the form of legislation, present it, and hope that it will go through the House without anybody taking too much notice of it. If the Procedure Committee wants to look at the issue, then obviously it will do so.

The next Bill we are debating deals with filming on the highways in one particular locality. It is often asked why we need Bills dealing with a particular locality that could have a more general application through an enabling Bill passed by the Government that would enable local authorities, if they so wished, to opt into certain legislation. However, that is a debate for another day.

Having had such constructive engagement with my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East, it would not be appropriate to seek to divide the House on Third Reading. As I have said all along, there are parts of this Bill that I support. I merely wanted to ensure that it was a better Bill when it left this House than when it arrived. I think that anybody looking at this objectively will agree with me and with you, Mr Deputy Speaker, that it is a better Bill that is worthy of a Third Reading.

3.28 pm

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): I am glad to be able to speak in this debate, if a little surprised at how soon I am doing so. No doubt hon. Members

on both sides of the House will be glad that six years after this Bill was deposited in the House we have finally reached its Third Reading.

Many Members have worked to improve the Bill, of whom many are in their places today, as have many in the other place, and not least in Committee. I want to take this opportunity to place on record my thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick), who spoke on behalf of the Opposition on Report. It should be recognised that the main promoter of the Bill, Westminster city council, has shown a willingness to compromise on a number of points. Thanks to that work, this is, overall, a sensible package of measures and I hope the House will give the Bill a Third Reading.

3.29 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Stephen Hammond):** I am delighted that we have reached Third Reading and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman) on his efforts in promoting the Bill. He and many other Members present have sought to make changes to, and contribute to extensive scrutiny of, the Bill during its passage through Parliament. The debate has been healthy and constructive, and the Bill has undoubtedly been improved as a result. The Government have made it clear throughout that we support the principle of the Bill. I thank my hon. Friend for his work in steering it through the House and Third Reading, and I hope it will receive Royal Assent. With that, I reiterate the Government's position.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.*

## Hertfordshire County Council (Filming on Highways) Bill [Lords]

### *Second Reading*

3.31 pm

**Mr James Clappison** (Hertsmere) (Con): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This debate has already had something of a preview, but I hope there will not be a sequel. This very important Bill is promoted by Hertfordshire county council and has the full support of the borough council in my constituency, Hertsmere borough council. The purpose of the Bill is to confer powers in relation to filming on highways in Hertfordshire and thereby to help the film industry, which is an important business and employer in Hertfordshire.

In fact, there are no fewer than five major film studios in Hertfordshire, including Elstree studios in my constituency, the BBC studios in Elstree and the Warner Brothers studios in Leavesden. They are responsible for some of the most well-known and well-liked television programmes on our screens today, as well as for some important films. Elstree studios in particular have made a major contribution to the British film industry since its very beginning. They have also made a contribution to the international film industry and were used for the “Star Wars” and “Indiana Jones” films. They have made a contribution to the British film industry since 1925 and many of our most iconic films were made there, including my all-time favourite, “Ice Cold in Alex”. I hope it will not disappoint too many fans of that film if I disclose that the ice-cold beer consumed at the end of the journey across the desert—supposedly in Alexandria—was in fact consumed just off the Shenley road in Borehamwood.

Likewise, many important television programmes have been and continue to be produced there. Last Saturday evening’s episode of “Strictly Come Dancing” was produced at Elstree studios, which is the programme’s new home. I am not sure whether that particular programme will need to avail itself of the Bill’s provisions, but many other productions at local studios may wish to do so. The intention behind the Bill is to help those productions and to facilitate film making in Hertfordshire. A number of new programmes are in production at Elstree studios, including a new production of “Paddington Bear”, which may well want to avail itself of the provisions.

I am confident that the film studios in my constituency will continue to be at the forefront of film making in Britain for many years to come, not least because the Elstree university technical college opened its doors in September, offering a range of courses focusing on technical skills and crafts that support the film, television and entertainment industry.

**Sir Greg Knight** (East Yorkshire) (Con): What duties would rest on my hon. Friend’s county council to inform motorists of a road closure? If one is trying to get from A to B and one is not from the particular county in which one happens to be travelling, there is nothing more infuriating than to find oneself faced with a road closure that was not flagged up earlier. What duties would the county council be under, should the Bill become an Act, to advise motorists that a road closure is in force?

**Mr Clappison:** My right hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. Hertfordshire county council has given an assurance that it will follow similar procedures to those set out in the Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Procedure Regulations 1992 on giving notice of when roads will be used during the course of filming. Those requirements relate to posting notices in the street, notifying the police and making certain advertisements of when the roads will be closed. The duties for when the roads are actually closed are set out in clauses 3 and 4, to which I will turn shortly.

**Mr Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): Following on from the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for East Yorkshire (Sir Greg Knight), proposed new subsection (6C) in clause 4 makes it clear that the county council is seeking powers to enable it to close a road with a minimum of only 24 hours notice. Does my hon. Friend think that that is reasonable?

**Mr Clappison:** As my hon. Friend will know, that is the film notice, as opposed to the film order, and the various requirements relate to film notices. I hope he will take some consolation from the fact that a film notice can continue for only 24 hours, whereas a film order can continue for longer. As he has said, notice of a film notice has to be given at least 24 hours before it comes into effect. The purpose is to deal with situations in which weather may be a factor and the film producers want to take advantage of temporary weather conditions.

**Mr David Nuttall** (Bury North) (Con): My hon. Friend has set out the long history of film making in his constituency and his part of the world. Given that that has happened for so many years, will he briefly set out why these measures are now deemed necessary and how the area managed without them in the past?

**Mr Clappison:** My hon. Friend makes a fair point. I am aware that roads have been closed in the past, but I am not sure whether the legal powers under which they were closed were, shall we say, as certain as some would have liked them to have been. I think my hon. Friend would be among the first to ask whether there was a proper legal power and to look into it. The Bill will put the legal position beyond any doubt. I hope I will be able to assist hon. Members by explaining that this Bill is analogous to existing legislation for other categories of event and activity for which roads can be closed. The Bill merely makes it clear that film making will be added to that list.

May I say, in general support of the Bill, that the film industry and the ability to attract films to use our excellent local environment are very important for the local economy? It was reported in December 2011 that Hertfordshire employs approximately 3,200 people in the film and television industry, quite a few of whom live in my constituency. Film and television productions are facilitated if film makers are able to use out-of-studio locations in the many picturesque locations in Hertsmere and Hertfordshire. As I have indicated, this Bill will put the use of those localities and local roads on a firmer legislative footing.

The provisions of the Bill will have the effect, as I have suggested, of extending, with modifications, the existing powers of the highway authority to close roads for special events. Those powers are found, as I am sure hon. Members will know, in the Road Traffic Regulation

Act 1984, which was amended in the 1990s to enable the Tour de France to be hosted in England for the first time. The relevant provision of the 1984 Act allows closures to facilitate the holding of a relevant event, which is defined as

“any sporting event, social event or entertainment which is held on a road.”

It is ambiguous whether that definition includes film making.

**Sir Greg Knight:** Is there not a difference, though, between those examples and the Bill’s proposals? When a road is closed for a street party or a sporting event, it could be argued that it is for the public benefit, because the public are invited and expected to take part. When a road is closed for the making of a film, however, the film director will not want the public to be present, because they will spoil the shot. It could therefore be argued that the Bill seeks to close a public highway for a narrow sectional interest. Is that not the difference?

**Mr Clappison:** I have been in agreement with interventions by my right hon. and hon. Friends, but may I put a different case? My right hon. Friend gives the example of entertainments and the like, but they do not confer any wider economic benefit. Filming confers a wider economic benefit on the community because it will help prosperity and employment to be established in Hertfordshire.

I also disagree with what my right hon. Friend said about keeping people away from the filming. My experience is that film makers are happy for members of the public to be present to watch from an appropriate distance, provided they do not interfere with the filming. That may not always be the case, but I know of examples in my constituency where it has been.

Members of the public in Hertfordshire take not only great pleasure from witnessing films being made, but pride from the fact that well-known local landmarks are used for filming. My right hon. Friend will not be old enough to remember “On the Buses”—I remember it, I am sad to say—but in Borehamwood, we take great pleasure from the fact that the principal figure in the series happened to be a bus driver, the late Reg Varney, who was a great character. For the filming, he drove his bus up and down Shenley road in Borehamwood, and if one watches those films, one can see Shenley road as it was then, with members of the public standing around and witnessing the film being made. It is all there in that very good series. I will not digress any more about “On the Buses”, but I am sure that there are many other good examples.

Legally, the Bill will have the effect of categorising the making of a film as a “relevant event”, therefore allowing the council to make closure orders. The existing restriction on special events that allows such events to last for three days will continue in force, but it will be extended to seven days for film orders. The 1984 Act allows a road to be closed for three days, but the Bill will allow it to be closed for seven days. Up to six film orders can be made for any one stretch of road under the provisions.

In addition to such film orders, the Bill makes provision for film notices, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope) has already referred. Going beyond existing provisions for special events, film notices

will enable the council to issue restrictions on road use where it appears to the council that it is expedient that the closure should come into effect without delay, although the duration of up to 24 hours is shorter than the seven days for film orders.

**Mr Chope:** Does my hon. Friend accept that it is possible to close any road for only three days once a year under the Road Traffic Regulation Act, but under his Bill it will be possible to close a particular piece of road on six occasions for a maximum of seven days each time—in other words, for 42 days a year?

**Mr Clappison:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. If he has been listening, I hope that he will accept that I have been careful to say that the power is being extended. That is one of the details that it is important to debate, and no doubt he will want to come back to that point. I suggest that that is so to fit in with the needs of the film industry. I suppose that it will be hoped that roads will not need to be closed for the maximum period or for the maximum number of six occasions in a year. That provision is to fit in with the convenience of, and to promote, the film industry, which has to be balanced against the other factors that he mentioned, including the interests of local road users.

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

**Mr Clappison:** Of course I will, because the issue is important.

**Mr Chope:** My hon. Friend is being very fair, but what is his view of the reasonableness of the provision? If one was running a business on a road that was closed for 42 days a year, would that be reasonable?

**Mr Clappison:** There is a procedure for making the orders by the local authority. I take my hon. Friend’s point, but I must say that many businesses are dependent on the film industry, particularly in my constituency, because there is so much film making there. People are so used to the film industry that they accept that some inconvenience is associated with attracting to Hertfordshire, and in particular to my constituency, important productions that are of so much general benefit to the public and the local economy. As far as I am aware—I will probably have an avalanche of mail complaining about it—there is a general acceptance of that in my constituency, as well as great pride in our connection with film making and a wish for it to continue. He makes a good point about the generality of the powers, but there are special circumstances to take account of in the case of my constituency.

I hope that I have been frank enough for my hon. Friends about the proposals in the Bill. As I have said, film notices go beyond the existing provisions for special events that I have mentioned in current legislation. Film notices enable the council to issue restrictions on road use where it appears to the council that it is expedient that the closure should come into effect without delay, which is particularly valuable to the film industry.

To turn to the detailed provisions, clause 3(2) provides that a “relevant event” under section 16A of the 1984 Act will include film making. Hon. Friends who are

[Mr Clappison]

familiar with the 1984 Act will know that roads can already be closed, although for a shorter duration, for the several events specified in section 16A, covering

“the holding of a relevant event,...enabling members of the public to watch a relevant event, or...reducing the disruption to traffic”.

The film order will be added to that list of special events.

Clause 4 deals with restrictions on film orders and notices. Subsection (2) allows for film orders to remain in force for up to seven days, compared with the three days for relevant events under existing provisions, as we have already discussed. Subsection (4) provides that no more than six film orders may be made in any one year, that a film notice shall continue for only 24 hours and that notice of a film notice must be given at least 24 hours before it comes into effect.

Among other matters, clause 5 provides that a breach of a film order or notice will be an offence in the same way as a breach of an order relating to a relevant event under the existing provisions in section 16C of the 1984 Act. I understand that there has been some discussion and, I am happy to say, constructive dialogue between the Bill's promoter and the Minister, as I hope the Minister will confirm.

Clause 6 provides for the council, as a highway authority, to give permission to film makers for the temporary placing of objects on a highway, subject to conditions imposed by the council and certain defined conditions set out in subsection (3). The general purpose is to ensure that that is done safely, because safety is of overriding importance. Subject to such conditions, clause 6 allows the council to authorise equipment, such as static film cameras, lighting rigs or camera trucks to be placed on roads during filming.

**Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con): Will my hon. Friend explain what penalties will apply to somebody who breaks an order, particularly if they were trying to get back to their home on a road that had been closed?

**Mr Clappison:** To assist my hon. Friend, let me point out that those penalties are set out in existing legislation. I hope that I am right in saying that such breaches are dealt with by way of fines, but I will be corrected if I am wrong. I will look at the detail and come back to him in due course.

**Jacob Rees-Mogg:** Will there be an exemption for people who are trying to get back to their own property, because it would seem unreasonable if the closure of a road made it impossible for somebody to get a vehicle back to their own drive or for a pedestrian to walk back to their own house?

**Mr Clappison:** I hope that it gives my hon. Friend some comfort to know that the penalties will be exactly the same as those that have existed for a long time under the 1984 Act, under which roads are closed for the holding of specified events. Famously, that related to the Tour de France, but it has also been used for other events and entertainments. I hope that there is a spirit of reasonableness in all such matters and that only

somebody who is unreasonable will come anywhere near to receiving the penalties that can be meted out under the law.

In summary, the Bill will benefit film making, particularly in my constituency. I have no doubt that it will be subject to the same scrutiny as every other Bill of this kind. I hope that I have been frank with the House in setting out its provisions.

**Sir Greg Knight:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way again; he is being very generous. Have there been any discussions between the promoter of the Bill and the police? For example, are there any police manpower implications? Should the Bill become an Act, the police might be asked to enforce the film orders, so have the police been consulted?

**Mr Clappison:** I will come back to my right hon. Friend on that matter in due course. My understanding is that the county council has consulted widely, so I am sure that the police are aware of what is being proposed. I might be speaking out of turn here, but I think that the police may well find it helpful to have their powers put on a firmer footing. That is the purpose of the Bill.

I hope that the Bill will engender many benefits for my constituents. On that basis, I invite the House to give it a Second Reading.

3.50 pm

**Mr Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): May I say at the outset that it is not my desire to divide the House on Second Reading? However, I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmer (Mr Clappison) and the promoter of the Bill will take on board the concerns Government Members have expressed in interventions.

Essentially, the issue is: what is proportionate and reasonable? At the moment, national legislation enables activities to take place on the highway for a maximum of three days and ensures that no piece of road may be affected more often than once a year. As I made clear in an intervention, the Bill would make it possible for an individual piece of highway to be closed for as long as 42 days a year, without any compensation for businesses or residents who were inconvenienced or suffered a loss as a result. The question is whether this House needs to give such wide powers to a local authority through private legislation.

One can envisage what would happen if Westminster bridge was closed for 42 days a year for filming. One could make any number of arguments as to why it would be a wonderful location for filming. If it was closed for 42 days a year, one can imagine what the consequences would be for local residents and other users of that highway. I venture to suggest that the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 was drafted in the way it was to maintain a balance between the interests and needs of local residents and the wider interests that might be served by closing a road for a particular purpose on a particular occasion.

A lot of films are made in Hertfordshire, so the county council feels it needs to increase the powers that are available to it or, as my hon. Friend said, clarify those powers. However, the Bill goes far beyond clarifying the wording of the 1984 Act. A clarification could be

made by adding one or two words to that Act and without changing the amount of time for which a road may be blocked. It is a misrepresentation to suggest that the Bill merely seeks to clarify an ambiguity in the existing legislation. It goes far beyond that and I hope that in Committee it will be given a degree of scrutiny commensurate with those extra powers.

I have been approached by Buckinghamshire county council. I do not know why it thought it necessary to write to me for advice on introducing a private Bill, but it had the courtesy of so doing. I wrote back to the council leader and said that the Bill that he was seeking to bring forward was very similar, if not identical, to this one. If it is presented tomorrow, as we heard it might be, we will see. I suggested that rather than his county council bringing forward a separate Bill, it might get together with Hertfordshire and any other county council that is interested, speak to the Minister and see whether it could bring in more general legislation.

If the Minister wishes to intervene, I shall be happy to hear his answer. Perhaps we will hear in due course whether he thinks it would be appropriate for the national framework legislation to be changed so that instead of having the rather unhealthy competition between rival councils that are vying to present neighbouring towns as the most friendly to film-makers, which ultimately comes at the expense of the convenience of local people, there would be a more objective way of assessing what is reasonable and what is not.

There is another point that concerns me about the Bill. When I am not in my constituency, I live in a part of London that has a network of streets that were constructed largely in the late-Georgian period. The streets have retained their character and are often used for film sets. To compensate residents for the inconvenience associated with the use of local roads for film sets, which involves not being allowed to park and sometimes having access impeded by film crews, film companies pay a significant sum to the local residents association. It means that the association can function and hold Christmas parties and such things that it might not otherwise be able to afford. In a sense, there is a quid pro quo. Film companies are not acting for charity but to make money for themselves, so why should there not be a system for compensating those who are inconvenienced as a result of those activities? I would be interested if at some stage the promoters of the Bill considered whether some provision could be included to ensure that residents and businesses that are unduly inconvenienced, or perhaps inconvenienced on more than one occasion each year, are entitled to some compensation or recognition in monetary terms that they are making a contribution that should be recognised by the film company.

Like a lot of other Bills, this Bill merits considerable scrutiny. I am also puzzled by the explanatory memorandum that states that clause 3

“enables closures for the purpose of enabling members of the public to watch the making of a film.”

If we start closing roads to enable spectators to watch the making of a film, it seems to me that we are getting a long way from the Bill's core purpose alluded to by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere, which is to enable people to make films. If we start saying that additional roads must be closed, or additional time taken up because we must provide for people who want to watch the making of films, that is going further than

might have been intended by the architects of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. I hope that in due course that issue can also be addressed.

**Sir Greg Knight:** My hon. Friend made an interesting point about compensation. Does he know whether under existing legislation a local authority could charge a whopping licence fee to the film makers, thereby making money out of the process?

**Mr Chope:** My right hon. Friend will have noticed that the local authority is giving itself power to charge a fee for the exercise of its functions in connection with the Bill.

**Mr Clappison:** My hon. Friend is making some excellent points. My intervention will be brief, but I gently point out that the local council is the owner of Elstree studios. As long as those studios are in business and doing as well as they are at the moment, I believe the council's revenues are considerably assisted by that. My hon. Friend mentioned local benefit, and my constituency contains a school that has been established to try to get young people into jobs in the film industry. That gives a lot of pleasure and satisfaction to local people.

**Mr Chope:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that further information. I had not realised that Elstree studios is a municipal enterprise. When my hon. Friend's council next says that it is short of funds, he will be able to say, “Why don't you sell off your interest in Elstree studios?”

**Mr Clappison:** It is a Conservative council with a substantial Conservative majority and an excellent record on finance, and it continues to provide very good services with a very good value for money council tax.

**Mr Chope:** I certainly do not want to get myself into deep water—deeper water—with Hertfordshire county council. My hon. Friend has explained that there is in a sense a potential conflict of interest between the county council as the highways authority, the regulator and the body setting and charging the fees and the county council wearing its hat as owner of the studio. That issue merits some detailed scrutiny by the House. It is wonderful that my hon. Friend has been so open and frank in exposing these issues for scrutiny and I am sure that plenty of people will want to take advantage of that in due course.

4.2 pm

**Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con): I wish to speak only very briefly in response to the answer my hon. Friend the Minister gave me regarding the fines that can be levied on people who may use streets when they have been closed. This House should always be enormously careful about passing any further laws that increase the risk of British people being fined when going about what has previously been their lawful business. Every time this Parliament acts to make the life of individuals that little bit harder, that little bit more onerous or makes someone a little more at risk of coming into conflict with the authorities, the worse we make our society.

*[Jacob Rees-Mogg]*

I would hope that any Bill that we pass reduced the risks of these impositions and that we will be very careful to think about the necessity for legislating when the existing system has worked. We heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr Clappison) that films are made regularly and successfully in Hertfordshire, creating a great deal of business for the county. Roads are closed by common consent, good sense and the willingness of residents to co-operate with what they know to be a good and sensible business, even if it is technically a slightly grey legal area. That very British approach to things has worked successfully over many centuries, and if possible it is preferable not to legislate.

4.3 pm

**Richard Burden** (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): This Bill will enable Hertfordshire police to sustain and attract the film industry, which is a significant contributor to the local economy and to local jobs—a point made forcefully by the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr Clappison). My understanding is that it will clarify the current uncertainty in the legal position for the county council and the police, who have been using the Town Police Clauses Act 1847 to enable road closures for filming. The use of that Act ended a few years ago because of some nervousness over the appropriateness of doing so and the council has therefore proposed this Bill, which I understand—the hon. Member for Hertsmere will no doubt clarify this as the Bill goes forward—the police support.

The powers are already available to local authorities in London and Kent. The Bill goes further, enabling the council to close roads with only 24 hours' notice. I understand that this aims to deal with unpredictability in filming, such as the weather. Concerns—we have heard some today—have centred on the impact on local people and others that could result from sudden road closures and the risk of prosecution for other people breaching a closure notice. My understanding is that after a request from the Lord Chairman of Committees, the county council has updated its code of practice for location filming to address these concerns, including a section requiring the county council to consult local residents and businesses.

On that basis we can see merit in the Bill and in its going forward.

**Sir Greg Knight** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am sorry, I am unclear. Mr Burden, have you finished or are you giving way?

**Richard Burden:** I will take an intervention although I was just finishing.

**Sir Greg Knight:** I thank the shadow Minister for giving way. Does he agree that if arguments favour the Bill after it has been fully scrutinised, there will also be a case for national legislation—as mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope)—rather than doing this county by county?

**Richard Burden:** Something tells me that all those issues and others will be considered as the Bill goes forward, which is entirely appropriate. At this stage, we are dealing with a Second Reading and we can see merit in the Bill and its objectives. On that basis, we are happy for it to go forward.

4.4 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Stephen Hammond):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hertsmere (Mr Clappison) on moving the Second Reading of this private Bill. We welcome the opportunity presented by the debate, and we have listened to a number of the interventions. This Bill will certainly enable the successful film-making industry in Hertfordshire to prosper. I suspect my hon. Friend will enjoy many happy hours in Committee scrutinising this Bill.

Let me make it clear from the start that the Government do not oppose the Bill. We accept that it largely replicates previous legislation, including the London Local Authorities and Transport for London Act 2008 and the Kent County Council (Filming on Highways) Act 2010, but we had some initial reservations about the limited procedural protection offered to property owners and the travelling public. These are similar issues to those raised by my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Jacob Rees-Mogg), who can be reassured that the Government have had discussions with Hertfordshire county council. We are grateful that the council reassured the Government that when it puts in place film orders and film notices, it will—to the extent that there are no mandatory requirements in law—follow the procedures similar to those set out in the Road Traffic (Temporary Restrictions) Procedure Regulations 1992.

I heard my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope) musing on why Buckinghamshire county council should have asked him to sponsor a private Member's Bill on a similar subject. I can assume only that, after his long hours of parliamentary scrutiny, it considers him to be the House's expert.

**Mr Chope:** The council did not ask me to sponsor the Bill; it asked for my advice.

**Stephen Hammond:** I am happy to have that correction put on the record, but equally, I am sure that his advice was sought for exactly the same reason, given my hon. Friend's extensive hours of scrutiny over various private Members' Bills. I heard his comments and those of my right hon. Friend the Member for East Yorkshire (Sir Greg Knight) about the potential for looking at national legislation, and given that I am known as a most generous Minister, I am happy to offer the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Mr Goodwill) for a meeting if they wish to pursue the point. None the less, the Government wish this Bill well on its Second Reading, and we have no objection to its moving forward through the House of Commons.

4.7 pm

**Mr Clappison:** This has been a very good debate. I hope I was frank enough in it, and I am grateful to my hon. Friends for their acknowledgement of my frankness. There are issues to be debated. This Bill has to go

through scrutiny in the same way as every other single Bill does: most, if not all of them, are much better for that process.

Good points have been raised in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Jacob Rees-Mogg) asked a pertinent point about whether this constituted an offence and, if so, what the penalty was. I can tell him that it is an offence in the same way as a transgression of existing provisions relating to other special events for which roads are closed is an offence under the Road Traffic Regulation (Special Events) Act 1994. I believe, although I could not swear to this, that a level 3 fine will apply in this case.

I very much hope that those responsible for enforcing the Bill will take a view on the public benefit and take cognisance of the public interest in deciding whether any such prosecutions should take place. I hope that that situation can largely be avoided. As my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset quite rightly said, members of the public who want access to their premises or who have other important reasons for going about their lawful business should be able to do so. I am sure that there will be a will for that to apply.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope) raised some important points about the time for which roads may be closed. I very much hope that it can be kept to a minimum. As I understand it, we have been talking about the maximum periods and on each occasion up to six of the orders might be applied for, but I hope again that this will be a maximum and that the filming can be completed in much less time. As a maximum, of course, it can be debated. I probably agree with the ideological views of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch as far as local and national public ownership are concerned. This seems to be a case on its own, an exceptional circumstance, as Hertsmere borough council owns the studios.

I can assure my hon. Friend that—as, indeed, I think he knows—Hertsmere is not, in fact, a hotbed of socialism, but very much a testing ground for Conservatism. In this instance it may be a pragmatic type of Conservatism, for thanks to the keen commercial acumen of the Conservative leadership of the council over the time—quite a few years now—for which it has owned the studios, they have been a great success. I could read out a long list of films that have been made there, and another list of contemporaneous television programmes. I have already mentioned “Strictly Come Dancing”, but I could mention many other programmes, including “Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?” and “Celebrity Big Brother”. The BBC studios are the home of “EastEnders”.

I can assure my hon. Friends that Hertfordshire, and Hertsmere in particular, are very important to the film industry, which is a great asset to our country. It does a lot of good for us economically, attracting investment and helping our balance of payments. I ask my hon.

Friends to think about that carefully when they scrutinise the Bill. I ask them to bear it in mind that the country—and my constituency in particular—has an important interest in promoting our film industry, and that the Bill will help to promote it in the ways I have described.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time.*

## Business without Debate

### DELEGATED LEGISLATION

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),*

#### IMMIGRATION

That the draft Special Immigration Appeals Commission (Procedure) (Amendment) Rules 2013, which were laid before this House on 21 October, be approved.—(*Amber Rudd.*)

*Question agreed to.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),*

#### COMPANIES

That the draft Small Companies (Micro-Entities' Accounts) Regulations 2013, which were laid before this House on 23 October, be approved.—(*Amber Rudd.*)

*Question agreed to.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),*

#### REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE, NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2013, which were laid before this House on 24 October, be approved.—(*Amber Rudd.*)

*Question agreed to.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),*

#### NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Local Elections (Northern Ireland) Order 2013, which was laid before this House on 30 October, be approved.—(*Amber Rudd.*)

*Question agreed to.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),*

#### ROAD TRAFFIC

That the draft Motor Vehicles (International Circulation) (Amendment) Order 2013, which was laid before this House on 24 October, be approved.—(*Amber Rudd.*)

*Question agreed to.*

## Business of the House (2 December)

*Debate resumed.*

*Question (25 November) again proposed,*

That at the sitting on Monday 2 December, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr Andrew Lansley relating to select committee statements and the Motion in the name of Mr Charles Walker relating to backbench business (amendment of standing orders) not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first of those Motions; such Questions shall include the Questions on any Amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved; proceedings on those Motions may continue, though opposed, after the moment of interruption; and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.

4.12 pm

**Mr Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): It is good to have a reasonable slot in which to expand on the remarks that I was making just before 10 o'clock last night, and it is good to see that my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House is on the Front Bench and in a position to explain a bit of the background to the motion.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): All the background.

**Mr Chope**: Indeed: all the background.

The purpose of the motion is to enable the House to sit until as late as 11.30 pm on Monday, or even later, in order to consider two motions, one of which proposes to amend Standing Orders. I wanted to know why the Leader of the House had decided that the business should be debated so late on Monday, after a Second Reading debate on the important Mesothelioma Bill. Why could it not be debated at some other time? I believe that the motion proposing amendments to Standing Orders has been on the Order Paper for a long time, and I understand from contacts that I have had with my own Whip that the Government are concerned about the possibility that the House will divide at 10 pm on Monday. The business is highly contentious, which is why Members have been told that they will not be allowed to be "slipped", or that slips that had been granted to them have been withdrawn. That suggests the Government regard it as highly contentious. If they do, it is all the more reason it should be given a primetime slot, rather than pushed towards midnight on Monday.

On a more serious point, the motion restricts the amount of time during which the two issues can be debated. It states that

"the Questions necessary to dispose of the proceeding on the Motion...relating to select committee statements and the Motion in the name of"

the Chairman of the Procedure Committee, including on amendments, shall be put

"not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of those proceedings".

That means that a maximum of three quarters of an hour is being given to each subject, including for the discussion of amendments and for votes on the first motion before the second motion is debated.

I am speaking now on the last item of business on a Tuesday afternoon before the Adjournment debate. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr Reid), whose Adjournment debate it is, could therefore have an extended debate on the defence police and fire pensions review until 7.30 pm. I cannot understand why the business on 2 December is being so dealt with and why effectively we have to suspend Standing Orders and move this business motion. I am not normally of a suspicious disposition, but this raises various questions.

**Mr David Nuttall** (Bury North) (Con): Does my hon. Friend think it bizarre that this motion could be debated for longer than the 90 minutes allotted for the actual debate next week?

**Mr Chope** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo)**: Order. That depends on the debate staying in order. Its subjects are the length of the debate proposed—an hour and a half—and its timing, which, as Mr Chope has said, is next Monday.

**Mr Chope**: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Indeed, I tried to limit my remarks to those two issues: the length of the debate and its timing next Monday. I look forward to hearing an explanation from the Leader of the House.

**Jacob Rees-Mogg** (North East Somerset) (Con): I am puzzled by my hon. Friend's view that after 10 pm on Monday is not a good time for debating these issues. What on earth else would anybody rather do than come to the House and debate these important matters?

**Mr Chope**: I would be happy, as I am sure my hon. Friend would be too, to debate these issues until 1, 2 or 3 o'clock on Tuesday morning, should the need arise. That is why, as I said, the more serious of my concerns is the time limit rather than the timing. Obviously, he and I will participate in the debate at whatever time is set down, but we need to think about how easily people outside can follow our proceedings.

**Mr Bone**: I am concerned about my hon. Friend; he is becoming a bit of a leftie and a liberal. Is he really suggesting that the House should sit 9 to 5? That is outrageous.

**Mr Chope**: That is a gross exaggeration of my position. I was suggesting to my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Jacob Rees-Mogg) that we should sit until we concluded the business, but that one advantage of having debates earlier—during primetime, as the Government would put it—is that they would be more likely to attract more interest from people scrutinising our affairs, who would not have to look at the historical record, but could watch it as it was happening.

**Mr Bone**: I am sorry that I misunderstood my hon. Friend's point. I think he said earlier that slips were being cancelled and that people were being whipped, but that cannot possibly be right, because this is House business, and House business cannot be whipped.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo):** With respect, I would prefer the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope) not to answer that point. The purpose of the debate is to discuss only the date and the allocation of time. Nothing else is relevant to the specifics that we are dealing with.

**Mr Chope:** I shall not answer my hon. Friend, but I invite him to intervene on me again.

**Mr Bone:** With regard to the date and time of the debate in question, why does my hon. Friend think so many Members will be present?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Because they are good Members of Parliament.

**Mr Chope:** Madam Deputy Speaker, the sooner you are able to participate fully in our debates, the better. I invite you to come down and join the throng.

**Jacob Rees-Mogg:** I am simply concerned that, at that late hour, some Members might be tempted to go to nightclubs and things like that. It would be distressing if we were to have the debate at a time when that might happen.

**Mr Chope:** I hope that when the debate takes place, it will be allowed a longer period of time than the motion currently provides for, and that it will have a similar spirit of good humour to the one that is prevailing in this short debate. I see no reason for extending this debate; I am making only a short point. Why does the Leader of the House need to close down debate on these issues and limit the discussion to 45 minutes on each of the two subjects, one of which has been the subject of a Government amendment to the motion tabled by the Procedure Committee? If we are going to encourage Members to participate to the full in the work of the Select Committees, including the Procedure Committee, the least we can do is allow proper time for colleagues to debate and question the proposals of those Committees.

I do not think that 45 minutes for each subject is sufficient, and I would be interested to hear why the Leader of the House thinks that those time limits are sufficient and appropriate, particularly as we have quite a lot of surplus time available now. I was talking to a journalist earlier, and he suggested that the business for next week seemed extremely light. I put these questions to the Leader of the House in a spirit of friendship. I know that, even though he does not always succeed, he tries hard to accommodate the needs of Back Benchers.

4.23 pm

**Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con):** It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope), who has made a lot of important points. My concern is the restriction of time for the debate to one and a half hours. We shall be discussing important changes to the way in which Back-Bench business is debated in the House. When this Parliament came into being, the Backbench Business Committee came into force and we took great steps towards greater transparency and accountability. That is to the great credit of the Government, but I am worried that there is sometimes a temptation for them to row back slightly in this regard.

The Leader of the House might well have a good explanation for the decision to limit the debate to one and a half hours. If he does not think that the debate will take more than that length of time, there is no need to bring in the restriction. If, however, he thinks that Members might want to speak for longer on this important matter, surely they should be able to do so. There seems to be no point in curtailing the debate, especially as the motion states that it will be allowed to

“continue, though opposed, after the moment of interruption”.

The Government have been very good on the questions of transparency and accountability and it is a shame that, on occasions such as these, they seem to row back a bit.

4.24 pm

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Andrew Lansley):** As ever, I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Christchurch (Mr Chope) and for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) for their good-natured contributions. It is entirely right that they should ask a number of questions about this motion as the time permits. It might be sensible if I make it clear that the business of the House motion has two main effects. First, it allows the House to take the two motions together for debate. Given that both relate to the work of the Backbench Business Committee, that seemed entirely sensible, as it would not otherwise have been possible for them to be brought together in one debate. Secondly, it specifies a maximum time for debate of one and a half hours, as my hon. Friends have noted. My view is that that is an entirely sensible period to allow for this debate. I freely admit that that is a judgment about the amount of time in which the issues that arise on these two motions are likely to be debated. My personal view is that the second motion, relating to the capacity for Select Committee reports to be launched, will not detain the House for long, as we have seen in practice, but it needs to be regularised in the structure of the provision of Backbench Business Committee time.

**Mr Bone:** I thank the Leader of the House for the explanation he has given so far. If the motions had been tabled separately, he would almost certainly have granted one and a half hours for each of them. I do not think he would have granted a 45-minute debate; so a good compromise might be to extend the total time to three hours.

**Mr Lansley:** I think I have explained straightforwardly the judgment I have made, which is that the two motions relating to the work of the Backbench Business Committee in the House can be brought together perfectly sensibly. The latter motion, which I understand has the support of the Chairs of the Liaison Committee and the Backbench Business Committee, would not detain us at any great length. From my point of view, in order to protect Government time, it is important for us to ensure that we have allowed these motions to be brought forward for the House to debate. I freely admit to the House that it has been difficult to find Government time. The Backbench Business Committee, as my hon. Friends will know, does not have the capacity to use its own time to bring forward its own motions relating to itself. [*Interruption.*] That is a separate debate, but the Committee does not have that capacity under the Standing Orders.

[*Mr Lansley*]

For these motions to be debated, Government time has to be used, and so I have looked, along with my colleagues, to ensure that we find such an opportunity. That has been difficult and we have made the appropriate judgment in securing the possibility of time.

It is entirely a matter of speculation as to whether the Mesothelioma Bill will absorb all the time through to 10 pm. The assumption being made is that it will do so, and if it does, so be it. If we commence this debate after the moment of interruption, I do not want it to extend for a long period beyond 10 pm, although I am happy for the debate to go beyond 10 pm if necessary.

**Mr Chope:** My right hon. Friend makes an important point—he says that he does not want the debate to go on for more than one and a half hours after the moment of interruption. Unfortunately, that is not what his motion says. His motion says that it cannot go on for more than one and a half hours after it starts. Perhaps he would be willing to withdraw this business motion and table an amended motion saying that we could have the maximum of one and half hours after the moment of interruption.

**Mr Lansley:** I point out to my hon. Friend that I have said two things. I have said, first, that I do not think that the debate requires more time than one and a half hours, and it is Government time that we have found for the purpose. I have said, secondly, that I would not wish it to go for more than one and a half hours beyond the moment of interruption. It does not follow that I think it requires three hours—in any circumstances.

Yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch questioned the need for the Standing Orders to be amended. He knows that this motion exempts the business from

both the moment of interruption and the Standing Order relating to deferred Divisions, and he will understand that Standing Orders are amended regularly for such purposes. The motions for debate next Monday result from the work of the Procedure Committee, and it is right that the House is given the opportunity to resolve those issues.

**Jacob Rees-Mogg:** To follow up the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch, it would be a pity if we went home early on Monday, would it not? If the earlier debate were to finish well before 8.30 pm, it would be a shame if the House's business came to an end before the normal hour of closure.

**Mr Lansley:** In scheduling business, my purpose is to ensure that there is time available for all the business. My objective is not to fill time. I say gently to my hon. Friends that they could have raised the matter when I announced provisional business at business questions last Thursday. They have done so in the past. They have raised issues after business questions and, on occasions, I have taken those issues away and we have amended the timing and the character of business. In this particular instance, I have to say that the motion relating to Back-Bench business has been on the Order Paper since before the summer recess. It relates to a report published by the Procedure Committee in November 2012. It has taken us more time than we would have wished to bring it forward. The Procedure Committee was rightly keen that we should schedule that business. We have done so, and we have given it adequate time. From my point of view, I hope that the House will allow the business to go forward as proposed in motion 9, which I moved yesterday.

*Question put and agreed to.*

## Defence Police and Fire Pensions

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—(*Amber Rudd.*)

4.31 pm

**Mr Alan Reid** (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I thank Mr Speaker for granting me tonight's debate. I want to express my thanks to Mr Eamon Keating of the Defence Police Federation and to Dave Kirby of the defence fire and rescue section of Unite for their help in preparing for this debate.

Many of my constituents work as police officers and firefighters at the naval bases of Faslane and Coulport. They are a dedicated and skilled work force. However, they have been caught out by what I believe is an anomaly in the Public Service Pensions Act 2013. The anomaly arose because defence police and fire personnel have traditionally been on civil service terms and conditions rather than on conditions comparable with the country's other police and fire services. As they are on civil service terms and conditions, their retirement age had been 60.

The previous Government imposed a pension settlement, which meant that new recruits to the defence police and fire services have a retirement age of 65. However, efficiency savings have meant that very few recruits have joined those services since then and more than 90% of the current work force have a retirement age of 60. Those who have a retirement age of 65 tend to be younger people who have joined recently, so it is unlikely that there is anybody over 60 working at the moment.

The present Government inherited that situation. The unique circumstances of the defence police and fire personnel were then overlooked by Lord Hutton when he prepared his report on public service pensions.

Through the medium of the Public Service Pensions Act, the Government have faithfully implemented Lord Hutton's recommendations, one of which was that those in occupations for which the normal pension age had traditionally been under 60 should have a normal retirement age of 60. That applies to the uniformed services: the armed forces and all police and fire services except those in the Ministry of Defence.

However, Lord Hutton has subsequently said that he was not aware of the unique circumstances of the defence police and fire personnel when he compiled his report. He added that had he been aware, he would have recommended that they be treated the same as the other uniformed services, with a retirement age of 60. I hope the Government will take on board Lord Hutton's admission that he made a mistake.

The Public Service Pensions Act implements Lord Hutton's recommendation of a retirement age equal to the state pension age for public sector workers other than the exceptions already mentioned. That means a retirement age of 65 rising over time to 68.

My understanding is that the Government have already agreed that the retirement age for defence police and firefighters will not rise above 65 when the state pension age does. I would be grateful if the Minister could confirm that tonight.

The number of personnel involved is very small—about 3,500 in total out of a civil service work force of about 700,000. Defence police and firefighters do a vital job that involves putting themselves in dangerous situations

and requires a high degree of fitness. Fighting a fire on a vessel at sea requires a person to be extremely fit and also extremely quick thinking. The same degree of fitness is required for police officers who have to wear body armour and carry a heavy weapon.

**David Wright** (Telford) (Lab): Obviously, there are similar personnel in areas such as Telford, where there is a large MOD footprint. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that what we need for this group of people who do a great job for our country, often in difficult circumstances, is a pretty comprehensive review of their terms and conditions? I hope to hear the Government's view tonight, but a future armed forces Bill might pick up on this issue and consider these workers' terms and conditions as well as their status. I believe that they deserve a very high status indeed.

**Mr Reid:** I agree with the hon. Gentleman that these workers deserve a high status. The review I shall talk about later is of pensions and the retirement age, but I certainly agree and hope that this Government or a future Government will conduct a wholesale review of those people's terms and conditions.

Like all other uniformed services, defence firefighters and police have to be ready to go instantly from a state of rest to 100% alertness and high physical exertion. That puts a heavy strain on the body and, as someone nearing 60, I know that we all have to accept that age takes its toll on us.

What makes the uniformed services different from workers in manual jobs is the need to go instantly to a 100% level of alertness and effort. Many other manual jobs involve hard work, but it tends to be done at a steady rate over several hours, whereas the uniformed services have to go to their 100% physical and mental peak immediately.

**Dr Eilidh Whiteford** (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): The hon. Gentleman will be aware that I, too, represent MOD police in my constituency. They do a job that requires them not only to be fit and alert at times of crisis but to keep up arduous standards of fitness in preparation for any eventuality. The key issue is that it is often a false economy to keep people working beyond the peak of their physical fitness. If they have to leave work owing to ill health, that can be more expensive in the long run.

**Mr Reid:** The hon. Lady is perfectly correct. I shall talk about that aspect of the problem later. She is right that the defence police and fire personnel need a high level of fitness or they will be forced to take early retirement. That question leads me nicely on to the next part of my speech because I want to draw the House's attention to a report produced for the Ministry of Defence by Dr P. Griffin, a consultant adviser in occupational medicine. The report makes it clear that a person's ability to function at peak physical and mental alertness declines once they are over 60. I hope that the Government will take that report into account during their review.

Defence police and firefighters have to undertake regular fitness checks and demonstrate a high degree of fitness. I am concerned that if they have to work beyond 60, many of them will fail those tests before they reach

[Mr Reid]

the normal retirement age. Having a high proportion of personnel retire early on health grounds is no way to manage vital services such as policing and firefighting.

During the later stages of the Public Service Pensions Bill, I was pleased that the Government gave an undertaking to review the effects of defence police and fire fighters working until 65. That undertaking became section 36 of the Public Service Pensions Act, and I want some answers to questions I shall put to the Minister tonight.

**Gemma Doyle** (West Dunbartonshire) (Lab/Co-op): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo)**: Order. This is an Adjournment debate. Opposition Front-Bench Members cannot intervene from the Dispatch Box in an Adjournment debate. Interventions can be taken from Back Benchers.

**Mr Reid**: The review is to be presented to Parliament no later than 24 December, so time is short. The report will look at the impact of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 on the health and well-being of defence police and firefighters, and at the ability of those over 60 to meet the strict fitness requirements that are needed for the important and dangerous job that they do. The report will also consider the consequences of early retirement for workers who are forced to retire early on health grounds because they cannot meet the stringent fitness requirements. It will also look at the likely cost to the taxpayer.

If the retirement age is 65 and significant numbers of personnel are forced to retire early on health grounds, both the taxpayer and the worker will lose out. The worker will lose out because they will not get the full pension that they expected; the taxpayer will lose out because the amount that has been paid into the pension pot will not cover the cost of the pension if it is paid out early.

**John McDonnell** (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman may recall the debate on the Bill; I was party to it as well. The impression that Ministers gave then was that this category of workers was an anomaly that had not been dealt with in the legislation. There was cross-party anxiety about this issue. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree with me that, to get the legislation through, the Government gave the impression that this group of workers would be treated fairly and consistently with others working in this field, which meant that they would not be expected to work longer because of the physical capacity problems they would experience.

**Mr Reid**: I remember the hon. Gentleman's contribution to the debate on Lords amendments. In response to the concerns expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, the Government tabled a new clause which became section 36 of the Act, which set up the review that we are now discussing. I hope and expect that that review will recommend an age of 60, for all the reasons that I have given and some that I shall go on to explain. I hope that the review will make that recommendation. If it does, I will certainly expect the Government to accept the outcome.

**John McDonnell**: Perhaps I can make the point more clearly. I think that the passage of the Bill was secured only because of those assurances. There was such strength of feeling across the House and across parties about this group of workers in particular that others would have objected to the Bill overall if the new clause had not been inserted and if assurances had not been given that this group of workers would be treated sympathetically.

**Mr Reid**: My expectation was that the review would recommend a retirement age of 60, and that the Government would accept it, and that is what I hope will happen.

I simply do not believe that it would be right for these workers to work beyond 60. The most appropriate comparison is with other firefighters and police officers. Members of all the other fire services and police services in the country are allowed to retire at 60 under the provisions of section 10 of the Public Service Pensions Act. Those staff whose pension conditions are being investigated by the review have important knowledge about their jobs, so I hope that the review team is consulting them. People who are actually doing the job can give information that no one else can so it is important that they are consulted.

I have some questions which I hope the Minister will be able to answer tonight. What consultation have the Government had with the work force representatives—the Defence Police Federation and the defence fire and rescue services section of Unite? What further consultation will be held with these representative bodies before the review report is completed? Will the Minister confirm that they will be able to see a draft before final publication and feed their views into the process?

Another important question for the Minister is whether the publication of the review will be the final word, or the basis for further consultation and negotiation. What research has been carried out to establish whether people over 60 are likely to have the fitness required to carry out the duties of defence police and firefighters without long absences from work, and what proportion would be likely to retire early on health grounds before reaching the age of 65 because they did not meet the stringent fitness requirements?

**David Wright**: I strongly support the hon. Gentleman. This is not just about fighting those fires that have an impact only on bases. He will be aware that in Telford and Wrekin a few decades ago, there was a huge fire at MOD Donnington, which affected the entire community around that base. It is in the public interest to ensure that those on MOD bases who have to fight fires are capable of doing so in the most efficient way.

**Mr Reid**: Yes, and I certainly remember the fire that the hon. Gentleman refers to; it was in all the news media. He is perfectly correct: this is a vital job. In Faslane in my constituency, there are nuclear submarines. We are talking about a very strenuous and highly skilled job and one that is very important, not just because of the assets on the base but for the general public.

Unite has supplied figures that are specific to age-banding and to ailments including those involving the heart, strokes and blood pressure, muscle and bone, and anxiety and depression. It also looked at long-term sickness over a 24-month period. It obtained those figures from

medical and absence data provided by Defence Business Services, and has asked for the inclusion of those figures in the report. Will Unite's figures be taken into account when the report is compiled? What plans do the Government have for a balanced, fair and equal retirement strategy for those individuals who may not be able to maintain the stringent fitness requirements?

The civil service pension scheme historically had a lower employee contribution than police and fire service pension schemes, so defence police and fire service workers had net pay deductions and abatements taken off their pay in an attempt to give parity with other police and fire services. However, the impact of these deductions has been that the defence firefighters' pension is based on net pay after those deductions, rather than on their gross pay. Other police and fire service staff receive a pension based on their gross pay before employee superannuation payments are deducted. An actuary engaged by the Defence Police Federation has said that the abatement and net pay deduction system is antiquated and very unfair. There may have been a logic to the system when it was introduced 30-odd years ago, but over time it has become antiquated. I hope that that will be looked into as part of the review.

If defence police and firefighters have to work on beyond 60, they will be contributing more towards their pension and collecting it for less time than their colleagues in other police forces and fire services. I hope that the Government agree that there should be parity, in pension terms, between defence police and firefighters and those who come under the remit of other Government Departments and the devolved Administrations. In addition to investigating whether people over 60 are likely to be physically fit enough to carry out policing and firefighting duties, the review should look at levels of abatement of pay and net pay deductions. In that regard, I draw the House's attention to what was said during the final debate on the Public Service Pensions Bill on 24 April by the hon. Member for Bromsgrove (Sajid Javid), then Economic Secretary to the Treasury, and now Financial Secretary to the Treasury:

"I agree that abatement, which the hon. Member for Nottingham East and my right hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark raised, is an important issue. It is therefore important that the MOD review considers it. It will have to consider a broad range of issues affecting the workers in question, including all pay and remuneration conditions and other potential benefits. It will have to examine the matter in its totality, and I would expect nothing else."—[*Official Report*, 24 April 2013; Vol. 561, c. 912.]

I hope that the Minister can tell us tonight about that aspect of the review. Pensions calculations are notoriously complex, and I would ask that as well as a recommendation in the review on the level of employee superannuation contributions, all the calculations behind this recommendation be published for checking and comment.

Defence police and firefighters do an extremely important and strenuous job. I simply do not think it is right that they should be asked to continue doing it beyond 60. Sixty-five-year-olds should not be fighting fires or tackling terrorists. I draw the attention of the House to what was said by Phil Salt, the chief fire officer of the Defence Fire Risk Management Organisation, who is on record as fully backing a retirement age of 60. I understand that senior officers in the Ministry of Defence police share this view.

Police, fire and rescue personnel working in the Ministry of Defence should be allowed to retire at the same age as their counterparts in the country's other police and fire services. I hope that that will be the outcome of the review and I look forward to the Minister's answers.

4.50 pm

**John McDonnell** (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I thank and congratulate the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr Reid) on bringing this issue to the attention of the House at a key time before the review is finally published.

I want to go back to the original debate, because it is important that we set the issue in the right context. To be frank, we approached it in legislation quite late in the day. This seemed to be an area of service that had been missed out in the debate on pensions. The emphasis in that debate—and this is exactly the final point made by the hon. Gentleman—was on the physical capacity of that group of workers to do the job once they reached the age of 60.

I have seen some of the figures that Unite has submitted as part of the review, and they demonstrate that for workers over the age of 60 in this field the absentee rate doubles as a result of sickness and incapacity. That is a clear indication that it becomes more difficult to undertake the job. The argument has been made—we debated this in the context of the Fire Brigades Union dispute—that if someone is incapable of achieving the required fitness levels, they might be redeployed within the service. We have discovered that those vacancies do not exist, so redeployment is not really an option. People face continuing in the job at a risk to their health—lack of fitness quickly becomes incapacity, as we have seen in other emergency services—or they face losing their job with a reduced pension as a result of having to withdraw from the service. There are certainly no opportunities for redeployment.

The whole issue is the unfairness of the situation. When people are called out to tackle a fire or for any other incident, they are all called out to do the same task. They do not have on their helmet something saying "Reduced duties" or "Unfit for lifting certain ladders". They are all called to do the same task, so they all require the same fitness levels. As a result of our concerns, at least we managed to insert into the Bill provisions for a proper review that took into account the issue of fitness and ageing with regard to the responsibilities people were required to discharge.

My understanding is that some aspects of the review are based, for example, on 12 months of absentee rates rather than on 24 months. I hope that the review will look comprehensively at all the information—and as the hon. Gentleman has said, the word we have is that management support the workers in their demands, because they understand the nature of the role that they have to perform—but, whatever the review says, at the end of the day it is for Ministers and Government to decide. I return to the point that I made earlier: when that legislation was going through the House a common-sense view was taken by the majority of members that, yes, a review would take place, but it would take into account the strength of feeling among Members of Parliament, who recognised the importance of that role and the difficulties of discharging it for an ageing work force if people have to stay on beyond 60.

[John McDonnell]

That common-sense view was accepted by the House, and I hope that the Government clear the matter up, forget the review, make a decision and implement it rapidly to reassure the workers concerned. I remember the debate, because Member after Member stood up to praise the service provided by that group of workers. I remember them being described as loyal professionals undertaking their task in a way that we all commended, and putting their lives at risk at different times in their history. Now that the review, as the hon. Gentleman said, is more open and transparent, I hope that the drafts will be provided to all the parties concerned in advance of publication so that they are aware of what is coming, and that Ministers will deal with the matter speedily and in the way that the House directed, which was to ensure that these workers are not discriminated against, they are treated like others, and the special circumstances of their job are properly taken into account.

4.55 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Anna Soubry):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr Reid) on securing this debate and on his tenacity and diligence on the issue. I am aware that there is, and has been, a great deal of interest in this matter. I thank the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) for his speech. He reminds us that the topic attracted a number of speakers during the passage of the Bill and of the importance that many attached to it.

It is important to set out that members of the Ministry of Defence police and the defence fire and rescue service are civil servants. Although there are similarities in the roles and responsibilities of both groups when compared to their Home Office and local authority colleagues, I would say that they are not the same. I believe that that has been recognised historically.

By way of history and some background, the 1979 Wright committee that examined the Ministry of Defence police found significant differences in their role when compared with what we call the Home Department police forces—the ordinary police officers and police forces as we ordinary citizens know them. For example, at that time—back in the 1970s—the work was essentially routine and involved a high proportion of static duty, largely because of the high degree of security.

In 1994 a study led by Sir John Belloch recognised that there had been a significant change in the role of the Ministry of Defence police since the Wright report. Most notably, a requirement had been introduced for all MDP officers to have the capability to be armed. The MDP had also moved away from routine security towards higher value armed guarding roles. Nevertheless, Belloch noted that there were still substantial differences between the role of the MDP and the role of Home Department forces, such as the lower level of crime dealt with and the attendant physical stresses and strains placed upon Home Department police forces, as opposed to their counterparts in the MDP.

It might be helpful for the House to know that a much wider review of terms and conditions of service concerning the Ministry of Defence police is currently being conducted. This review, although begun earlier,

is being taken forward in the light of the outcome of the independent review of the remuneration and conditions of service of police officers and police staff in England and Wales that was undertaken for the Home Secretary by Tom Winsor.

The defence fire and rescue service is subject to rigorous modernisation and efficiency initiatives, including the examination of opportunities for greater private sector involvement through the defence fire and rescue project which is in its assessment stage following initial gate approval, as it is called.

The Ministry of Defence police and the defence fire and rescue service personnel have always been members of the principal civil service pension scheme, as are all uniformed civil servants. Therefore they are subject to the normal pension age of that scheme which is 65, although the closed sections have a normal pension age of 60. The civil service unions have already accepted this move to a normal pension age of 65 for all staff joining since—after, in other words—2007. Prospect and Unite, which represent members of the defence fire and rescue service, were two of those unions.

As I am sure Members will be aware, in 2010 Lord Hutton conducted a review of public sector pensions. He recommended that the normal pension age for civil servants should rise in line with the increasing state pension age, but he made an exception, as we have heard, for the armed forces, firefighters employed by local authorities and Home Department police forces. For those individuals, he proposed that the normal pension age should be set at 60, but only where their normal pension age was currently below 60. That would have the effect of their pension age increasing in line with that of other public servants.

Following the review into public sector pensions, both the Defence Police Federation, which represents the Ministry of Defence police, and Unite, which represents the firefighter grades of the defence fire and rescue service, lobbied the Lords. They wished that exception to be extended to them so that their normal pension age would not only not rise in line with the state pension age, but reduce from 65 to 60.

As we have heard, the Public Service Pensions Bill was last debated in the House on 24 April this year. The Lords amendment proposed at the time was accepted by the Financial Secretary to the Treasury. He announced that the Ministry of Defence would prepare and lay before the House a report on the likely effect on both groups of staff of the normal pension age increasing in line with the state pension age. The report was to consider the following three issues: the likely effect of the increased pension age on the health and well-being of the two groups; the likely effect on their ability to continue to meet operational requirements; and the extent to which they were likely to take early retirement as a consequence of the increase in normal pension age, and the consequences of that for them and for the taxpayer.

On 15 May the Ministry of Defence set out the report's terms of reference, which were simply to "review the Normal Pension Age of both the Ministry of Defence Police and Defence Fire and Rescue Service personnel".

Those terms of reference were communicated to the respective trade unions and accepted without amendment. As part of the review, my Department has consulted the

relevant trade unions and the chief constable of the Ministry of Defence police and the chief fire officer of the defence fire and rescue service.

**David Wright:** The Minister says that she has consulted the unions. She might not be able today to give the dates on which those meetings took place, but could she provide that information in the Library of the House?

**Anna Soubry:** I see no reason why not, so I am more than happy to do so. I should have explained, as I often do in these debates, that if I do not answer the various matters raised by hon. Members in the course of my speech, I will write to them.

**Mr Reid:** My hon. Friend said that there were discussions with the trade unions. For clarification, the Defence Police Federation has reminded me that it is a professional association, not a trade union. I just wanted to check whether it had been consulted along with the trade unions.

**Anna Soubry:** I am so sorry—this is entirely my fault, because I was specifically briefed on that—but I have completely forgotten the answer to that question. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for rightly raising that point about the Defence Police Federation. I know that there is an answer to his question, and it might be provided to me in the course of my speech. If it is not, I undertake to put it all in the Library. There is no difficulty at all in doing that.

I will now turn to the specific points my hon. Friend raised. I thank him for providing a copy of his speech, which is so helpful in these circumstances. I fear that I will be unable to answer all his questions, because of the short time available to us. The MOD will review the levels of abatement of pay and net pay deductions as part of the continuing and wider work into the terms and conditions of service and the future of both the MDP and the defence fire and rescue service. It is as part of that work that we are reviewing pension calculations.

We are also reviewing all pay and remuneration conditions and other potential benefits. For the purposes of that report, the Defence Secretary directed that the review should concentrate on the questions posed by the Act. As I have already stated, a separate continuing review is looking at the broader issues. The Department has engaged with the Defence Police Federation—I think that that answers my hon. Friend's question—and the defence fire and rescue service section of Unite. Engagement with the federation has been through the quarterly police committee, the monthly Ministry of Defence police management board, and regular meetings in respect of the separate terms and conditions of service review.

Unite was briefed by relevant business units at the outset of the review. It has been engaged in agreeing the statement of requirement that, as I explained, was submitted to the Government Actuaries Department, and it was invited to attend workshops and make separate submissions to the review as it has progressed. Unite is fully aware of the business units' conclusions, and its

concerns and points of view have been considered by the review. The reports due to be laid in the House—I will give the dates in a moment—will form part of the continuing discussions regarding future changes to the terms and conditions of both groups, including their pension age. I am reliably informed that staff representatives will have a copy of the report before it is published, and that is an eminently sensible idea.

**David Wright:** The Minister is relatively new to her post but I have experience of working with her in other areas of work and she is always fair and equitable. Is she willing, as the Minister involved at this point, to meet the trade unions to talk through some of the issues that the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr Reid) has raised? That would be very welcome.

**Anna Soubry:** As an old trade unionist—a proud shop steward, I might say, of the National Union of Journalists—I am more than happy to meet the hon. Gentleman, my new friend. I have absolutely no problem with that, or with meeting my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute and trade union representatives. It might be fair to add the Defence Police Federation. It is always a pleasure to talk to the federation.

In respect of parity, the MOD acknowledges that defence police and firefighters deliver a professional and valued service to the Department and, not least, to the nation. There are significant differences in how they carry out their roles and responsibilities as compared with those under the remit of the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Home Office, and it is only right that that should be reflected in their terms and conditions of service.

During the review of the pension age, the MOD has considered a number of studies on the fitness levels of people over 60 and their ability to carry out their duties without long absences from work, including the likelihood of early retirement before the age of 65. These will all be referenced in the report. In addition, we have taken account of the management information available within the MOD. Individuals who find that they are unable to maintain the fitness capability required will continue to be exited under the regulations that are applicable to their pension scheme membership.

I hope that I have addressed all the questions raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Argyll and Bute and others; if not, I will do so by way of letter. We must not forget that we agreed to undertake a review into the likely effects of an increase in the normal pension age beyond 65 on Ministry of Defence police and defence fire and rescue service personnel and, as part of that review, we will consider the three matters that I have outlined. I can assure Members that that is what we are doing. The review is due to be completed by 24 December this year and the Department is on track to meet that deadline. The report will be laid in the House before it rises on 19 December.

*Question put and agreed to.*

5.8 pm

*House adjourned.*



# Westminster Hall

Tuesday 26 November 2013

[MARTIN CATON *in the Chair*]

## Transport Infrastructure (North Wales)

*Motion made, and Question proposed.* That the sitting be now adjourned.—(Gavin Barwell.)

9.30 am

**Martin Caton (in the Chair):** As can be seen by the attendance, there is quite a bit of interest in this debate. Six Back-Bench Members have already indicated that they would like to speak, so if Members can curtail their remarks as far as possible, we will get everyone in.

**Mark Tami (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab):** I welcome you to the Chair, Mr Caton. It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship.

I am pleased to have secured this debate on an important issue. I will mainly concentrate on north-east Wales, particularly its economic importance, the history of the area and why the transport links that we have now and that we hope to have in future are so important.

The area, whether people want to call it the Deeside hub or Mersey-Dee, covers Flintshire, Wrexham, Denbighshire, Cheshire west, Chester and Wirral, with a population of about 1 million and gross value added of some £17 billion a year. Some 83% of the area's journeys start and finish in the area. More than 17,000 people commute across the border to England, and some 10,000 go the other way. There are also students who go to Chester, and students going the other way to Glyndwr university.

I am pleased to say that the area contains many modern and very successful manufacturers, with Airbus, Toyota, Shotton paper, Tata Steel Colors, ConvaTec and many more on the Deeside industrial park. On the other side of the border, we have Vauxhall at Ellesmere Port, Bank of America and, again, many more. Indeed, north Wales accounts for more than 30% of the manufacturing output of Wales as a whole. I know that colleagues both in England and in Wales are surprised at the size and skill levels of some of those factories and at the number of jobs involved. My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Clwyd (Chris Ruane) will no doubt talk about the Technium in St Asaph, and my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) will talk about Wylfa in Anglesey.

Airbus employs more than 6,500 people, 60% of whom live in Wales, coming from as far afield as Anglesey. The other 40% live in England, coming from as far afield as Derby, or so I am advised—that seems a fairly long commute to me, but apparently it is the case. There is substantial spend in the local economy, but those people need to get to and from their place of work. The supply chain is beginning to site in the local area, which, again, is creating more jobs. The big danger is that we take all that for granted, as if it will be there for ever and a day.

I have told this story before, but I will tell it again because I think it is worth telling. When I entered Parliament in 2001, before giving my maiden speech—I am sure other colleagues did the same—I looked at

what my predecessor did. My predecessor, who is now Lord Jones, talked about the two great powerhouses of the area, which were Courtaulds Textiles and British Steel. One of those companies has gone altogether, and the other is still important but employs only a fraction of the numbers it did back then. It still holds the record for the most job losses on a single day at a single plant, when more than 8,000 people lost their job. We cannot assume that, just because companies are big and employ a lot of people, they will be there for ever and a day.

Many other areas that suffered in the 1980s have still not recovered, but because of the efforts of Flintshire county council and others, including my predecessor Lord Jones, new investment was attracted to the area, and we have managed to build on that. Importantly, we want to attract companies that will stay, not just companies that come because they want grant assistance and that will then up stumps and move somewhere else. We want long-term investment not only in buildings but in the work force. Even in good times, we have seen that successful companies can still fail. I remember when we thought that the optical fibre market was doing extremely well, but it crashed overnight and the high-tech factory closed. We lost quality jobs in a relative boom period.

We are getting by okay at the moment, so why do we need to improve and update our transport network? To be honest, we are barely getting by. If we get the level of growth in the local area for which we hope, we will need to improve things, because our transport system is creaking at the seams in places. The Mersey Dee Alliance carried out research, which is included in both the Haywood and the north-east Wales integrated transport taskforce reports to the Assembly, showing that we can expect to get between 40,000 and 50,000 jobs in the next 20 years. That figure comprises Mersey waters enterprise zone, with 20,000 jobs; Deeside enterprise zone, with 5,000 to 7,000 jobs; 4,500 jobs at Ellesmere Port; Ince resource recovery park, with 3,200 jobs; the university of Chester's Thornton site, with 2,000 to 4,000 jobs; central Chester business district, with more than 1,000 jobs; the Northgate project, Chester, with 1,600 jobs; Wrexham industrial estate and western gateway, with 2,500 jobs; 7,500 jobs in Denbighshire; Vauxhall Motors, with 700 jobs; and Bank of America, with 1,000 jobs. So we hope that a substantial number of jobs will come to the area during the next 20 years, which is positive stuff, but we need a modern transport system that works to ensure that that happens.

We are already over-dependent on car usage. In Flintshire, more than 80% of people use their car to travel to work, which is a very high figure—Flintshire had the highest car usage in the country, but I do not know whether it still does—and I am sure the figure is not much different in other parts of Wales. I do not think that is just because people like using their car; it is because there is a problem getting anywhere using any other system of transport.

The north-east Wales integrated transport taskforce report of June 2013 clearly highlights some of the problems that we are facing. I will illustrate them by referring to a few journeys to the Deeside industrial park. From Flint by car it would take an estimated 16.5 minutes, and by public transport 43 minutes, which is not too bad. Rhyl is 39 minutes by car, or one hour and 25 minutes via a bus and a train with one change. Denbigh is 44 minutes by car, or two hours and

[*Mark Tami*]

17 minutes by public transport—a bus and a train, two changes. Wrexham is 32 minutes by car, or one hour and 25 minutes by public transport—it is a bus and two changes, even from Wrexham. Frodsham is 24 minutes by car, or one hour and 14 minutes by bus and train, again involving two changes.

**Chris Ruane** (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend for securing the debate. Two of the big centres that he mentioned, the Airbus factory and the Deeside industrial park, are on the north Wales line. Is there a case for building dedicated stations on the Deeside industrial park and at Airbus itself?

**Mark Tami:** I think there is, and I will talk about why we need a dedicated station. It is important that we make it easy for people to move about, because there is a lot of anecdotal evidence showing that some people are not taking up jobs that are perhaps not well paid because the difficulty and cost of getting to that job outweigh the benefits of taking it. We need to address that.

What do we need to do? On road improvements, we have a pretty good system, but there are pinch points. Considerable work has been done on the M56 to sort out problems on the English side of the border, but there is a pinch point on the A494 and the A55 around Queensferry and Aston Hill. With the creation of the Deeside enterprise zone, that will probably get worse, rather than better. In saying that, I am certainly not arguing for the original proposal, which was totally out of proportion to what was required. At one point, it included 13 lanes—I think it could have been seen from space. It failed to take account of local issues, and there were serious local concerns about that.

I think we can do things relatively cheaply—we are in difficult financial times. As someone who uses the road a lot, I know that most of the problems are caused by lorries and, in the summer, caravans slowing down. A crawler lane could deal with a lot of those problems.

Whatever we do, we need noise protection measures. We also need to involve local people. The Assembly is looking at the issue, and I have written to the Transport Minister about it. The problem is that there is a lot of uncertainty, which makes it difficult for people to sell their houses or to know the size of the project they will face. I recognise that £70 million has been earmarked for improvements further into Wales. I read the other day that another crossing to Anglesey was being considered, depending on what borrowing powers deliver.

A further pinch point is between the A483 and the A55. As someone who has sat in traffic there on many occasions, I know that it causes a bit of a problem. Again, it could be sorted out relatively easily. I am always struck—this perhaps demonstrates that we need more joined-up government—by the fact that the A483 has tarmac on it on the Welsh side of the border. I actually know when I am entering England, because I drop off the tarmac and on to concrete slabs. I do not know why the two Administrations could not just have spoken to each other and sorted the whole thing out in one go, but clearly that did not happen.

As I said, we do not have a bad road network; it needs improving, but it does not need major surgery. The same cannot be said for our rail network, which is

particularly poor—especially for people in the Mersey-Dee area who use it to commute to work. The Wrexham-Bidston line goes through the whole area, and it is an ideal solution to many of the transport issues I have talked about. There is great potential, but the service's frequency and reliability are, unfortunately, not what the average commuter expects.

**Susan Elan Jones** (Clwyd South) (Lab): My hon. Friend has spoken about a variety of matters, but does he not agree that some small changes could have a real impact? He referred to the inadequate rail service. In my constituency, there are two stations—Chirk and Ruabon—neither of which has ticketing machines. If one wishes to print a ticket, one has to go to Wrexham General station, which defeats the whole point of advance booking and the like. There is also no disability access at the stations, so it is not possible to go from one side to the other. Those are small things, but they suggest the lack of a mindset favourable to rail usage in smaller areas.

**Mark Tami:** I thank my hon. Friend. I agree there are lots of small changes that could be made. Someone came to see me who was blind. He said that few announcements are made on trains, so he feels unsure whether he is getting off at the right station. There are small things we can do to improve the situation, and they do not involve a big cost.

**Hywel Williams** (Arfon) (PC): The hon. Gentleman has listed a large number of possible road improvements, and he is now talking about rail improvements. However, I was under the impression that transport is a devolved matter. I am not springing to the Minister's defence, but would the hon. Gentleman's comments not be better directed at his Labour colleagues in Cardiff?

**Mark Tami:** I would say I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention, but that would not be true, would it? He has made his point, but I was talking about joined-up government, which would make sense. The hon. Gentleman might realise that there is no Hadrian's wall at the border; in fact, there is no border at all as far as most people are concerned. As I have tried to illustrate, people work on both sides of the border, and we do not want to be turning away jobs, although perhaps that is what the hon. Gentleman wants.

**Hywel Williams** *rose*—

**Mark Tami:** I think the hon. Gentleman has made his point.

The Wrexham-Bidston line does not work well, particularly for shift workers, for whom it does not start early enough or end late enough. We really need to modernise the service. In the first instance, we need to introduce a half-hourly service. In the longer term, we need electrification, although we must take on board any concerns among people living along the route.

We have to look at a cross-border service. In the past, when we thought we had made progress on the Wrexham-Bidston line, it came to nothing, partly because costs suddenly spiralled—I never quite understood why—but also, if we are honest, because the Administrations failed to work together for the benefit of those on both sides of the border.

I certainly support upgrading the service. As my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Clwyd (Chris Ruane) mentioned, we need a dedicated station on the route to serve the Deeside industrial park. The Hawarden Bridge station offers an opportunity, although we might want to build a different station. However, we need something on the site. To be frank, it is incredible that the industrial park was built without a dedicated station in the first place—that seems crazy to me. For those who do not have a car, the only way to get there is to use the shuttle bus. For a park with 7,000 or 8,000 jobs, that is completely ridiculous. We can look to the past, but we really have to learn the lessons of the past and not make the same mistakes again.

I welcome the improvements at Saltney junction, where line speed and capacity will be increased. I would also welcome the reinstatement of the Halton curve, which links the Chester-Manchester line at Frodsham with the west coast main line at Runcorn. That would allow the reintroduction of a direct rail service between north Wales and Chester, and on to Liverpool Lime Street and, importantly, to John Lennon airport. A study is looking at the viability of that, and I hope it reaches a positive outcome.

A service we tend to forget—it is seen just as an add-on—is buses. We need a more co-ordinated approach, and we need to look at the cross-border nature of bus services. As I indicated, even short journeys seem to take a ridiculous time—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Clwyd is indicating that I am doing a similar thing. As I said regarding the Wrexham-Bidston line, the public must have confidence in bus and train services if they are to use them. If they do not, they will see them as unreliable, and they will carry on using cars.

I will make one final point, as I know people are keen that I conclude. There has been some mention of having an airport in north Wales at Hawarden, effectively in Broughton. Broughton is vital for taking wings out of the manufacturing facility there to be assembled in France and Germany, and for a limited number of light aircraft movements. It is in a very built-up area, and we have two perfectly good airports at Manchester and Liverpool. We do not need to expand any service at Broughton; we need to ensure it is easier to get to and from the airports at Manchester and Liverpool. That makes far more sense than expanding capacity at Broughton.

In conclusion, we have a great opportunity in north Wales to grow and to create jobs, and to use the very skilled work force we have there to grow the economy for the future. We are only going to do that if we have the right transport infrastructure in place.

9.50 am

**Glyn Davies** (Montgomeryshire) (Con): I want to do exactly as you would prefer me to do, Mr Caton, which is to speak for a very short time, because I intend to make only one point in this debate. My point builds on one made by the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami) about the relationship between the Welsh and British Governments and how they work together to recognise cross-border links.

The issue of cross-border links applies to several areas in Wales, but as this debate is about north Wales, I want to speak specifically about Llanymynech. I will

not go into the case for a bypass at Llanymynech today, because it has been made elsewhere and would take away from the point that I want to make, which I want to make on the basis of the strong case for that bypass having already been made. Part of that new road would be in Wales and part of it in England, so it would require a commitment from both sides. There is often a strong commitment from Wales in these cases, as there would clearly be access to markets in England—in mid-Wales, near Middletown, there is a very strong case, and only a little bit of the road would be in England. The case from Wales is very strong and the investment would be made, but the case from the English side is very weak, because there is little access to markets. Although the scheme would be hugely important to the benefit of Wales, it cannot go ahead. It has been stopped, by devolution, from even being considered. That is a negative aspect of devolution which will grow over time. As road links elsewhere in Wales improve, we will still find bottlenecks on the border that cannot be dealt with because of devolution.

**Hywel Williams:** I do not want to disagree with the hon. Gentleman, but he ascribed the difficulties to devolution. Were there any moves to improve the road before devolution? As he identified, the problem comes on the English side, so if devolution is the problem, surely it is not devolution to the Welsh Government; it is something else, which people do not talk about here: devolution in England, possibly.

**Glyn Davies:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. Discussions about that particular road crossing in Llanymynech had been going on for many years, but my understanding is that it is now not being considered at all, because of the difficulty of coping with the constitutional problems. Cross-border links in other parts of Wales have fallen off the radar because of the difficulties of taking them forward. We must address that.

Devolution is not independence. It is not separation, even though some Members might prefer it to be so. We need the Governments in Wales and England to work together on projects in which they both have an interest and accept that sometimes the priority on one side must be considered alongside the priority on the other. With cross-border links—I have used the example of Llanymynech today—that is crucial. The English Government must consider the economic benefits of Wales when looking at the priority they might give to such schemes. I hope the Minister takes that on board and considers it in relation not only to north Wales, but to cross-border links from the north to the south of Wales.

9.54 am

**Mr David Hanson** (Delyn) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami) for introducing this important debate.

My central contention to the Minister is perhaps contrary to what the hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams) said. What happens to transport in England matters to my constituents and to north-east Wales. What happens in England with these projects—for example, the Halton curve, linking north-east Wales to Liverpool, electrification from Crewe to the north Wales coastal

[Mr David Hanson]

railway line, and the potential HS2 project and its Crewe link—matters a lot, and so does the speed with which people can get to north-east Wales. Transport is devolved to the Assembly in many respects, but the Assembly budget is set by the House of Commons, and important issues for improving transport links to my constituency rest partly with Department for Transport Ministers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside began his speech by stating the importance of the north Wales economy, which is linked to that of north-west England. As he said, north Wales business is now worth more than £10.4 billion to the economy, with 22% of the Welsh economy and 30% of its manufacturing residing in north Wales. He spoke about Airbus, paper, steel, wind farms and tourism. Only today, a report shows that the north Wales coast path has brought 416,000 visitors to the county of Flintshire, which he and I represent, since it opened. All those businesses and potential economic growth areas rely on an efficient and effective public transport system.

We are inexorably linked to Manchester, Liverpool, Chester and Crewe through the Mersey Dee Alliance. As my hon. Friend said, there is the potential to create 45,000 jobs in the next 20 years, including at the Wirral Waters enterprise zone, so it is the responsibility not only of the Assembly but of the United Kingdom Government and Parliament to help to develop the region's transport system. We have great potential for business and tourism growth. Only last week I hosted a meeting at Flint town hall of Arriva Trains Wales, Virgin Trains, Flintshire county council and Taith, the local council-sponsored transport network for north Wales, to consider how businesses in the area, and in particular tourism, could grow.

My hon. Friend mentioned the north-east Wales integrated transport taskforce, which produced a report in the summer. I want to focus on the points it made, which the Minister should reflect on, from his perspective as the link between the UK Government and the Assembly. My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside highlighted difficulties with public transport times versus car journey times and mentioned Flint, in my constituency. It takes 16 minutes to get from Flint to the industrial areas of Deeside by car, but 43 minutes by bus, with one change. The fact that people's morning journeys would take so much longer by public transport is a disincentive for them to use it.

However, the taskforce focused on other key areas and made severe criticisms for Government to attend to, saying:

“The rail network does not link places where people live to employment sites effectively and does not offer sufficient service frequencies to allow seamless commuting where it does. Bus networks serve town and city centres reasonably well, but outside of the core network service frequencies are often poor... Marketing of alternatives to the car is poor and ticket arrangements across public transport networks are complex, not joined-up and are often not understood by consumers.”

Crucially—the Minister should reflect on this point—the report said:

“There is evidence that transport networks either side of the border are developed partially in isolation from each other, leading to gaps in service provision and difficulties in seamless cross border journeys.”

The report also made some strong recommendations, in particular on rail:

“The rail modernisation business case should consider how frequencies of service and journey times within North Wales and to/from key destinations in the North West can be improved. We would encourage the provision of new stations”,

which my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside mentioned. Another recommendation, which I want to emphasise, states:

“There is also strong support for the delivery of the Halton Curve to enable direct services to...Liverpool from the study area”,

which comprises our constituencies.

We have a unique opportunity in the next few months and years to look at those recommendations. What discussions is the Minister having with colleagues in the Department for Transport about progress on the Halton curve to link north Wales to Liverpool—to Liverpool John Lennon airport in particular? What progress is he making with the business case, about which I know he is concerned, for electrification and how that will link between England and Wales for business and tourism purposes? Following yesterday's publication of the High Speed Rail (London - West Midlands) Bill, will the Minister explain how he sees north Wales benefiting from that investment and the link to Crewe?

Although rail journey times from London to Crewe will be shortened after the project's second stage—if we reach it following the long parliamentary process—I am interested in what discussions the Minister has had with Assembly colleagues about the long-term vision for north Wales following HS2. It has my vote and support, but, because it could outlive all of us in this room in terms of parliamentary procedures, what is the Minister looking at now to maximise the benefits?

With companies such as Airbus securing £30 billion of new-aircraft orders, which will be on its order books for 20 to 25 years, only last week, we need to examine business and commuter movement, the growing tourism market and the effects that HS2, electrification and improvements to the Halton curve and other rail infrastructure can have on north Wales. Those are challenges for the Minister now, and I hope that they will be challenges for my right hon. and hon. Friends in the near future.

10.2 am

**Guto Bebb** (Aberconwy) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Caton, and to follow the right hon. Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson). I am pleased to be involved in this debate, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami) on not only securing it, but articulating a positive view of the future of the Welsh economy.

It is important that we should sometimes speak as Members for north Wales, rather than trying to make party political points, and the spirit of the debate has been positive. We are all extremely proud of the success of the north-east Wales economy, which, it is fair to say, is interlinked with that of the north-west of England. As a Member for a constituency further west, I want to see some of north-east Wales's success move along the A55 and the railway line to ensure that more of north Wales benefits from the economic performance of north-east Wales.

The success of north-east Wales—I am thinking of Airbus in particular—is putting Wales on the map. A week and a half ago, when the announcement was made about Airbus's success in securing further significant orders, I happened to be in Washington, and it is my pleasure to say that both Senators and Congressmen were aware of Wales, mainly because of the success of Airbus. For Wales to be known for the high-skill, high-technology industry in the area is an important development.

On the performance of our predecessors, I should say that before making my maiden speech, I read Lord Roberts of Conwy's, but I felt depressed afterwards. He said that he wanted to do two things during his time in Parliament—first, to ensure that there was a dual carriageway from Chester to Holyhead, which was delivered—

**Chris Ruane:** It is 25 miles short!

**Guto Bebb:** Almost to Holyhead. Lord Roberts also wanted to ensure that Bangor had a new general hospital, which was delivered. When preparing a maiden speech, looking at a predecessor's performance can be a sobering experience.

The road infrastructure in north Wales is actually fairly good, but we need to consider whether we can deal with some of the pinch points, not least those on the A55, which can create difficulties—in particular on summer Friday nights when people are heading into Wales for the weekend from the north-west and Yorkshire and any accident or problem can cause severe delays.

The A55 is a designated Euroroute and yet that dual carriageway has two roundabouts in my constituency—the only two roundabouts on Euroroutes in the whole of Europe. I can assure everyone that the caravans and tourists trying to get down to Anglesey or the Llyn peninsula make returning from my constituency office on a Friday night a difficult journey. The A55 does need some improvements, but we should be fairly pleased with the current road infrastructure.

We need to look carefully at the required investment in rail. Anybody who travels from London to north Wales is well aware that there is a two-hour service to Chester, where one must often change trains and enter what feels like a less effective system. The mere fact that it takes two hours to get from London to Chester, but then another hour and 45 minutes to reach Holyhead is indicative of the problems.

I warmly welcome the announcement of the £200 million-plus investment in signalling on the north Wales main line, but we need to keep up the pressure for electrification. It is to be welcomed that the Government are delivering electrification in south Wales—in particular on the valley lines—but we need to argue the case for north Wales. Signalling will make a huge difference to speed and capacity, but I acknowledge that we need to look at electrification as the long-term goal. The north Wales railway line can take high-speed rail, by which I mean a speed much faster than the current performance. Much of that can be achieved through signalling, but we must keep up the pressure for electrification.

Given the growth and renaissance of Liverpool, the fact that there is no direct link from there to north Wales is problematic. People in my constituency travel

to Airbus, to Deeside and over the border for work, and I am sure that they would travel even further afield if the transport links existed. I would support a direct link into Liverpool.

We should, however, be confident of the fact that positive things are happening on the railway, and not only in signalling. Virgin Trains has plans to develop services in north Wales. My constituency is dependent on tourism, so a service from Llandudno Junction to London in three and a quarter hours, which is what Virgin envisages as possible, would make a huge difference. To be able to say that a constituency such as mine was within three hours and 15 minutes of London would be a huge boost to tourism in my area.

The Conwy valley railway has also seen significant investment into communication for the cabs travelling up and down the line. It is an important link, but we sometimes think of it as a line that happened to escape the Beeching cuts. I recently gave a hitchhiker a lift from Tal-y-Cafn back to Dolwyddelan when on my way to a surgery. The gentleman in question worked at the new Bodnant Welsh food centre. He catches the train down from Blaenau Ffestiniog to Tal-y-Cafn in the morning and then hitchhikes back in the evening, because he cannot afford the rail fare. He wanted to work, so he preferred to do that than be unemployed in Blaenau Ffestiniog. He cannot hitchhike in the morning, because he needs to be in work for 8 am, so the only way he can make it is via the Conwy valley railway.

Another important point about the line is that my constituency and that of the right hon. Member for Dwyfor Meirionnydd (Mr Llwyd) have both seen huge development in outdoor sports, such as mountain biking. Market research in the area shows that many of those who visit for such sports would really like to travel by public transport, so the Conwy valley railway is important. My aspiration is that such people should go biking on the new tracks at Blaenau Ffestiniog while staying at Betws-y-Coed or other places in my constituency. The railways are getting some investment, but we need more.

Before I finish, I have a few points to make about infrastructure. When discussing infrastructure, we need to talk about broadband. The fact that 10% of the broadband fund has been spent in Wales is a real success for the Government and a great success for the partnership between Westminster and the Assembly. The important investment from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, which has been matched and supported by the Welsh Government, is most welcome.

If we aspire towards a modern economy, broadband infrastructure is just as important as any transport link. Frankly, in an area aspiring to have new businesses, saying that we have no broadband capability is not very persuasive. That is also true from a tourism perspective; time and again I am told by businesses in my constituency that the lack of broadband capability and of wi-fi affects them.

All that must be underpinned by the skills sector. We can talk about the need to invest in infrastructure—whether road, rail or broadband—to our hearts' content, but we must also underpin all that by training our young people so that they can take the job opportunities. In that respect, the investments in Deeside college, Glyndwr university and, in my constituency, Llandrillo—including the support of Coleg Menai, which is part of Grwp

[*Guto Bebb*]

Llandrillo Menai, for the energy sector—provide examples of the further education sector supporting the jobs that, without doubt, we hope to see in north Wales.

Infrastructure is important, yes, but unless we have the skills base in place, we will not be able to exploit the economic potential of the area.

10.10 am

**Albert Owen** (Ynys Môn) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Aberconwy (*Guto Bebb*). He started off by saying that there were no partisan points to be made, but I have to come back on a serious one that he made in trying to rewrite history: the A55 from Chester to Holyhead was not completed and there was a huge gap of 15 or 20 miles across my constituency for 15 years. That allowed the economy of my area to decline significantly, because of the logjam of traffic from Ireland.

It was all a huge mistake, and I was proud that one of the first things that the Labour Government did after coming to power in 1997 was to dual the A55, allowing us to join in the prosperity of the rest of north Wales. It is worth putting that on the record. I have a lot of time for the predecessor of the hon. Member for Aberconwy, an Anglesey man, but that was a failure of his in the Wales Office of the previous Conservative Government.

I want to concentrate on some issues that have not been touched on, and one that affects full integration is the ports. Britain is an island and the island of Ireland lies off Wales, so it is important to get gateways from Ireland to the United Kingdom. One of the best ways of achieving that is to have 21st-century ports.

Holyhead is the major port on the western seaboard; it is one of the busiest ports in the United Kingdom, but I feel that sometimes it has been losing out. I want to make this point again, as I did to the Minister's predecessor, who is now the Secretary of State for Wales. When the Government put aside £60 million for investment in UK ports, which are a reserved area, they immediately made it for England only. English ports were allowed to share the £60 million, but Welsh ports were not allowed to bid for it—there was just a Barnett consequential and, as a result, ports in Pembrokeshire and west Wales shared only some £3 million. Everyone knows that we cannot get much port development for £3 million.

Meanwhile, because the £60 million was an England-only policy, other ports in England had the lion's share, which meant that it has become difficult for Welsh ports to compete against English ports. The economies of areas around ports rely heavily on port development. Offshore wind development needs proper infrastructure to get goods to the wind farms. There is a great danger that, without the necessary infrastructure in Welsh ports, the equipment will be assembled in other parts of the United Kingdom—or, indeed, Europe—and be shipped to the wind farm locations.

I make a plea to the Minister. Let us look again at UK port policy and ensure that Welsh ports have an even and level playing field for investment for the future, because a huge number of skilled jobs are involved. People in my constituency are good at maintaining its offshore wind farms, which are some of the best in the

world. Turbine Transfers works throughout the world, but it cannot work out of its own port, because of the lack of development.

Rail is also important. I agree that there have been some huge improvements over the past 15 years on the north Wales line. The investment in the west coast line—some £13 billion over that period—has given great benefit to north Wales, with faster and better trains between Holyhead and Euston. That is why I support High Speed 2; the same benefits could be derived from HS2, if we got those fast links to Crewe in the first place and then electrification along the north Wales coast. The issue is hugely important and we should look at it positively. Dublin and London can be linked via north Wales, which can be part of a huge European network between those capitals—with shipments on to Felixstowe, for example.

For ports as well, the carrying of freight by rail and ship is important to alleviate the problems on our roads. We need to invest more in the freight capacity of our railways. If we have faster speeds on the lines, we get more capacity on our railways for carrying freight across the United Kingdom and for the purpose of connecting continental Europe and the Republic of Ireland. We must concentrate on those issues.

**Hywel Williams:** Is the hon. Gentleman satisfied with the performance of this Government, and of the Welsh Government, on the trans-European transport network, TEN-T? The route to Ireland is designated to go through Liverpool rather than Holyhead in his constituency.

**Albert Owen:** I know what the hon. Gentleman is referring to—a little scaremongering by Jill Evans, MEP—but the European Commission and the Welsh Government say that that is not the case and that the priority will remain the existing TEN-T route, including from Felixstowe to Holyhead.

Opportunities have, however, been lost; if the hon. Gentleman wants to be partisan about the Tory coalition Government in Westminster and about the Welsh Government, I should say that one such wasted opportunity was between 2007 and 2011, when we had a Minister who was not of those colours, but did not put the case for the electrification of the north Wales line. As a member of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, the hon. Gentleman knows that a Plaid Cymru Minister gave evidence at the time; when we were pushing for electrification for south Wales, he said that for north Wales it was only an aspiration. I would expect a Minister from north Wales to have greater priorities for north Wales than merely “aspiration”.

Rather than scaremongering about such routes, we should be dealing with the situation. We should put the case for north Wales—with HS2 and with all the European and British networks—because we want an integrated north-west Wales in an integrated United Kingdom. That is not supported by the hon. Gentleman's party.

I could go on longer about rail, but I am conscious of time, so I turn to air links, which we have not mentioned in any great detail. My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (*Mark Tami*), whom I thank for securing the debate, said that we need to get proper air links. We are going to have huge investment in north-west Wales—a proposed £8 billion; among the biggest in the whole United Kingdom—in the development of Wylfa

nuclear power station. We need to get people and goods to the area, so we need a proper, fully integrated transport system. I want to see the development of north Wales airports—yes, Hawarden and Anglesey airports—so that people can fly there.

The novelty in this country is that we think we have to go by the slowest and longest routes. In continental Europe and the Americas, people leap from city to city and country to country via air links. They do it to do business fast. Yes, we need broadband, but we also need people to get from A to B as quickly as possible, and air links are good way of doing that.

My constituency is only 40 minutes away from the capital city of Wales, because we have an air link. It is important that we are able to say to the rest of the world that we can get from capital cities to such locations quickly. We need to concentrate and improve on a western corridor that might include Cardiff, Anglesey, Belfast and many other areas. Such a corridor has not been explored, and Belfast is an important and growing city in the United Kingdom, so we need to get such air links to it.

On roads, we have heard about the potential for an extra bridge across the Menai straits, funded by extra borrowing. I do not dismiss that option, but the road infrastructure in Anglesey will take a pounding during the development of Wylfa power station. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Clwyd (Chris Ruane) has been signalling me to get me to halt my speech, but I have a final and important point to make. That Wylfa development is one of the biggest investments—it is not in north-east Wales, but in north-west Wales, which deserves equal weight with the rest of north Wales. The road infrastructure in Anglesey needs huge improvements. I would like to see some focus on that from Government across the United Kingdom.

I make one final point to the Minister. We need to work together on this matter. The UK Government, the Welsh Government and local government need to work together to get the best out of our infrastructure and create the prosperity that we all want. North Wales is a place to do business. We can do business better and faster if we have better and faster infrastructure—sea, air, road and rail.

10.20 am

**Ian Lucas** (Wrexham) (Lab): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami), and echo much of his introductory message about the strength of the economy in north-east Wales.

I want to start in a bipartisan spirit by quoting the Secretary of State for Wales—not something I do very often—who said:

“Together, Deeside and Wrexham make up one of the most important industrial areas in Europe”.

That is absolutely true. In fact, I would go further: we could say that together they form one of the most important industrial areas in the world. At the Dubai air show last week we heard the fantastic announcement that 50 A380 jets have been ordered, the wings for which will be built at Broughton in north-east Wales.

We need to be a voice for north Wales on a cross-party basis, to create strong infrastructure to support our industry. As my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and

Deeside said, there is no guarantee that that industry and those businesses will remain in north-east Wales. It is important to construct that infrastructure across north Wales and into north-west England—that link is crucial—so that we can compete with international businesses and competitors that would love to have those businesses and industries in their own countries.

In north-east Wales the infrastructure in my view is really from the 1990s, but is trying to cope with industry that is developing towards 2050, so we need a far-sighted approach. We welcome the investments in infrastructure that are now being made in the region. The Welsh Government have promised to invest £44 million on the line from Wrexham in Wales to Chester in England. That is crucial to the people of Wales; many people go every morning from my constituency of Wrexham across into England, to work for businesses such as General Motors in Ellesmere Port or the pharmaceuticals centres in Daresbury. They have high-quality jobs there and need to have contact with those areas. The businesses that employ those people want to ensure that they have access to a skilled work force.

We are also seeing developments in infrastructure in north-east Wales. Yale college in Wrexham has merged with Deeside college, creating Coleg Cambria, which will be a world-challenging organisation and will build support networks for competitive businesses. In Deeside and Wrexham we need a linked-up transport system, so that the fleet of buses that now travels from Deeside down to Wrexham and back is replaced by a modern, integrated transport system.

We have heard a lot about the Wrexham-Liverpool line, which goes right through this hugely important industrial area. The Wrexham industrial estate and Deeside industrial park have both been extremely successful in attracting important international businesses. We need to link those industrial estates; as has been said, it is extraordinary that a new estate such as the Deeside industrial park was built without a real public sector transport connection. I am afraid that it is also extraordinary that in the 1980s, the Wrexham-Chester railway line was reduced from a dual to a single track, one of the most short-sighted decisions I can remember a Government making. Fortunately that is going to be addressed.

We also need collectively—it is important that north Wales MPs speak collectively on this matter—to stress the importance within Wales of north-east Wales. We have colleagues who are eloquent in promoting different areas within the country. Only yesterday I saw a report that the south-east Wales local authorities are pressing for a metro system in their region. It is true that there has been massive investment in the past 10 years in the valleys lines and the Vale of Glamorgan line in south Wales. That sort of rail investment has not happened in our area in the past. It is coming now, and I have referred to the cross-border investment in the Wrexham-Chester line, which will lead to a big improvement and create a great deal of additional capacity. We need to say to our colleagues in the UK Government and the Welsh Government that if our tremendous industrial area is to sustain jobs and be internationally competitive, we need to work collectively to provide an infrastructure, in both skills and transport, that makes the area too good for any globalised company to leave. North Wales has to be the place where people want to be.

[*Ian Lucas*]

We have world-beating industries in our area—not just Airbus, but Toyota and JCB; Sharp is also based in my constituency. Those companies are at the cutting edge of research. We established a university in north-east Wales for the first time in 2008, when Glyndwr university was established; that needs to be part of a support network for our businesses. Businesses need to work together with our educational institutions to put together proposals for the Government on building an integrated cross-border system of transport, so that people who are now travelling across the border can do so more easily and far of them can use more public transport than at present. Wrexham and Flintshire are two of the counties in the UK with the biggest proportion of people who travel to work by car. That is creating pinch points in that 1990s transport network that I have referred to.

We need to look ahead to 2050 and construct a transport system that uses the tracks we already have for a modern rail system linking Liverpool, Manchester and north Wales. Liverpool and Manchester have extremely successful air transport networks, but we have dreadful links to those airports. Anyone who travels to those airports from the west would be insane to travel by train, so they travel by car, which will create additional pressure on the road network in the years ahead. We have to look at how we will link to those international hubs, given our international businesses.

We also need to look at High Speed 2, thinking ahead to its construction and how north Wales will benefit from that. As north Wales MPs, we need to press the Wales Office about HS2 to see how it will specifically benefit our area, and we need to press the UK Government to ensure that there is a plan for north Wales with regard to HS2. We have seen enormous improvements in the rail network down to London and down to Cardiff in recent years, mainly through investment in the west coast main line but also through investment in north-south networks within Wales. That has happened only because of insistent pressure from north Wales. We need to keep that going and look much more closely than we have in the past at the public transport system within north-east Wales, especially the rail system. We need local authorities, AMs and MPs to work together to speak out loudly on behalf of the region that we should all be proud to represent.

10.28 am

**Chris Ruane** (Vale of Clwyd) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Caton. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami), who secured this debate for us, for his good work in promoting north Wales and his constituency in Parliament.

I will talk first about rail transport in north Wales. In the 19th century, rail transformed north Wales. My home town of Rhyl had a population of 1,000, but when the train came in 1849, it turned Rhyl into a premier tourist destination. Rail also opened up the port of Holyhead and the train route to Ireland, bringing great wealth to north Wales.

In the mid-20th century, rail took a dip with the advent of Beeching. Many smaller lines in north Wales and throughout the UK were closed, but in the 21st century

we are looking at a rail renaissance. North Wales MPs must ensure that we receive our fair share of the UK transport budget. London and the south-east have had massive input into their transport infrastructure. They have had Eurostar; Crossrail, one of the biggest construction projects in Europe, is being built; and Heathrow airport has been extended. Many people in the south and London do not want what they believe is over-intensification.

MPs must look at the regional impact of transport investment. There should be a rebalancing towards Wales and north-west England, and we in north Wales must ensure that we tap into that transport infrastructure. We must also ensure that we do not get just crumbs from the table, as we did when Virgin's rolling stock was upgraded and we ended up with Voyagers instead of Pendolinos. We must ensure that we are not short-changed on electrification of the north Wales line, and that we get transport links to the Manchester end of HS2 so that we have the proper investment to attract tourists and manufacturers to north Wales.

The road infrastructure in north Wales is also important to bring in tourists and manufacturing as well as research and development. I pay tribute to the work of Glyndwr university, which called the A55 a "knowledge corridor". In my constituency, it has invested in the optic research and development centre, which won a £200 million bid to create the optics for the extra large telescope that will be located in the Atacama desert. That is the sort of 21st century investment we need in north Wales.

There is a proposal for an A55 science corridor from St Asaph business park in my constituency all the way to Daresbury near Manchester, taking in Airbus and the optic research and development centre to bring that science corridor alive with jobs and investment. That is important.

Airports are essential for us in north Wales. Our regional airports are Liverpool and Manchester, and public transport links to them are very poor. If investment is coming, we must ensure that we have coach and rail links direct to those airports. I take on board the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen)—Ynys Môn is fair old distance from Liverpool and Manchester—that there is a definite need for an airport in north-west Wales.

My hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside mentioned the jobs growth in his constituency at the Deeside industrial estate and at Airbus. There are already tens of thousands of jobs there, and tens of thousands are to come. We must ensure that workers from the unemployment hot spots on the north Wales coast at Holyhead, Bangor, Colwyn Bay, Rhyl and Flint can get on the train in their home town and get off at dedicated stations for the Airbus factory and the Deeside industrial estate, where the jobs are. Will the Minister look at the Department for Work and Pensions transport grants that were available about 10 years ago to help to link people to jobs?

As well as speaking about the big stuff—airports, rail and road—I want to speak about cycling in my constituency. My right hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson) referred to the north Wales coastal path, which brought 416,000 visitors to his county last year. It is a fantastic facility for north Wales and I pay tribute to Sustrans for attracting millions of pounds of lottery funding for the

UK coastal footpath and cycleway. A £4 million dedicated cycle bridge, Pont Dafydd, was opened in my constituency two weeks ago, and I am grateful to the Welsh Government for their investment in that, to the European regional development fund, to Sustrans and to Denbighshire county council. Cycling is an important form of local transport. My constituency has the finest off-road cycle networks in Wales, and I pay tribute to Adrian Walls, the cycling officer for Denbighshire, Gren Kershaw, who set up a cycling attraction in my constituency, and Garry Davies and Howard Sutcliffe from Denbighshire's countryside services, which have provided fantastic cycling facilities.

Finally, the first hovercraft passenger service in the whole world was from Rhyl to Wallasey in 1963. Is a future transport link possible across the Dee estuary to link the hundreds of thousands of people on the Wirral and Merseyside directly to Rhyl?

**Martin Caton (in the Chair):** I will call you now, Mr Williams, but I appeal to you to sit down at 10.40 for the wind-ups.

10.36 am

**Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC):** I certainly will, Mr Caton.

I may surprise everyone in the Chamber by agreeing almost entirely with everything that has been said. It is not the border that worries me, because, as the right hon. Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson) said, what happens in England is important. Anyone who has travelled from Caernarvon to Crewe knows that they get to the border quickly, but then the road between Chester and Crewe is appalling. What happens in England is important for Wales, and I agree with him entirely about that. I also agree entirely with the points about Manchester and Liverpool airports.

Two factors frame this debate. Historically, transport links go through Wales to Ireland rather than to Wales, and transport is largely a devolved matter. In the short time left to me, I will consider matters that are the responsibility of the UK Government rather than the one down in Cardiff. However, I must break that promise almost immediately by agreeing with the hon. Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb) that the two roundabouts on the Dublin to Moscow route are both in north-west Wales, which is an anachronism that must be looked at immediately.

The Welsh and UK Governments have spoken about A55 improvements, and I would be very happy indeed if the Minister could tell us what they might entail. I hope that the two Governments have been talking deeply about that, and that we will see a new crossing from my constituency to that of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen). That is important.

Another point is the one I made earlier about the trans-European transport networks—TEN-T—corridor to Ireland. The hon. Member for Ynys Môn said that I was scaremongering on behalf of my colleague, the MEP Jill Evans, but everyone knows that the quickest and easiest route to Ireland is through north Wales from Holyhead to Dublin, yet the TEN-T route currently goes through Liverpool, which is complete nonsense. I would not mind hearing from the Minister about that. My hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (Jonathan Edwards) asked the Department

for Transport about that, and it gave the game away when it said that the UK Government's priority was to ensure that member states rather than the European Commission remain responsible for transport planning and investment decisions on national networks. It seems that the Commission wanted the route to go through Ynys Môn—[*Interruption.*] The hon. Member for Ynys Môn says “no” from a sedentary position, but I did not hear him explain that in detail in his rather longer speech. Perhaps we can debate that in future. It seems to me that the Commission wanted the route to go through Ynys Môn, but the UK Government wanted it to go through Liverpool.

Wales still does not have a single millimetre of electrified rail in Wales, and I am pleased about the possibility of that on the south Wales line, but I must ask about the north Wales line. As other hon. Members have said, it is vital.

Finally—you will be glad to hear that, Mr Caton—there has been some talk about HS2. Yesterday, I came down on the train through Crewe, and I recommend that any hon. Member who is travelling through Crewe station looks, as they go over the bridge from platform 3 to platform 5, at the very large poster extolling HS2. There are several arrows pointing up from London to Runcorn, Liverpool, Leeds and Manchester, and Wales is a very large blank.

10.40 am

**Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami) on securing this important debate. We can tell by the number of Members who are here—a 100% turnout from Labour MPs in north Wales—just how important infrastructure is, and transport infrastructure in particular. As he rightly pointed out, although we have one of the most vibrant economic areas in Europe in north-east Wales, we cannot be complacent. Even big household names can go bust or move elsewhere. If we want to keep investment there, retain existing firms and attract new investment, we need to be continually upgrading our transport infrastructure to compete in the modern world. He highlighted the over-reliance on cars because of the lack of availability of public transport and pointed out that some people face a real dilemma, in that they hesitate to take up low-paid jobs, particularly if they are part-time or split-shift, because of the high cost of transport to get to them.

The hon. Member for Montgomeryshire (Glyn Davies) talked of cross-border bypasses, saying that although there is enthusiasm for road improvements on the Welsh side of the border in order to access markets, there is no real commitment from the UK Government to back up the English side of the project.

The hon. Member for Aberconwy (Guto Bebb) emphasised the need for better services not only to London but to Liverpool. He highlighted the success of the Conwy Valley rail line and pointed out that rail is vital to bringing in tourists, particularly those with mountain bikes. He also stressed the important success of local FE colleges in helping to upskill local people.

The hon. Member for Arfon (Hywel Williams) referred to the status of Holyhead and whether it was the top priority for the TEN-T European scheme. He also

[*Nia Griffith*]

mentioned the importance of electrification and the need for better transport links when crossing over from Wales into England.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Delyn (Mr Hanson) held a local summit to bring together partners, showing how infrastructure is part of the business community's priorities and something that everybody needs to be involved in. He talked of the importance of long-term commitments and projects such as HS2, which will outlive all of us. He also mentioned the growing importance of tourism, such as that brought by the completion of the all-Wales coastal path.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) stressed the importance of Holyhead as a port, particularly as part of the route from continental Europe through to Ireland. He pointed out that ports are a reserved matter, and that although £60 million of funding was made available for English ports, Welsh ports had to make do with only £3 million. I ask the Minister what he will do to secure a better funding deal for Welsh ports. I am sure that he will be only too aware of the issue, from Milford Haven in his constituency, and I hope that he will be able to respond to my hon. Friend on the subject of Holyhead.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wrexham (Ian Lucas) pointed out that new industrial estates need to be fully integrated and served by public transport. There needs to be proper joined-up thinking, as the phrase goes. He again stressed the need for better connectivity to the international airports in England—obviously, Manchester and Liverpool are absolutely vital to north Wales—and for a link with HS2. He also stressed the need to keep up the pressure for better rail transport in north-east Wales and, like my right hon. Friend the Member for Delyn, stressed the importance of working together with the local business community to keep that pressure up.

My hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Clwyd (Chris Ruane) praised the vision of the A55 science corridor, and he stressed the importance of railways and rolling stock. He talked, again, of the connectivity to Manchester and Liverpool airports and mentioned the importance of infrastructure to tackle unemployment. He would like an answer to his ambitious vision for a hovercraft project from Rhyl to Wallasey and suggested that the Minister might instigate some sort of feasibility study to look at how that might work out in practice. Perhaps we can hear the Minister's views on that project.

I turn to how we will fund the infrastructure and, in particular, what measures the Government can take to facilitate funding for infrastructure in north Wales. We have heard the Secretary of State for Wales telling us that £2.25 billion of new infrastructure will benefit Wales, but the reality is that we will see little of that—possibly none of it—in this Parliament. Government Ministers have boasted frequently about electrification, but in fact, only 50 miles of rail track will be electrified by the time of the election across the whole of Britain.

When we left office in 2010, we already had plans for the electrification of the Great Western main line to Swansea, but this Government have had a stop-start approach. The project was cancelled, and then there had to be a campaign to reinstate the plans for the line through to Swansea. That electrification project will not start until 2015, so what about north Wales? The Welsh

Government have been looking at plans for rail electrification in the north, but when are we likely to see the funding mechanisms for that put in place?

The reality of investment in Wales is very different from the rhetoric. The truth is that the Tory-led Government in Westminster have cut the Welsh capital budget by a third, as part of an overall budget cut of £1.7 billion, hindering the Welsh Government's ability to invest in transport, housing and other essential infrastructure.

**Hywel Williams:** I cannot allow the hon. Lady to get away with what she said. Where were the Labour Government for 13 long years, when not a single millimetre of railway in Wales was electrified? Where were they? It is not a stop-start process—it is a stop-stop process.

**Nia Griffith:** I want to point out, first, that we had all the plans in place for electrification, and the Tory Government wasted time by cancelling them so that we had to campaign to reinstate them. Secondly, as my hon. Friends have already pointed out, there was a certain Minister from Ynys Môn who was the Transport Minister in the Welsh Government from 2007 to 2011, and who seemed to think that electrification in the north was just pie in the sky. Perhaps if he had fought a little harder for it, it would have been higher up the agenda.

**Chris Ruane:** Would my hon. Friend not say that the greatest achievement of the Transport Minister from Ynys Môn was “Ieuan Air”?

**Nia Griffith:** I endorse my hon. Friend's comment.

Turning back to funding for infrastructure in Wales, borrowing powers are absolutely vital for the Welsh Government to invest further in transport infrastructure in north Wales. However, I am concerned not only about what seem to be considerable delays in the introduction of borrowing powers, but about the fact that the goalposts on borrowing seem to be being moved.

We had the announcement back in October 2012 about borrowing powers. UK Government Ministers have indicated that devolution of the minor taxes is a sufficient independent income stream against which the Welsh Government can borrow for capital expenditure. We therefore need clarity on how much borrowing will be released when the minor taxes are devolved.

However, in the UK Government's response to the Silk commission, we read that “appropriate short-term borrowing powers” will be given to the Welsh Government to manage lower-than-forecast tax revenues, but it also says that capital borrowing powers will be given and that:

“The precise levels of capital borrowing will...depend on the outcome of the income tax referendum”.

I should remind the Minister that in Scotland, borrowing is not linked to income tax powers in that way. The Scotland Act 2012 gives the Scottish Government the power from April 2015 to borrow up to £500 million for current expenditure to manage volatilities in tax revenue when they gain responsibility for stamp duty and landfill tax. They will also be able to borrow for capital expenditure, with a limit of 10% of the capital budget up to a maximum stock of £2.2 billion. Both those powers are coming into effect prior to income tax-varying powers.

According to a similar formula, that would mean that the Welsh Government could borrow about £150 million for capital expenditure. Will the Minister clarify exactly what borrowing powers will be given to the Welsh Government based purely on the devolution of minor taxes? If some borrowing powers are to be linked to the devolution of income tax powers, that is a very different situation from the previous understanding that they were linked to the minor taxes.

Will the Minister explain why there are still delays on the issue of borrowing for the M4? We know that there may be some borrowing powers purely in respect of the M4, as has been mentioned today. First, will he explain what is preventing the Treasury from immediately permitting the Welsh Government to use their existing borrowing powers to finance the much-needed M4 upgrade? Secondly, and more importantly for this debate, as the Welsh Government are being given specific borrowing powers for the M4 first, with a more general borrowing power to follow, what will happen to any north Wales projects? Will they have to wait for a more general borrowing power, which could be until the end of the decade, or will the Minister confirm that borrowing might be available sooner for specific north Wales projects, along the same lines as the M4 borrowing, should the Welsh Government ask for it? Will he please tell us what infrastructure can go ahead in Wales, what extra borrowing powers there will be and what sort of time scale he envisages for all this?

10.50 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Stephen Crabb):** It is a pleasure to serve again under your excellent chairmanship, Mr Caton. I thank the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mark Tami) for securing the debate and congratulate him on that. It has been a very good debate, largely free from partisan tribal politics. During the past hour and 20 minutes, we have had a very good discussion about some key issues for people and businesses in north Wales. I commend the hon. Gentleman for the way in which he addressed the issue, for the strategic oversight that he brought to the debate and for his detailed knowledge. He has proved himself to be an effective voice for economic development in his constituency and region.

Transport infrastructure plays a vital role in the economy of Wales and in north Wales. It enables people to access job opportunities and is a key determining factor for the attractiveness of a location for business investment. As the debate has demonstrated, there is a great deal that we can be proud of in north Wales. The north Wales economy, and particularly what we see in Wrexham and Deeside, is a jewel in the crown of the Welsh economy at this time. Opposition Members have demonstrated their pride in what is happening in their constituencies and in the region. It is right that they should take pride in that but want to go further.

I take four broad messages from the debate. The first is the recognition on the part of all hon. Members present of the huge economic importance of north Wales, as a region, for the economy of Wales, but also for the United Kingdom. It is a strategic location for business investment. What we have there with the likes of Toyota, Airbus and all the other companies that hon. Members have mentioned is an engine of job creation in north Wales. I take the point made by the hon. Member

for Alyn and Deeside that we should not take any of that for granted. He has been around long enough to have seen huge economic change in his constituency and region. Companies that were once huge employers there have disappeared altogether to be replaced by other companies, so we cannot take that economic success story for granted.

Key to underpinning that economic success story is continuous investment in transport infrastructure. That is the second conclusion that I take from the debate—a joint recognition, on the part of all hon. Members present, of just how important transport infrastructure is in securing the future economic development for north Wales that we all want to see.

The third conclusion is the recognition that, because of the nature of the cross-border issues and economic development in the region, there is huge interconnectedness between what is happening on the Welsh side of the border and what is happening on the English side. There is a shared interest on the part of the UK Government, who are responsible for transport in England, and on the part of the Welsh Government, who are largely responsible for transport on the Welsh side; and because there is that shared interest, there is also a shared responsibility.

That leads to the fourth conclusion that I take from the debate, which is the need for far better and more effective working together. The point about devolution is not that suddenly the UK Government here in Westminster become uninterested in what the Welsh Government are doing on transport priorities and vice versa. Actually, this debate has demonstrated that the need for the two Administrations to work together becomes even greater. That can be difficult. Hon. Members have highlighted some of the complexities in relation to the devolution boundary. I am thinking in particular of my hon. Friend the Member for Montgomeryshire (Glyn Davies) and the issue of the bypass in his constituency that he mentioned. That highlighted a specific issue that we need to overcome to get the Administrations working better together to tackle some of those cross-border transport priorities.

That brings me to the fourth and final broad conclusion that I take from the debate, which is about unity. Yes, we need far better working together between the Administrations, but one of the things that can help that, and which has come to the fore this morning—largely—is north Welsh MPs working together and speaking with a united voice as champions of further economic development and further transport investment in their region.

**Albert Owen:** Will the Minister take a fifth point from the debate? I am referring to the development of Welsh ports and the importance of their having a level playing field with the rest of the United Kingdom. That is a reserved matter; it is the responsibility of the UK Government, although economic development is devolved.

**Stephen Crabb:** I wanted to use the last five minutes to highlight a number of specific points that different hon. Members raised, so let me deal first with the issue of ports. I absolutely recognise the point that the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Albert Owen) makes. He is a powerful voice for and champion of port development. Yes, ports are a reserved matter, but many of the decisions

[*Stephen Crabb*]

about the infrastructure that supports the development of ports are of course devolved, so this is a classic case of the two Administrations needing to work together.

During international shipping week recently, we at the Wales Office hosted a function for the Welsh ports and shipping sectors. It proved to be a very successful opportunity to bring together different interested players, and involved the Department for Transport as well. There is no intention on the part of the UK Government—ourselves at the Wales Office and colleagues at the Department for Transport—of ignoring the needs of Welsh ports. We absolutely want to see Welsh ports share in the future success of all UK ports.

What else are we doing at the Wales Office? One thing that I do is chair the Wales Office infrastructure working group. Transport infrastructure is just one component of the body of work that we are taking forward. I am pleased to say that the Welsh Government are represented on that working group, as are a number of key private sector players and a number of public sector agencies and organisations. We try to focus our mind on some of the big strategic infrastructure priorities for Wales for the future—the things that will make a difference to the Welsh economy in the years ahead—and start to identify hurdles and barriers that need to be overcome in order to see Wales benefit from the larger infrastructure projects that we know are so important to it.

Moving on to some of the specifics that have been mentioned, I shall deal first with HS2, which a number of hon. Members mentioned. HS2 is a hugely strategically important project for the UK, and for north Wales in particular through the new station at Crewe. That will unlock the opportunity for businesses and individuals in north Wales to benefit from access to high-speed services. Crucially, HS2 strengthens the case for electrification of the north Wales main line, which a number of hon. Members mentioned. If we are interested in building the business case for that electrification of the north Wales coastal main line, HS2 strengthens that

case. I see a number of hon. Members nodding their heads, and I am pleased by the level of support for HS2 that has been expressed here this morning.

The other thing that HS2 will do, of course, is bring north Wales closer to other parts of the north of England. I think that it was the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside who talked about commuters coming to his constituency from Derby, and said that he was surprised at the distances that some people were travelling to come to there. With HS2, we will see the journey times to other parts of the north of England coming down even more and there will be even more commuting, both from north Wales into different parts of England and from England into north Wales, so there is a huge economic opportunity there.

With regard to the Wrexham to Bidston line, I do not want to throw out too much excitement and optimism, because, as I think the hon. Gentleman recognised, a number of intermediate improvements could be made to the service on that track before we get to thinking about electrification. From a Wales Office perspective, we are looking at the business case for electrifying the line. It is part of the package of transport infrastructure improvements for north Wales that we are keen to progress, and we are in dialogue with the Welsh Government and the Department for Transport about that.

With regard to the Halton curve, I cannot offer any immediate cause for optimism. It has been looked at previously. Again, it is part of the package of improvements that, in the longest term, we want to happen. I will write to the hon. Gentleman, as I will to other hon. Members who have mentioned specific projects.

We have had an excellent debate about the transport infrastructure needs of north Wales. There is a lot of work to be done if we are to see all those projects realised and bringing about the economic benefit that we want to come to north Wales, but I thank all hon. Members for their contributions and I will write to the hon. Member for Vale of Clwyd (Chris Ruane) about his desire to see a renaissance of the hovercraft on the Mersey estuary.

## CAP Budget

11 am

**Dr Eilidh Whiteford** (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship this morning, Mr Caton. I am pleased to see at least a few other hon. Members taking an interest in recent developments on the common agricultural policy, and in particular the convergence uplift.

Common agricultural policy funding secures the vitality of farming in Scotland, and it is instrumental in the sustainable development of our rural economy. I represent one of the most rural constituencies anywhere in the UK, where farming underpins a healthy food production sector and a range of successful agricultural industries, and supports vibrant towns and villages. The investment we make in our farming sector through the CAP generates jobs, creates sustainable livelihoods and ensures effective land stewardship. Without it, our environment, economy and communities would be immeasurably poorer.

Earlier this year, agreement was reached on the future shape and direction of the CAP. There will be some substantial changes, but most significant for the purposes of today's debate is the requirement for more equitable distribution of CAP funding, known as external convergence, across the EU. That has enormous significance for farmers in Scotland, because historically Scotland has had very low levels of support relative to the area of land in agricultural use. Scotland receives an average of €130 per hectare, compared with an EU average of €196 per hectare. In the UK, the English average is €265 per hectare, the Welsh average is €247 per hectare and the Northern Irish average is €335 per hectare. Compared with other parts of the EU and other parts of the UK, Scotland has been short-changed on the CAP for a long time, which has put our agricultural sector at a considerable competitive disadvantage. In that respect, moves towards convergence are an important step in the right direction.

Last week, when I questioned Ministers from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on the matter, I received a response that was based on average farmer payments, which concerned me because it betrays either a worryingly poor understanding of what the convergence uplift is or a shameless attempt to pull the wool over our eyes. Average farmer payments are completely irrelevant to the calculation of the convergence uplift. I appreciate that the Minister is quite new to his role and might not yet fully understand the technicalities of how the convergence mechanism is calculated and what it is intended for. That is why it is so important to clarify that the convergence uplift has nothing whatever to do with individual farm size, which varies across Europe, depending on the landscape, climate and model of farming. The convergence uplift is calculated on the basis of average payments per hectare and nothing else. It is intended to benefit those whose support per hectare falls below 90% of the European average.

The convergence uplift is a mechanism introduced by the EU to ensure that member states with payment rates of less than 90% of the EU average rate per hectare receive an uplift designed to close the gap over the next six years. Although England, Wales and Northern Ireland are all above that threshold, Scotland is well below it—so far below, in fact, that it brings the UK average down. That is why the EU has awarded the UK a

convergence uplift of €223 million. That is money designed to level the playing field, calculated on the basis of the average payment per hectare across Europe. It is money earmarked for Scottish agriculture.

**Mr Iain McKenzie** (Inverclyde) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this important debate. She has laid out a conclusive argument for Scotland getting its fair share of the money. Does she agree that it is essential for the Scottish and UK Governments to get together and deliver a coupling deal for the benefit of Scottish farmers?

**Dr Whiteford:** I agree entirely with the hon. Gentleman. There has been an unprecedented degree of co-operation in the Scottish Parliament on the matter. DEFRA has succeeded where many have failed in creating unity among the warring tribes in the Scottish Parliament.

There was a sense of disbelief in the Scottish farming community on 8 November when the UK Government announced that they had decided to split the convergence uplift four ways, rather than using it for its intended purpose. That disbelief has quickly turned to anger and a sense of betrayal. Last week's *Scottish Farmer* called it an "act of grand larceny". Last week, when I met with Scottish farming leaders—some of whom, I believe, are here today—we discussed what representations they might make to Ministers to look again at the issue and, at the very least, bring forward the promised review from 2017 to deliver progress towards convergence over the next six years. Yesterday, along with other Scottish MPs, I received a letter from the Secretary of State for Scotland, which appears to kick that possibility into the long grass by reiterating that no changes will be introduced until after 2020. I appeal to the Minister to look again at the need for convergence in the UK. Will he consider his review timetable and get round the table with stakeholders to work out how the convergence uplift can be used for its intended purpose?

**Mr Alan Reid** (Argyll and Bute) (LD): I congratulate the hon. Lady on securing this debate. I agree that the review is very important, and I am sure she agrees that the UK Government must map out how they will achieve the EU target—which I believe will be implemented in 2020—of convergence towards the EU average of €196 per hectare.

**Dr Whiteford:** I know that the hon. Gentleman shares my concerns from a constituency perspective, because his constituency, like mine, is set to suffer some of the worst impacts of the Government's approach. He makes an important point, and I hope the Government are listening.

The UK seems to be saying that it will simply ignore convergence until the next round of CAP negotiations. We are asking the Government to listen to the voices of the farming community and to work with stakeholders to ensure that convergence happens as the EU intended and that the convergence uplift comes to Scotland. The coalition parties have enjoyed an enviable degree of loyalty over the years from parts of the farming community, but that loyalty is not blind. Trust is a precious commodity in politics, and the Minister would be wise to listen to the farming community, even if he will not listen to the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr Reid) and me.

[Dr Whiteford]

The issue has prompted a great degree of cross-party co-operation and collaboration at Holyrood. Will the Minister commit to meeting the cross-party representatives of the Scottish Parliament—the SNP, Labour, Tory and Liberal Democrat rural affairs spokespeople—who wrote to the UK Government recently requesting a meeting? As they pointed out:

“These receipts only exist because of Scotland’s current position. All other parts of the UK are above the threshold set by the EU for external convergence, and it is only because of Scotland’s extremely low average level of Pillar one payments per hectare that the UK as a whole fell below the threshold and qualified for an external convergence uplift.”

They made the important point that

“Passing on this uplift to Scotland will also not entail any deductions at all for farming colleagues in England, Wales or Northern Ireland.”

They went on to say:

“The European methodology focused entirely on per-hectare levels of payment, and the within-UK decision must be on the same basis.”

It is important that Members of this House understand how support for farmers in Scotland compares with support for farmers in other parts of Europe, so they can see that Scottish farmers are asking not for special treatment, but for parity of treatment with their neighbours and competitors. In Denmark, for example, the area eligible for pillar one funding is less than two thirds the size of Scotland’s eligible area, but Denmark receives more than one and a half times as much pillar one funding—€964 million, compared with Scotland’s €596.6 million. That means that Denmark’s per-hectare pillar one rate is almost three times the Scottish average pillar one rate. Denmark’s pillar two rate of €31 per hectare is more than two and a half times as high as Scotland’s rate of €11 per hectare. The Czech Republic also has a smaller eligible area than Scotland does, but the Czech Republic gets one and a half times as much money to fund pillar one. Its average pillar one rate per hectare is almost twice that of Scotland, and its pillar two rate is more than 10 times higher, at an average of €116 per hectare.

Even closer to home, our neighbours in the Republic of Ireland, who have a similar amount of eligible land under pillar one, get twice as much funding as we do, which means that the average Irish per-hectare pillar one rate is more than double the Scottish average, while its average per-hectare pillar two rates are more than 10 times the Scottish average. I could go on and list every single European Union member state, because each and every one of them, without exception, will receive a higher per-hectare rate than Scotland in both pillar one and pillar two by 2019. Let us be clear: if the average rate of payment in Scotland had been increased to €196 per hectare, in line with the EU average and the objective of all member states by 2019, Scottish agriculture would have benefitted to the tune of €1 billion over the next six years. Instead, as a peripheral region of a member state that places a low priority on the rural economy, Scotland’s per-hectare rate will drop to €128 by 2019 and could fall as low as €108 if all the eligible land comes into the system.

The same is true for pillar two. Although our rural development budget will rise by 7.8% in cash terms, in real terms that amounts to a 5.5% cut over six years. By contrast, 16 member states argued successfully for uplifts

in their rural development funding. Ireland has secured nearly €2 billion, compared with Scotland’s £478 million. Finland has secured even more. With that kind of rural development funding, we could make transformational step changes to Scotland’s rural economy. We could create more jobs, help farms to diversify, improve amenities in our rural communities and strengthen environmental sustainability. Instead, Scotland will continue to have the lowest rural development allocation per hectare in the whole European Union.

Quite frankly, it is an insult to the intelligence of our farmers to pretend that the deal is anything other than profoundly lousy. For the Government to claim largesse, by suggesting that 2% additional flexibility on coupling in some way compensates for the failure to deliver adequate core funding, has been described to me as “quite pathetic”. As one farmer put it to me, “We’re supposed to be grateful to get the crumbs from a cake that should be ours by right.” Just to clarify, the 2% flexibility on coupling brings with it no extra money. It would merely allow us to divvy up the pot differently, to target more resources at the livestock sector, where they are most critical. The serious point is that an extra 2% coupling makes a negligible difference to beef farmers in Buchan, some of whom are set to take sizeable hits under the new regime. What they want and need is the option to go up to 13% coupling, like those member states that face similar challenges and that have successfully negotiated the ability to do so.

**Mr McKenzie:** I thank the hon. Lady for giving way again; she is being generous with her time. She sets out a compelling argument for the Minister to meet the cross-party group, which supports her position, from the Scottish Parliament as soon as possible. Would she say that he needs to give the date on which he will do so?

**Dr Whiteford:** I hope that an outcome of today’s debate will be not only meetings with the Scottish Parliament, but meaningful engagement with the National Farmers Union and other stakeholders. The farmers and crofters of Scotland desperately need a resolution. The sense of outrage is palpable in rural communities, going well beyond the farming communities that are the primary producers in the agricultural economy.

The convergence uplift has come to the UK only due to Scotland’s woeful position, languishing at the foot of the international table for pillar one and pillar two cash receipts. Scotland has the lowest levels of agricultural support in the European Union, yet the Secretary of State for Scotland believes he has delivered

“a fair, positive and stable package for all parts of the UK”.

He is demonstrating plainly that, far from being Scotland’s man in the Cabinet, he is the Tory’s spokesman in Scotland, defending an utterly indefensible decision. I will be interested to see whether the Minister can stand here today—an historic day in Scotland, when we consider our future and the future of our country—and repeat the Secretary of State’s claim with a straight face.

11.14 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (George Eustice):** I thank the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Dr Whiteford) for securing the debate, which is important

to all parts of the UK, but particularly her constituents in Scotland, because as she says, she has a very rural constituency.

As hon. Members are aware, the Government have recently announced the allocation of €27.6 billion in funding from the common agricultural policy between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland for the period 2014 to 2020. The vast majority of those funds will come to the UK as direct payments under pillar one of the CAP. In total, between 2014 and 2020, the UK will receive €25.1 billion in the form of direct payments and €2.6 billion in funding for our rural development programmes under pillar two. Although these are significant sums, the UK will receive less CAP funding in the next seven-year EU budget than it did from the current EU budget. The fact that the UK will receive less funding from the CAP in the future is in line with the reduction in the EU budget that the Prime Minister secured at the February European Council. That position was overwhelmingly supported earlier this year by the House of Commons and will be to the benefit of all UK taxpayers.

**Mr Mike Weir (Angus) (SNP):** The Minister says that there is a reduction in overall funding, but he does not address the fact that the convergence uplift was specifically due to the difference between Scotland and other parts of the EU. The money was given in the budget for a specific purpose. Should it not be used for that purpose?

**George Eustice:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention, but I am one minute and 50 seconds into my speech and I have another 12 or so minutes in which I might get to those issues.

Across the EU, most member states will see reductions in their CAP budget and receipts, and it is only appropriate that the UK shoulders its share of the cut. It is worth noting that we have done better than many other member states. With a shrinking pot of money, how we allocate the funds between Wales, England, Scotland and Northern Ireland was always going to be a difficult decision for the Government. In reaching that decision however, the Government consulted extensively with the devolved Administrations. We have had to be fair to all parts of the UK; I shall explain why I think we have been. Through a collaborative process, the Government decided on the most appropriate way to allocate the funds. There was an equal and proportionate reduction in funding to each Administration. That is fair.

**Mr Reid:** The Minister says that the Government's approach was an equal percentage reduction throughout the UK. The point was made in the debate that the uplift came to the UK due to Scotland, so surely the money should have gone to Scotland?

**George Eustice:** I was going to move on to the uplift, which is the main topic of the debate. I have heard the views of hon. Members who say that the additional funds should have been made available to Scotland, but quite simply the UK's direct payments will fall over the next seven years and there are no additional funds to allocate. Compared with 2013, the UK will receive around €500 million less in direct payments over 2014 to 2020. It is important to note that the convergence uplift does not mean that there is an additional pot of

money to allocate. It simply slows the rate at which we have to make reductions for everyone across the UK. To give more funding to Scotland—or any one region, for that matter—would have required deeper cuts to the other parts of the UK.

**Mr Weir:** Will the Minister give way?

**George Eustice:** I want to make progress; I will get to the point that I think the hon. Gentleman will address in a moment.

The point has also been made that Scotland has the lowest per-hectare payment in the UK and that, by virtue of that, Scotland should have received additional funding. There are a number of points to make about that argument. First, the so-called convergence uplift was calculated based on a UK average payment. Secondly, the lower per-hectare payment in Scotland is due to Scotland's extensive moorland, which has yielded lower levels of production and, therefore, has historically attracted lower subsidy payments than other parts of the UK. Thirdly, it is important to note that Scotland still makes payments based on historic subsidies received by farm holdings in 2001, which means that those areas of land that had been most actively farmed, and generally still are most actively farmed, receive more money than the unfarmed moorlands.

Scotland's low per-hectare payment also needs to be viewed alongside the fact that Scotland has the highest average per-farm payment in the UK, at about £26,000, compared with just £17,000 in England, £16,000 in Wales and £7,000 in Northern Ireland. I know that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan said that she has no respect for that argument, but it is legitimate. Scotland has bigger farms, and the land there has historically been less intensively farmed. I think that the public will realise that if Scottish farmers are getting payments of almost £26,000 a year, they are getting far higher payments than the UK average, which is currently only about £16,000.

**Dr Whiteford:** It all depends how one cuts the figures. In fact, the majority of Scottish farmers—50% of them—receive CAP payments of less than £10,000. Obviously farming is more extensive in upland areas of Scotland, which can skew the figures, but it is important to understand the median average payment, rather than the mean average payment. Either way, it is irrelevant to the convergence uplift.

**George Eustice:** I do not think it is irrelevant. As I said, the reason why Scotland has historically had a lower allocation is that there is much more moorland, which is not farmed as intensively. One can make the argument that there are differences within that and that some small farmers get less than £10,000, but that is also the case in Northern Ireland, England and Wales. The principles are set, but Scotland's average farm payment is among the highest in the EU. In fact, only in the Czech Republic, where there are still huge collective farms, is the average payment received per farm higher than in Scotland.

Finally, it is important to note that there have always been wide variances in the per-hectare rate paid, both between member states and within member states. Countries such as Latvia and Estonia receive less per hectare than

[George Eustice]

Scotland. I should also point out that the Government's approach in allocating the cut equally across the UK's Administrations is consistent with the approach that we adopted earlier this year when allocating the UK's structural funds. Of those, Scotland received €795 million, which represented an increase of €228 million compared with the amount it would have received if the EU's formula had been used, so Scotland received an uplift of sorts when it came to the allocation of structural funds, because the UK was willing to depart from the EU formula and adopt the approach that we have taken historically. We must accept that if we are to be consistent and take the historical approach, Scotland might lose in some areas, but it might also win in others. It has undoubtedly won from our adoption of the historical approach to structural funds.

In announcing the allocation of CAP across the UK, the Government have also committed to undertake a review of the allocation of CAP funding in 2016, at the same time that the European Commission will be undertaking a review of the 2014 to 2020 EU budget. The president of the National Farmers Union Scotland, Nigel Miller, has made a strong case for us to do the review early, and I am keen to meet him to discuss some of his concerns.

Let me say to hon. Members who have raised points that I speak regularly—almost weekly—with the devolved Assembly. One thing about the farming and fishing ministerial brief is that we deal extensively with all our colleagues in the devolved Administrations. The next time I visit Scotland or other devolved Administrations, I am more than happy to discuss the issue with politicians there. I am a great believer that we in the UK are stronger working together. DEFRA has a good track record of engaging closely with our partners in the devolved Administrations.

**Mr Reid:** I am pleased that the review will take place in 2016, but my understanding is that the Government have given no commitment to implement its outcome quickly. Will the Minister leave open the option to implement the review's outcome in 2017, rather than waiting until 2020?

**George Eustice:** A number of other things must happen at about the same time as the review, not least, particularly in Scotland's case, moving from the current approach, which is based on historical payments in reference to 2001, to an area-based approach. Scotland will have to think about that carefully in order to get it right. One would not necessarily want a single, flat rate for all land areas; there will be a difference between lowland rates and moorland or upland rates.

It will be a big exercise for Scotland to get the rates right for different types of landscape. Only after we have seen how the transition from historical payments to land area-based payments will work can we make decisions about it. There may also be legal issues about whether things can be changed before the next financial perspective, post 2020.

I know that Nigel Miller, the president of the NFUS, has made a strong case and wants us to consider the issue. The Secretary of State has already discussed it with him, and I am keen to discuss it with the NFUS

when I go to Scotland, to ensure that we engage fully with the Scottish farming industry on this important issue. The review, concluding in 2017, will be an opportunity for us to consider domestic CAP allocations and reflect on wider developments across the EU and UK as a result of CAP implementation. We might also be able to see how the different approaches taken by various devolved Assemblies are working in practice.

Throughout the CAP negotiations, which have only just concluded, the UK fought hard to ensure that Scotland and the other home nations could deliver the CAP in a manner that suited their needs and those of their farming industries. The UK has used its size and influence to deliver a series of wins for Scotland and Scottish farmers, including securing greater regionalisation of the CAP, ensuring that the national reserve is flexible enough to provide continuing support to new farmers, clarifying that farmed heather is a form of permanent grassland and extending to 2016 the designation of areas of natural constraint, which are particularly numerous in Scotland. Finally, although the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan was sceptical about the value of this, we have also secured for Scotland the ability to increase the use of coupled payments—I know that there is a strong view in the Scottish industry that that is particularly important for beef production.

Now that we have negotiated all those outcomes for Scotland, it is up to the Scottish Government to decide how they want to proceed in implementing the CAP. The UK Government have ensured that Scotland and other devolved Administrations have the ability to implement the CAP as they see fit. I know that consultations are under way in all the constituent parts of the UK. The agreement that we secured includes significant flexibility for Scotland to direct funding to those parts of the rural economy and environment that it deems appropriate. With the budget settlement recently announced by the Government on the CAP across the UK, all the devolved Administrations now have the certainty they need to start making those important decisions.

**Mr Weir:** The Minister has not addressed the point I raised earlier. He said that there was less money in the budget from Europe, which may be true, but the UK Government argued for a lower budget. The budget coming to the UK has been increased by the convergence uplift specifically because of the Scottish situation. That money was given because Scotland had a particular problem, and it is not coming to Scotland. Surely that is not right.

**George Eustice:** I think I did address that point. I made it clear that the calculation for the convergence uplift was UK-wide, not Scottish, that there are historical reasons why Scotland has had less and that Scottish farmers receive more on average per farm unit than farmers anywhere else in the UK. I do not accept that I did not address that point. We are taking a consistent approach by sticking with the historical approach, as we did on structural funds. We have achieved a lot for Scotland and other devolved parts of the UK, in terms of giving them flexibility to implement the CAP as they see fit.

**Mr McKenzie:** Perhaps I can take the question asked by the hon. Member for Angus (Mr Weir) in another direction. Does the Minister understand Scottish farmers'

frustration and anger that moneys specifically targeted at Scotland have not arrived in Scotland but have been distributed elsewhere?

**George Eustice:** As a UK Minister, I must be fair to all parts of the UK, and I think we have been fair and consistent in how we have applied this, for all the reasons I have set out. As somebody who worked in the farming industry for 10 years and who comes from a far corner of the UK, I am a firm believer that, as a UK Government, we can achieve more for all parts of the UK by staying together. It would be regrettable, for instance, if Scotland did not have the muscle that it gets from being part of the UK in European negotiations. If Scotland left the UK, it would be in danger either of being outside the EU altogether or of having negligible voting weight and being one of the smallest countries in the EU, which would not be in Scotland's interests.

11.30 am

*Sitting suspended.*

## Fly-Grazing of Horses

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** I know that this debate is very important, because I have received constituency correspondence about it myself. We are privileged today to be led in this debate by Mr Damian Hinds.

2.30 pm

**Damian Hinds (East Hampshire) (Con):** Thank you, Mr Hollobone, for calling me to speak. It is a great pleasure to see that so many hon. Members, including the Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice), have come to debate this important issue.

In September, in Alton in my constituency, 46 horses were left in a field off the New Odiham road. On that occasion, they had been left with permission, but their owner had not arranged for them to be fed regularly and their welfare deteriorated to the extent that they were taken by the police under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and given over to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

A couple of weeks later, in the same field, another 18 horses appeared, belonging, apparently, to the same owner. If I quote briefly from the Redwings charity, which subsequently cared for a small number of the horses, that will give an indication of the extent of the cruelty imposed on them; I know that I must not quote at length, Mr Hollobone. I should explain that Redwings named the horses after characters from Jane Austen novels, as they were rescued from Alton in my constituency. Redwings said:

“We very tragically lost Georgiana, only two weeks after her rescue. Georgiana was suffering with salmonella - which several of these horses have - and also an horrendous small redworm burden.

Mr. Darcy is also an orphan foal and must have lost his mother at Alton. He was so hungry that he had actually been chewing the tails of the other horses in the group.”

I know that this issue and similar ones have been raised before by, among others, my hon. Friends the Members for Vale of Glamorgan (Alun Cairns), for York Outer (Julian Sturdy) and for Dudley South (Chris Kelly). Many hon. Members will recognise this kind of case, where horses are on farmers' fields, local authority land, grass verges or common land.

**Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con):** I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate. Does he recall the absolutely appalling case of Spindles farm in my constituency? In January 2008, the police and the RSPCA finally gained access to the farm and found the most unrepeatable cruelties being perpetrated on horses and donkeys. If he does remember the case, will he acknowledge the great work that the RSPCA did in obtaining a conviction against James Gray—a life ban on keeping horses and a 26-week sentence of imprisonment, which was richly deserved?

**Damian Hinds:** Absolutely. My right hon. Friend brings up one of the most terrible cases. I think that 2008, when the horses were seized in Amersham, was a high point for RSPCA horse seizures, and I pay tribute

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to the organisation's work. I should also say that it has been of great assistance to me as I have prepared for this debate.

There are four senses in which the practice of fly-grazing is a terrible problem. First, of course, there is often the terrible condition of the horses themselves, which suffer neglect and malnutrition. Secondly, when a farmer's field is being grazed on, it is also a problem for the farmers. Grazing, where it is not authorised, is theft; it is theft of a farmer's livelihood. Quite often, of course, the farmer is left to deal with the problem. Although they are the victim and not the perpetrator of the crime, they assume some responsibility for the horses. Thirdly, fly-grazing is a burden for those who must enforce the law, and for the charities that care for the horses. Currently, those charities find themselves significantly over-burdened as a result. Finally, fly-grazing is a great problem for the public—there are issues of public safety if, for example, horses get on to the public highway.

**Neil Parish** (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I also congratulate my hon. Friend on securing this debate. Does he agree that one of the great problems is the traceability of these ponies and horses? We must ensure that we know where they are. We have 70 or 80 passport-issuing agencies; there is no central database. We need to know where the horses are and who they belong to if we are to take action to stop fly-grazing and the welfare problems.

**Damian Hinds:** My hon. Friend rightly raises one of the significant underlying issues, and it is one that I will return to later.

There are three key pieces of legislation in this arena. First, there is the Animal Welfare Act 2006. However, that applies only where there is significant suffering; I am told that quite a "high-hurdle" test must be passed for it to be used. Secondly, there is the Highways Act 1980, which relates to cases in which animals are on or by the public highway. Thirdly, there is the Animals Act 1971, which is a means of getting horses off private land, although the process involved is quite onerous; I will discuss that process later. Significantly, there are also a number of private Acts that apply in different parts of the country, including the Mid Glamorgan County Council Act 1987 and, in my own area, the Hampshire County Council Act 1972.

What is the process if a farmer discovers that, say, a dozen horses have appeared on their land? They should call the local authority, which may check the horses. In doing so, it often finds that there is no microchip to allow traceability. The local authority then puts up a notice to say, "Contact us if these horses are yours." The owner then has two weeks to come forward. Then, just before the two weeks are up, the horses miraculously disappear; hon. Members will be familiar with the situation.

**Chris Kelly** (Dudley South) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on calling for and securing this important debate. Does he have experience of an issue that I have in my constituency? Once horse bailiffs seize horses, or council employees are involved in bringing in horse bailiffs, people are then intimidated by the owners of the horses—the owners who have neglected them and left them in such a sorry state.

**Damian Hinds:** It is indeed a recurring problem. I know that the presence of uniformed police on these occasions often helps, but people worry about intimidation a great deal.

If the horses do not miraculously disappear just before the two-week period is up and no one comes forward to claim them, the only option for the local authority is to auction them—but, of course, if a horse is to be put up for auction it must first be properly documented and microchipped. There is another situation that I think hon. Members will recognise. The horses go to auction but are often bought back by the same person who was responsible for abandoning them in the first place. Afterwards, of course, they have acquired a more valuable animal, because it has been microchipped at a low price.

The scale of the problem of fly-grazing is both large and growing. No one knows exactly even how many horses there are in the country, let alone how many are neglected, abandoned or fly-grazed.

**Mr Andrew Smith** (Oxford East) (Lab): I commend the hon. Gentleman on securing this important debate. I assure him that concern about this issue is not confined to rural areas; I have been struck by the number of my constituents who have contacted me about it.

Is not the need for a national strategy underlined by the fact that a piecemeal postcode lottery approach will ensure, in the end, that those who abuse animals in this way simply move them from the areas that are taking action to the areas that are not prepared to take action—a problem exacerbated by the action being taken in Wales? Does not every area need to be prepared to deal with the problem?

**Damian Hinds:** Indeed. I think that is one of the themes that we will hear a number of times during this short debate.

Best estimates suggest that perhaps 7,000 horses are at risk of welfare problems, with upwards of 3,000 on land without consent. In the year to date in my own county of Hampshire, the RSPCA has received calls about 14 incidents of fly-grazing; in the first quarter of 2013, the British Horse Society saw complaints about horse welfare go up by 50% on the prior year.

**Mr Brian H. Donohoe** (Central Ayrshire) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this debate. Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Oxford East (Mr Smith), I have had many letters from constituents about this issue. However, I want to clarify one thing with the Minister. Is it the case that racehorses are not in this situation because of the fact that they are microchipped as a matter of course, so they do not become part of the problem?

**Damian Hinds:** My understanding is that there are different categories of horse. Typically, the type of horse that ends up in such situations will not be raced.

This year, calls to Redwings about abandoned horses have risen by 75%.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this important debate. My wife keeps horses and recently rehomed two from animal charities that receive abandoned

horses. Might not part of the solution be for the horse-owning public with capacity for extra horses to receive and rehome abandoned horses rather than breeding their own?

**Damian Hinds:** I commend both the hon. Gentleman and his wife for what they do. Of course, rehoming is a good solution, but I fear that the scale of the problem, the stage that some of these horses have come to, and the cost and time it takes to—

2.39 pm

*Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.*

3.5 pm

*On resuming—*

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** Order. The second Division was not anticipated, so I can restart the debate earlier than advertised. The debate will continue until 4.26 pm.

**Damian Hinds:** Members will be pleased to know that I intend to accelerate my speech somewhat, because I know that several people want to speak.

As I was saying before the interruption, the problem is large and growing. Ten years ago, the RSPCA had 100 horses in its care; that figure now stands at 850, and the charity has to spend £3.5 million a year on food, board and care. The number of horses taken in has increased hugely since the peak year that my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Mrs Gillan) referred to earlier. Prosecutions under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 have also risen. The debate is so important now, however, because of the risk that the problem will become much greater in England in 2014 following the enactment of the Control of Horses (Wales) Bill that is going through the Welsh Assembly.

**Mr Donohoe:** It is my understanding that the circumstances are no different in England and Scotland, whereas Wales has that new legislation. It is necessary to put on the record that Scotland should also consider changing the law to prevent the same situation from arising.

**Damian Hinds:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point; I defer to him on the situation in Scotland. Fly-grazing certainly happens right across England and Wales, including up to the border, so that would seem a sensible consideration.

**Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab):** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this important debate. In response to the awful problem of fly-grazing and the intimidation of farmers in areas such as mine, the Welsh Government have introduced the Control of Horses (Wales) Bill in an attempt to get consistency right across the country and to give local authorities sweeping powers to deal with the horses immediately, rather than having to wait. Will the hon. Gentleman be seeking similar legislation for England?

**Damian Hinds:** The hon. Lady makes an important point. The Welsh Bill will not make the problem disappear, but it will make dealing with it somewhat easier, which

may help to disrupt and discourage sharp practice. The worry, however, is that it may also displace the problem across the border. As I understand it, the Bill cuts the waiting time from 14 days to seven; reverses the burden of proof, so that an owner coming forward must actively prove that they own the horses; and, crucially, increases the options available to those who seize horses. Auction is therefore not the only option. Horses can also be rehomed, as the hon. Member for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr (Jonathan Edwards) outlined earlier, or—when necessary in the worst cases, and with sadness—euthanised.

As I said, the Welsh Bill will not make the problem disappear and it is worth reflecting on its root causes. The main reasons seem to be a relatively small number of irresponsible dealers and the excessive breeding of horses. There is an over-supply, with horses changing hands at auction for as little as £5. Following the horsemeat scandal, there is also less abattoir capacity, although given the cost of put-down and disposal, that option is, arguably, unlikely to be high on the list for owners of £5 horses.

All that explains to some extent why horses are abandoned, but it does not explain why dealers come to pick them up again or why they would buy them back at auction. To some extent, dealers perhaps believe that the market will bounce back and that the value of horses will rise again. It also seems that some sections of some communities attach status to the volume ownership of horses.

What, realistically, can be done? Eventually, we need to rebalance the supply of, and demand for, horses. It has been suggested that if there were a market in horsemeat, animals would be better cared for, and there is a great deal of logic in that. However, there is a cultural issue about that in this country, and there is no likelihood any time soon of there being a great appetite for horsemeat.

I do not have the answer, but I suggest to the Minister that we need to find ways to ban irresponsible people who should not own horses from doing so. That is made more difficult because such people may not own the horses directly, but through proxies.

**Ian Lavery (Wansbeck) (Lab):** I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on bringing this important subject to the House. Historically, my constituency has had a huge population of horses, but we have seen an explosion in their numbers in the past year or two, with horses on almost every conceivable available blade of grass. However, we need to be careful in dealing with this issue, because there are some extremely good people in my constituency who have owned horses for generations. Just two days ago, the county council, which is leading the way in the country on this issue, lifted more than 20 horses in my constituency, and among them were foals and other horses whose owners had looked after them very well.

**Damian Hinds:** The hon. Gentleman makes an important point, and it is important not to generalise. Many people have owned horses for generations, and they do so responsibly.

I suggest to the Minister that our priority in the immediate term must be to disrupt irresponsible and cruel practice where it appears. Part of that may be about further propagating and encouraging partnership working, based on the best practice that exists in some

[*Damian Hinds*]

parts of the country. The National Farmers Union points to south Wales and Durham as examples of places where there is good co-operative working between the police and local authorities.

**Guy Opperman** (Hexham) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate, and I echo the point made by the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Ian Lavery). Does my hon. Friend agree that the ultimate solution would be to amend the Animals Act 1971, strengthening this area of the law and empowering local authorities and the Government to address this issue? However, we must be careful not to transfer the burden immediately on to farmers.

**Damian Hinds:** My hon. Friend makes an important point, and I will come to the legislative points in a moment.

I wonder whether further guidance on best practice would be useful for local authorities and police constabularies. There might also be innovative and different ways of utilising publicly owned land to keep seized horses.

**Tessa Munt** (Wells) (LD): I wonder whether I might, through the hon. Gentleman, implore the Minister to consider having discussions with his opposite number at the Ministry of Justice? There are prison farms on prison land, and prisoners at a few of them are given the duty of looking after horses as part of their outside work. There are two advantages to that: one is that the horses are cared for, and the other is that the prisoners take responsibility for caring for an animal. This is often the first time they have taken responsibility for caring for anything or anyone, and they develop new skills. That might be a slightly innovative way of looking at the issue.

**Damian Hinds:** I raised the question whether there might be different or innovative ways of using publicly owned land, and I am sure the Minister will have heard that suggestion.

Earlier, we talked about the challenge of traceability; large numbers of horses are not microchipped. Clearly, more enforcement is needed in that regard, and I ask the Minister whether he has any thoughts on how traceability can be better enforced, especially given that free microchipping is available to many people today but is not taken up.

It appears that the existence of a national equine database of some sort is important—it could, at least, make the current system work better. It might be possible to find a simpler, less costly version of the former national equine database to make traceability possible while minimising the attendant additional costs.

Most importantly, we need to make enforcement less onerous; that is the most critical immediate-term challenge, especially given the legislation across the border in Wales. We need to make the removal of horses more straightforward, and there are two, and possibly more, ways we might do that. First, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Guy Opperman) outlined, we could amend the 1971 Act to bring it into line with the best of the private Acts.

Alternatively, we could replicate the legislation going through in Wales. Either way, there needs to be a way to reduce the waiting time, during which owners can claim ownership. In Wales, it has been reduced from 14 days to seven—although seven is not a magic number; we could have another number. Whether the holding period is seven days or whatever, we also need to stipulate that horses do not have to be held on the land they were found on and that they can be held on the enforcer's land, which puts the onus on the owners to come forward.

**Mr Henry Bellingham** (North West Norfolk) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that problems are often exacerbated by travelling communities that allow their horses to go on land where they should not be? Plenty of travelling communities, however, do control their horses and ponies very effectively and graze them in the right places.

What advice would my hon. Friend give councils regarding better liaison with travelling communities? Will he also join me in paying tribute to two organisations that have been very busy in Norfolk? One is World Horse Welfare, at Snetterton, and the other is Redwings, at Hapton. They do an absolutely tireless job in helping to solve this problem by taking in many horses that should never have been abandoned.

**Damian Hinds:** I certainly join my hon. Friend in those commendations. I echo what he said, which in turn echoed what the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Ian Lavery) said, about the large numbers of people who look after their horses extremely well. It seems that these irresponsible practices are concentrated among a relatively small number of individuals. As to my hon. Friend's point about giving advice to local authorities, I am sure the Minister will pick it up.

On objectives for a legislative solution, we somehow have to break the cycle of horses being seized, going to auction and being bought back, with the result that the problem never decreases. Whatever the legislative solution, there must be options for rehoming and, sadly, for euthanising, where that is unavoidable in the worst cases.

**Richard Graham** (Gloucester) (Con): This is an important issue, and we should all thank my hon. Friend for raising it. On the things we can do apart from changing the law, does he agree that the RSPCA must make absolutely full use of its existing powers to prevent foals and horses from dying in winter floods, as happened in Sandhurst lane, in Gloucester, last winter? My overwhelming sense is that the RSPCA moved too slowly. Has my hon. Friend come across other instances where it could have done more within its existing powers? We should not necessarily expect the law to do everything.

**Damian Hinds:** I do not know the specifics of that case, so I cannot comment on how quickly things were or were not done. On fly-grazing, I do know that the RSPCA and other charities are heavily overburdened and struggle to cope with their case load, which may be part of the issue.

**Penny Mordaunt** (Portsmouth North) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for securing the debate, not least because I hope it will raise public awareness. The public are really appalled at some of the welfare abuses that have

taken place, but the strong message to them today is that they can be part of the solution by reporting cases. Quite often, welfare situations are exacerbated because of the time it takes for someone to identify where horses are and to report them. I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate, and I hope it will help get that message out.

**Damian Hinds:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend. She is right that such incidents must be reported and that the public play an important part in that. It is frustrating if offences are reported and there either is not the capacity to deal with them or proceedings are started but end up in a shocking circular process.

**Tessa Munt:** It strikes me that one practical thing we can do, which I have done myself, is to refer to the RSPCA those in the area who run stables, particularly for livery purposes, and who have gaps because of the expense of raising horses. Where people have taken their animals back into their own home paddocks, or whatever, and there are spaces, the best thing we can do is to ensure the RSPCA and its various centres are aware of where there are spaces at livery. It is often cheaper to keep a horse at livery than to do anything else. We should encourage people to identify the spaces in livery to ensure that they are used by the RSPCA, as is done very well in my area.

**Damian Hinds:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her intervention. I am sure the Minister will have heard that point.

To conclude, I know that the Minister is seized of the importance of the issue and its urgency. Given the growth in incidents and the imminence of the Welsh legislation, I hope that he will be able to give us some indication today of what can be done to assist hard-working charities, the police and local authorities to ease the burden on farmers and alleviate the suffering and cruelty inflicted on the poor animals.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** Order. A large number of Members wish to catch my eye. My intention is that everybody be allowed to speak; I am going to impose a six-minute time limit on speeches to enable that to happen.

3.21 pm

**Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship today, Mr Hollobone. I begin by congratulating the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Damian Hinds) on securing such an important debate. I would also like to explain that I might not be able to stay for the full length of the debate, as I face the not unusual House of Commons problem of having to be in two places at the same time. However, I would like to use the minutes that you have allotted me, Mr Hollobone, to make a few points.

As the hon. Member for East Hampshire rightly said, although the problem of abandoned horses might be thought predominantly to affect rural areas, that is certainly not the whole case. I can assure the House that it is a significant problem in some urban areas, such as my own black country constituency. In many parts of

the black country, specifically around the Bilston and Bradley areas of my constituency, it is common to see horses grazing on abandoned former industrial land or small plots of common land. The state of the horses varies. Sometimes they are in a decent state and looked after, but sometimes they are not and are in a very poor state. Sometimes they are tethered, sometimes they are not. Sometimes they can break free and be found wandering round housing estates, going into people's gardens and causing at least a nuisance and in some cases real danger.

**Chris Kelly:** I thank the hon. Gentleman, a fellow black country MP, for giving way. Does he share the experience that I have had in my constituency, where these poor animals have been found dead, still tethered to the rope that chained them?

**Mr McFadden:** The hon. Gentleman is right that sometimes the horses die, particularly in winter when they are not fed during harsh weather. The problem is difficult to tackle on two different levels because of what I call the ownership issue. By ownership, I mean that it is difficult to establish who owns the horse. Even if you can establish that, it is difficult to get that person to accept responsibility for the horse's welfare. In theory, under the law, horses should be microchipped and have passports that enable them to be identified, but the Minister will be aware that the law is routinely breached and ignored. I have been told by the animal welfare officer at Wolverhampton city council that, in her estimate, the vast majority of abandoned horses in my constituency have no microchip. The system is therefore simply not operating.

The first ownership problem is that it is difficult for the authorities to know to whom the horses belong. The other problem is that they are moved around at short notice, leaving a place and returning to it, which makes it difficult to track them. Another aspect of the ownership problem is that it is not clear who, in law, is responsible for policing the issue, removing horses and dealing with the problem. The police tend not to get involved unless the horse is on the highway, and practice among local authorities varies greatly. Some try to tackle the problem with energy and resources, but some do very little. The owners are aware of that and can take advantage of the situation by moving the horses around from one piece of open ground to another. Horse owners know that councils' attitudes differ in that way.

The part of my constituency that is most affected by the problem is close to the boundaries of Wolverhampton, Dudley and Sandwell. It is quite easy for horses to be moved, and that makes enforcement more difficult. Sandwell is next to Wolverhampton, and its council estimates that the cost of a removal—for bureaucracy and transport, as well as legal and animal welfare costs—can be up to £1,500. Some councils have tried to tackle the problem by providing grazing space and charging owners to put horses there. For responsible owners, that may work. However, irresponsible owners currently get a free good by putting horses where they should not; they are unlikely to queue up to pay £10 a week or more for what they currently get for nothing.

Another issue is the resources of local authorities. I am not making a partisan point, but we know that money is tight for councils. Wolverhampton city council

[Mr McFadden]

has one animal welfare officer, who works part time. She is responsible for pet shops, domestically kept animals, the few farms in the city council area and the huge issue of abandoned or illegally tethered horses. I spoke to her earlier today, and by lunch time she had had three reports from the public of concern about abandoned horses. To expect her, on her own and working part time, to deal effectively with the issue alongside her other responsibilities is clearly absurd, and it will not work.

Even for officers who have enough time, another issue is at play, which we should be honest about: fear. Although the horse owners may not want to declare themselves, those involved in removing horses fear reprisals by them. It cannot be right that those who are empowered to deal with the situation, albeit on an imperfect and incomplete legal basis, should be inhibited from carrying through their powers by fear of reprisals. We would not tolerate that state of affairs in other walks of life, and we should not tolerate it in the one we are debating. The effect of what I have outlined is a problem that has gone on for years without a proper solution and without anyone getting a proper grip on it. It is a significant animal welfare problem that causes the public disturbance and distress. We cannot go on as we are.

What, then, is to be done? The current law is inadequate. There is a right of removal under the Animal Welfare Act 2006, but only if the horses are in poor or severe condition, which is not always the case. Different provisions apply to public and private land, and there are different approaches for the highway or common land. All that needs to be straightened out and simplified. I do not know whether what the Welsh Assembly Government are doing is perfect, but at least animal welfare groups, landowners and the general public have welcomed it. The Minister should endeavour to clarify and simplify the law to make it easier to remove the animals.

The simplification should include introducing easier powers of removal from common land; minimising cost and delay in dealing with some of the issues that the hon. Member for East Hampshire raised; and removing the problem of proving ownership—in fact, why not reverse the burden of proof and ask those who claim ownership of the horse to prove it, rather than charging local authorities with running around trying to find out who owns it? The changes should also include improving animal welfare and giving confidence to the public. The problem is growing, and may grow further because of what has happened in Wales. The fact that solving it has been too difficult so far should not prevent us from putting our heads together and trying to come up with a better system.

3.29 pm

**Mr David Heath** (Somerton and Frome) (LD): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I congratulate the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Damian Hinds) on securing the debate and the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) on his contribution. This is a huge issue of not only welfare—bordering on criminality—but antisocial behaviour. We need to look at both aspects if we are to come up with a solution.

I first came to terms with the subject when a constituent came to me in despair, having found a number of horses in a field that she owned and been told by the local authority that there was nothing she could do to remove the horses; that there was no way of identifying whose they were; and, what was more, that she was now liable for the welfare of the animals, with third-party liability should anyone be injured crossing her land on which the horses now resided. She was quite rightly extremely upset that that should be the case. I looked into it further and found that it was not an isolated problem, even in my own area—I was told, anecdotally, that one gentleman owns 80 horses, but not one square foot of land on which to graze them, so was using everyone else's land—and throughout the country.

As has been suggested, the situation has been exacerbated by what to some extent has been a crisis in horse ownership. The recent difficulties in the economy have meant that an awful lot of people who bought horses with the firm intention of looking after them properly now find that they are unable to do so, so a lot more horses and ponies are either abandoned or sold cheaply than would normally be the case. Had I any doubts about that, they would have been dispelled by visiting the Glenda Spooner farm in my constituency, in Kingsdon, near Somerton. It is run by World Horse Welfare, which has already been mentioned and does a superb job of looking after abandoned animals and getting them back into shape so that they can be rehomed. I applaud its work.

I was trying to address the issue when I was in the Minister's position, and it is not without its complications—I will not pretend otherwise. It boils down to a number of clear areas in which the Government could perhaps have an effect. First, on intervention, the Government can help to prevent animals from entering the stream, as it were, by supporting horse charities and perhaps by considering what they can do directly to help people who get into difficulties to find a new home for their horses.

Secondly—a lot of the debate will be about this—there is the possibility of new powers. I discussed that at length with the Home Office, which assured me many times that the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill would be capable of remedying the nuisance. Potentially it will be, through the injunctions in the Bill and community protection orders, but we need guidance to be issued to local authorities and others as to how they can use the powers in the Bill to provide help in the area we are discussing. I hope the Minister will help me with that. Failing that, we need to look at the Welsh proposals. I spoke to Alun Davies, the Minister in Wales, some months ago about the subject, because I knew that he was working on his proposals. What is being suggested in Wales—providing a range of disposals to local authorities and others—seems to have an awful lot of merit.

Thirdly, I want us to consider liability, which I remember discussing many years ago during consideration of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, when it became clear that people had an absolute liability for animals on their land. That cannot be right. If it is not their animal, they did not ask for it to be there and they do not want it to be there, how on earth can they be liable for its actions? Yet that is the situation in law.

Lastly, we need to deal with identification. Microchipping needs to be enforced, of course, but that applies only to horses under four years old. There is a misconception about the national equine database, which was abolished by my predecessor, in that it did not provide traceability. We need a hugely better passporting system that ensures that we can trace a horse back to its owner. Serious discussion was going on with the Irish and French Governments on the issue, and I wonder whether the Minister can bring us up to date on where precisely we are.

I wish to raise a final, not uncontroversial, issue, which I remember discussing with the Irish Agriculture Minister, Simon Coveney. I am not betraying any confidence, because he has since discussed it with his Select Committee in the Dail, but he told me about the possibility of widening hugely the euthanising of horses in the Republic of Ireland, because of the overpopulation. We have to give serious consideration to that. No one wants to kill horses, any more than anything else, but if we have huge overpopulation, we will never get to grips with the welfare issues. We first have to reduce the population, bringing it back to the sort of level where we can find enough good, careful and sensible owners to look after the horses.

3.35 pm

**Chris Evans** (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure, as always, to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr Heath). The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is somewhat poorer since he left as a Minister, but we have had the joy of hearing his words of wisdom today. I congratulate the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Damian Hinds), who is a good friend of mine, on securing the debate, for which the whole House has come together. Like many Members, I have received a great many representations from constituents who have expressed concerns about fly-grazing, and 10 of them asked me to attend the debate specifically because of horse welfare.

Fly-grazing of horses is illegal, but the legislation makes it difficult for landowners to remove horses from their land. Fly-grazing poses risks to people when horses wander the roads, going through school grounds, digging up sports fields or damaging nature reserves. In June 2013, animal welfare charities released “Left on the Verge”, which reported that more than 7,000 horses were at risk of needing rehoming or rescuing.

This issue was recently brought home to me by a constituent, Mr William Jenkins, who grazes his horses on Manmoel common, in the heart of my constituency. He relies on common-land grazing to feed his stock in the spring—more so than ever this year. However, when he turned his flock on to the common in May, after one of the harshest winters he can recall, there was little grass to graze, because it had already been eaten by dozens of abandoned ponies—unsurprisingly, many had already perished in the prolonged freezing conditions, dying of starvation or exposure. This has been an issue on Manmoel common for a number of years—although not only there—robbing farmers of their historic rights to graze the common, an important food source for livestock.

In a recent case, more than 100 horses were destroyed after being kept in detrimental conditions. They were among 400 horses found in a neglected state by RSPCA inspectors. In another recent case, a breeder was sentenced to 10 weeks in jail and banned from keeping horses for 10 years after being found guilty of causing unnecessary suffering when nine horses had to be put down and another 51 placed in sanctuaries.

There are a number of reasons why fly-grazing throughout England and Wales is increasing—primarily, the economic downturn combined with too many horses being bred. The result has been a horse market in which horses at every level have dropped in price. At the lowest end, they are being sold at auction for as little as £5. Farmers may advertise a horse and sell it after 14 days to cover their costs, but if the pony has no passport or microchip, that animal cannot be sold, costing the farmer more than the cost of raising the horse. There are also reports of some dealers cutting the cost of animal welfare and disposing of their horses by abandoning them on other people’s land when the horse has no further value to them.

The issue is made worse by the confusion about who has responsibility for fly-grazed horses. Is it local authorities, landowners or animal welfare charities? The Government need to take action to clarify the situation. Dealing with abandoned horses is a problem further complicated by rescue centres being under severe pressure and close to capacity, local authorities struggling with the numbers of horses left on their land, and landowners having to engage in costly legal action to have abandoned horses removed safely.

Another reason for the proliferation of fly-grazing is that the mechanisms in place for prosecution are insufficient and perpetrators are finding it easy to get away with—the benefits to them far outweigh the cost. The present law is insufficient, as it makes pre-emptive action impossible, and is insufficient when attempting to trace horse owners. Indeed, the inability to trace ownership is the fundamental reason why current laws do not work. Fly-grazers do not comply with horse identification legislation, and horses are often not microchipped when they should be.

The problem comes down to the complex mix of legislation relevant to removing fly-grazing horses. It includes the Animal Welfare Act 2006, the Animals Act 1971, the common law of lost or abandoned property, the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, the Highways Act 1980, the Equine Identification (Wales) Regulations 2009 and the Horse Passports Regulations 2009—makes sense that, if you are a farmer or a horse owner, Mr Hollobone. All situations are different and require different elements of legislation to resolve them. Enforcers such as the police and local authorities will get involved only in incidents that violate criminal law.

**John Mann** (Bassetlaw) (Lab): On local authorities, is my hon. Friend aware of the situation in places including Bassetlaw where, when the local authority takes action for good reason, the horse owner simply moves the horse to a non-local authority-owned piece of land, and if the owner of that land takes action, they move the horse back to the local authority land? In other words, they can never be nailed down under the law.

**Chris Evans:** My hon. Friend has hit the nail on the head. Horses are being moved round in a cycle. People are wise to the law and know that unless a criminal act has taken place there is no violation.

As a Welsh MP, I think we should look to the Welsh approach. As the hon. Member for East Hampshire said, that approach might not be perfect, but it is at least a start and is getting a grip on the problem. Wales is now taking action to rectify the problem. Ministers there are introducing a new Bill to tackle fly-grazing, the Control of Horses (Wales) Bill, which will take effect from early 2014. Conservative estimates are that 3,000 horses are being fly-grazed in Wales and 2,500 in England. Given the tough approach being taken by the Welsh Government, the Westminster Government need to highlight what measures they are taking to ensure that those 3,000 horses in Wales do not simply become England's problem, which follows on from the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (John Mann). Fly-grazing is also a cross-border issue. My constituent, Mr Jenkins, supports the Welsh Government and has said:

"I think the new legislation will go a long way to help stop the problem, it will make people think twice about fly-grazing. The legislation is not perfect, a lot more could be done, but it is a step in the right direction and something we can work off moving forward."

That is the issue.

The Westminster Government need to take action on the issue of fly-grazing, which has been getting increasingly worse over the past two to three years. They must simplify the legislation dealing with fly-grazing, whether they opt to make small amendments to existing legislation, such as the Animals Act 1971, or introduce new legislation, as the Welsh Government are doing. While streamlining the existing legislation, the Government also need to enforce the equine identification legislation, including the requirements to microchip and register horses.

There are several key areas that need to be addressed in any action taken by the Government. The first is easier removal of horses. It should be possible to remove horses immediately and dispose of them after seven days if the owner does not come forward. Secondly, we should reverse the burden of proof of ownership. Owners should have to prove ownership of horses they have sought to claim, which would reduce costs and the time currently spent by local authorities. Thirdly, we should make it easier to dispose of horses. Currently, horses can only be sent to auction or sold at market. Authorities should authorise options such as rehoming or, in worst-case scenarios, disposal.

I have two key questions for the Minister. We have seen in Wales that to enforce the legislation we will need multi-agency co-operation between local authorities, the police and charities. What support will the Government give to enable forward planning and the prioritisation of resources? Secondly, will the Government provide guidance to landowners and local authorities on how to handle cases of fly-grazing so that costly legal advice need not be taken to determine exactly which of the seven or eight pieces of relevant legislation apply?

3.42 pm

**Julian Sturdy** (York Outer) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship this afternoon, Mr Hollobone. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Damian Hinds) on securing this important debate.

My hon. Friend may remember that I secured a similar debate back in July last year, on the connected issue of illegally tethered horses and the steps we need to take to clamp down on that problem. I said then that the problems that my constituents face on the edge of York with fly-grazing and illegally tethered horses are not restricted to York or the Yorkshire region. The problem is found throughout the country, predominantly—although not exclusively—in rural areas. I hope that the number of Members attending this debate has sent a clear message to the Minister about how important the issue is to constituencies around the country.

It must be remembered that fly-grazing not only blights the lives of the horses that are subjected to it, but impacts on farmers who grow crops that are destroyed and puts road users in jeopardy when animals stray on to the highway. I have had various meetings with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the local National Farmers Union and constituents about the issue of fly-grazing, and the message is clear: no one group can solve the problem alone. It is essential that we all work together on this growing crisis. The only way we can do that is with the support of the public, the Government agencies, the police and local authorities. If we all work together, we can stop the abuse once and for all.

At the core of the issue is a simple but profound point of principle that I believe in: no one should be above the law. Nor should people's lives be negatively affected by those who have little regard for such laws. This is a horse crisis. That is exactly how the charities concerned regard the issue, in the excellent report "Left on the Verge". The RSPCA, Redwings horse sanctuary, the Blue Cross, World Horse Welfare, HorseWorld and the British Horse Society have all reported an increase in the number of cases of neglect and abandonment that have been brought to their attention.

**Chris Kelly:** Local newspapers are also reporting huge numbers of cases of tragic horse deaths. In my constituency, the *Express & Star*, the *Stourbridge News* and the *Dudley News* are regularly filled with stories about horrific cases of horse death and neglect. Has my hon. Friend had a similar experience?

**Julian Sturdy:** I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. Those sorts of issues have been reported regularly in local media in my area. Also, there have been reports of issues on the highway, with cases of horses that were illegally tethered or were being fly-grazed on the highway escaping on to it and causing serious road accidents. We have to remember that this issue has a wider impact than just illegal fly-grazing.

My understanding is that ever since the horsemeat scandal, which devastated our confidence in the EU's food safety process, the price of horsemeat has plummeted. Notwithstanding that collapse, irresponsible dealers have continued to buy, breed and import horses as the market has become saturated. As has already been mentioned, a horse can now be purchased for as little as £5, although it can often cost in excess of £100 a week to look after it properly. Irresponsible dealers are importing horses from France and Ireland under the tripartite agreement that allows for the free movement of horses without health checks.

As the market for horsemeat in mainland Europe is depressed, dealers are left with a surplus of horses, much of which, sadly, can be seen along the roadside and in other people's fields, or even in people's gardens. One particular case from my postbag, which I would like to touch on briefly, highlights the vast amount of damage that fly-grazing can do and the way it affects farmers. My constituent, Mr David Shaw, farms land in Osbaldwick that is located in close proximity to the local Traveller site. Mr Shaw's land has been regularly overtaken by horses belonging to the Traveller community, which has caused a great deal of damage to his fences and crops, and to the land itself. Just recently, in October, Mr Shaw found approximately 14 horses in his fields. He turned them out, repaired the fences and spoke to the Traveller who owned them, requesting that he keep them off his land, but 15 minutes later the horses were back in his maize field again.

**Nigel Adams** (Selby and Ainsty) (Con): To me, that sounds like intimidation of landowners, so I wonder whether my hon. Friend and neighbour has had similar experiences to me. A constituent of mine came to one of my surgeries in tears because he had found horses in a paddock that he owns, with a sign asking him to ring about them. When he did, he was told that if they did not stay on his land for a certain period, he could be in trouble. The police should surely take serious action about that sort of intimidation.

**Julian Sturdy**: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend and neighbour. That is a worrying development; indeed, I now want to talk about some of the intimidation that my constituent has suffered from.

The following Sunday, Mr Shaw again found the horses in his field. He spoke to the owner once more, and it turned out that the owner was banned from keeping animals, following a previous cruelty case brought against him. Mr Shaw was subjected to the most horrific verbal abuse. Despite that, he carried on. He removed the horses and mended the fences. That evening, he again found them back in his field again. This exhausting exchange continued for a further four days, in which Mr Shaw spent well over 12 hours of his time dealing with the issue, all the while trying to run his dairy business. He removed the horses from his field a total of nine times and mended the fences the same number of times. That is a lot of expense for a problem that the council can do little to help him with.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire touched on the problems of the existing law. He also touched on the need for an equine database, and I entirely agree with that. The action that the Welsh Assembly is taking has been well rehearsed. I start from the simple principle that fly-grazing should be a criminal offence, to ensure that action can be taken swiftly and offenders brought to justice. The culprits are too often simply banned from keeping horses for a period, but the easy way round that is for animals to be transferred into the ownership of a relative. When horses are starving on the roadside, justice dictates that a custodial sentence should be brought to bear for such a horrible abuse.

It is essential that horse traceability is improved, because rules are routinely flouted, with few if any sanctions for non-compliance. It is important for everyone locally—the police, the local authority, animal welfare

charities, the NFU and Traveller representatives—to work together for a long-term solution. I intend to hold a round-table meeting in my constituency in the new year to add impetus to the issue. Sadly, fly-grazing affects and touches many people in different ways—

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair)**: Order.

3.51 pm

**Roger Williams** (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD): It is a pleasure, Mr Hollobone, to serve under your chairmanship this afternoon. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Damian Hinds) on securing this important debate.

I am secretary of the all-party group for the horse, which is well aware of the extent and depth of the equine crisis. It has been caused by the cost of keeping horses, which has increased at a time when many family incomes have come under pressure, with people finding themselves less able to look after their horses and ponies properly. The people involved in fly-grazing are many and varied. Some keep horses commercially and their incomes have decreased. Rather than disposing of their horses responsibly, they have tried to keep them irresponsibly. There was a terrible example in Wales of someone who kept many coloured horses and bred from them, but slaughtered every colt foal, keeping only filly foals. It was one of the worst examples of animal welfare abuse I have come across.

Some people who keep horses for personal or recreational purposes can no longer afford to keep them. However, because they cannot afford to put them down—doing so responsibly is quite an expensive affair nowadays—they let the horses out on any available ground. That ground is variable, as we have heard. Sometimes the land is owned for proper purposes by the local authority, on verges beside roads, and sometimes it is owned privately—we have heard examples of that. However, one example we have not heard about—although the hon. Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans) mentioned this—is that when people cannot afford to keep horses and ponies, it has sometimes been the practice in south Wales to turn them out on common land. That land is often extensive and remote. If a horse is turned out there, it is out of sight and out of mind, but it will suffer greatly, particularly as winter approaches.

Some commoners' associations act responsibly, and at this time of year will gather all the horses and ponies from the common and establish who owns them and whether they are fit enough to go back on the common for the winter. Welsh mountain ponies are bred to survive difficult conditions and are fed only when conditions are extreme and there is snow on the ground. The commoners will bring in all the horses and dispose of them humanely if they cannot establish who an owner is. I congratulate commoners' associations that act in that way—I have experience of one common, the rights of which are owned by the Duke of Beaufort, who acts responsibly.

The problem is not the fault of the horse or the pony, and dealing with the horses or ponies is not the way to ensure that such practices stop. Therefore, we must take action against the owners. I know the difficulty—many hon. Members have rightly emphasised the need for a proper identification process, so that we can establish

[Roger Williams]

who is responsible—but action must be taken against owners who have caused or are likely to cause harm to the horses.

My hon. Friend the Member for York Outer (Julian Sturdy) spoke about people who are already banned from keeping horses who are then found to have committed the offence again, but suffer very small penalties. As far as I am concerned, there is only one penalty for anyone who is banned from keeping animals but then found to be doing so without looking after their welfare properly and responsibly, and that is imprisonment. If that was the case, the message would go out that people cannot abuse horses or any animals in their care, and the situation would improve. However, only when magistrates courts understand the severity of such actions will such people be sent to jail.

3.57 pm

**Alun Cairns** (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): It is a privilege to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone, in this important debate. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Damian Hinds) not only for securing it, but for introducing it, covering the issues and touching on some sensitive matters in a way that brought all the parties together.

The problem is significant in Wales, and exceptionally so in the Vale of Glamorgan. Just two weeks ago, the BBC reported on the network news that 45 horses were tragically destroyed as a result of animal welfare issues. That case involved the excellent work of charities such as Redwings and World Horse Welfare. I pay tribute to those organisations for the compassionate work they conduct in difficult circumstances. However, a constituent contacted me to say that it was not just 45 horses destroyed, but ultimately hundreds. That demonstrates the scale of the problem just two weeks ago.

Over the last year alone, hundreds of horses have regularly been moved, throughout my constituent and the neighbouring constituencies, and on scores of occasions. The police recently reported to me that they were involved in 1,500 horse-related incidents in the last 13 months alone. Animal welfare must be our driving focus in this debate, but we must bear in mind the significant financial cost. The police estimate the cost to be around £1.2 million, and they can point to £745,000 spent directly by them, the local authorities and the RSPCA. One example, from a range of services that have to spend money to protect themselves and ensure safety, is Bryntirion comprehensive school in the constituency of the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mrs Moon). That school had to spend £61,000 on a fence to protect children in the playground because horses were so regularly breaking the boundary fence and grazing on the playing fields. Not only were they breaking the fence, but they were causing damage to the school and preventing children from participating in physical education and using those facilities. Landowners also face significant costs. The average farmer in my constituency will face a cost of between £1,000 and £1,500 if he is involved in fly-grazing in any way. Some 56% of farmers responded to a survey saying that their land had been involved in fly-grazing.

I can cite those factual data, or accurate data, because of a co-ordinated effort led by the police force. In particular, I pay tribute to South Wales police and Superintendent Paul James, who worked extremely closely with the local authorities in Bridgend, the Vale of Glamorgan and Gwent, where Operation Thallium led to a focused approach to ensure that every organisation, including the charities, were co-ordinated in trying to bring about an end to the problem throughout my constituency and the neighbouring constituencies.

I remember that Superintendent Paul James said to me this time last year, “Unless we resolve the problem on this occasion, I simply don’t know where we can go next year”. That was because of the resources being taken up. It was not only about the financial issues that I have highlighted, but about the time, which would not be costed into the figures that I mentioned, that he and all his colleagues had to spend trying to bring an end to the problem. There was one prosecution, but I fear that we are entering a situation in which the problem is simply being moved from my area to other areas.

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): The hon. Gentleman is making a powerful speech. I have a similar issue in some parts of my constituency, which may surprise people. In Bedfont, a number of residents have approached me about similar situations. Does the hon. Gentleman share the growing concern of charities, which now say that they are running out of resources to help horses and other animals that are being neglected?

**Alun Cairns:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady for that intervention and support her in that. She has also highlighted that it is not only rural areas that are affected. The problem has become so great that it affects urban areas and particularly urban fringes, where horses end up close to towns whose large populations are put at risk because of the problem.

Operation Thallium, a joint effort by the police and the Welsh Local Government Association, identified three key themes. One was about the identification of horses and the need for proof, and how difficult that makes things. The second was the delay that the landowner, having identified the horses or ended up with horses fly-grazing on their private land, experiences before they can act to dispose of the horses. People end up being almost forced or encouraged, on some occasions, to contribute to the problem. Scores of horses can be found on domestic properties, and strictly speaking, according to the law, people should be looking after the horses according to welfare standards, rather than driving them out on to the road to move the problem forward.

It is a shame that I cannot expand much more on that, but I want to underline the third theme, which is how the horses are handled thereafter and their disposal. The delay that I touched on is significant, with the current legislation restricting the agencies to acting in a humane, responsible way and considering the auction obligation. However, the euthanasia issue also needs to be addressed. I pay tribute to the Welsh Government and the way in which they are approaching the legislation. It is an important start—it is not perfect, but I hope that the Department will take it on board.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** It is a shame that the hon. Gentleman cannot carry on, but we have now reached the end of speeches from Back-Bench Members and the start of the contributions from Front-Bench Members. The debate is due to end at 4.26 pm.

4.4 pm

**Huw Irranca-Davies (Ogmore) (Lab):** It is great to serve under your stewardship again, Mr Hollobone. I begin by thanking the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Damian Hinds) for securing this timely debate, and I want to thank all the other Members who have spoken. I will not be able to note their contributions in full, but I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden), my hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Chris Evans) and the hon. Members for Somerton and Frome (Mr Heath), for York Outer (Julian Sturdy), for Brecon and Radnorshire (Roger Williams) and for Vale of Glamorgan (Alun Cairns). I shall turn to the Vale of Glamorgan in a moment. It has been a very good, wide-ranging debate with expert thought and analysis.

I also thank the organisations that have campaigned long and hard on the issue to force the growing crisis—and it is a crisis—of horse and pony fly-grazing up the political agenda. Those organisations include the RSPCA, Blue Cross, World Horse Welfare, HorseWorld, the British Horse Society and Redwings, which came together to produce a damning report called “Left on the Verge: In the grip of a horse crisis in England and Wales”. It catalogued appalling neglect and animal welfare abuses in London and Gravesend, Tyne and Wear and Blackpool, County Durham and Norfolk, and Bristol and Leicestershire—in short, in all parts of the United Kingdom.

I also thank the local authorities such as Durham, Cardiff and Bridgend and the coterminous police authorities who have taken a positive lead in developing joint-working protocols and memorandums of understanding to tackle the problem. I pay tribute to the leadership shown by the Labour Government in Wales and the National Assembly for Wales, who, as we speak, are fast-tracking new legislation as an early Christmas present. Where Wales leads in tackling fly-grazing, we hope that England will follow.

The past three years have seen a crisis develop in fly-grazing in the UK. Horses are suffering and dying in increasing numbers. Local authorities, police and highways agencies are navigating through legislation that is, frankly, out of date and not fit for purpose. Farmers, conservation bodies, other landowners and commoners are seeing their land trashed. Horse and animal welfare organisations, along with the public, are dismayed at the seeming inability of authorities to act promptly and decisively. However, their hands are tied. Minister, we must seek to resolve this issue in Parliament and in Government, and in collaboration with those affected.

It is worth saying that there are many good horse and pony owners, including many in the travelling community and others for whom responsible horse ownership and trading is an integral part of their way of life and culture. We should remember that. However, this debate is not about the good owners or even about some romanticised valleys culture, as portrayed in the quite wonderful series, “Stella”, in which the neighbour in the

terraced house opposite keeps a horse in the house as part of the family—I am not sure whether the RSPCA would approve of that. It is also not about whatever the equivalent is in Tyneside or Gravesend.

The issue is about the increasing horse welfare problems associated with fly-grazing and the tethering of horses. It is about the dumping of those horses in the light of over-breeding, the drop in the value of horses and the lack of passporting and micro-chipping or easy identification of horse ownership. It is about the complexity of outdated legislation, which allows frankly unscrupulous owners to dance, at great taxpayer expense, around the authorities and the enforcement agencies. It is also about criminality.

The Equine Sector Council for Health and Welfare notes the rapid rise in reported incidents over the past three years as the cost of responsible care and disposal of horses has outstripped their commercial value; the 20% rise in calls to the RSPCA for tethered horses in 2011; the rise in welfare concerns to Redwings over fly-grazing, from 160 reports in 2009 to 500 in the first six months of 2012; and the huge rise in reported incidents to local authorities. That crisis has grown remarkably in the past three years and has shown, as it has grown, the legislation to be sorely wanting.

My constituency of Ogmore in south Wales includes the local authority of Bridgend, which, along with neighbouring authorities such as those in the Vale of Glamorgan, represented by the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan, has seen some of the worst excesses and abuses of horse and pony welfare in recent years. Labour-run Bridgend county borough council and the neighbouring coalition council in the Vale of Glamorgan are to be commended for their strenuous efforts alongside South Wales police and animal welfare organisations to resolve the situation, although it has been tortuous and unnecessarily complex and costly due to outdated legislation.

In January this year alone, South Wales police reported nearly 500 calls from the public about nuisance, damage and animal welfare issues because of fly-grazing. Much attention centred on one individual and his family, a well known horse trader in south Wales, who regularly denied responsibility and ownership. That lengthened the time-consuming and costly farce for taxpayers, local authorities, and police and animal welfare agencies with those responsible ducking and diving to evade their responsibilities.

In such cases, public areas such as school playing fields, which the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan mentioned, and common land are trashed. Private land becomes temporary corrals for apparently ownerless horses that appear there overnight through broken fences and disappear just as quickly when enforcement measures are eventually taken. There are risks to public safety and to highways—and all the time, horses and ponies suffer and die through wilful neglect. Outdated and ill-fitting legislation and enforcement powers allow criminals to pirouette through their responsibilities and evade justice, and the horses suffer, as do the public, private landowners and commoners who find themselves enmeshed in this cruel and unnecessary tragic farce.

The individual whom I mentioned, Thomas Tony Price of Wick, was found guilty in June of 57 offences of causing unnecessary suffering and failing to meet the needs of 27 horses. His two sons were also found guilty

[*Huw Irranca-Davies*]

of related offences. RSPCA Inspector Christine McNeil, commenting on the 12 horses found locked in a barn with no space and no access to food and water—she believed they had been left there to die—said:

“These horses turned out to be the most poorly and diseased horses I have come across.”

She then turned her comments to the wider, UK issues. That individual is now in custody, but that is not the end of the matter. The RSPCA, which was intimately involved in the original case, now fears that the estimated 2,000 to 2,500 horses in the family’s care—I use the term “care” advisedly—that have historically been moved from location to location anyway, may have been steadily relocated across Offa’s Dyke to England, where the enforcement agencies may not be as prepared, in anticipation of the law’s being strengthened in Wales.

In short, parts of England are being seen as the softer option, and Wales’s problem may now be being exported to add to the existing problems in England. Horses that may be related to the south Wales case have already been appearing in the Surrey and Hampshire areas and elsewhere, causing the same problems and concerns.

That is just one sad postscript to the story in south Wales. As of last week, despite the best efforts of the RSPCA, the Vale council, the Redwings sanctuary and the police, just over 100 horses had been euthanised at a site in the Vale of Glamorgan. Thankfully, others have been rehomed. Our thanks go out—I know that the thanks of the hon. Member for Vale of Glamorgan do—to all those involved in trying to alleviate the suffering of the animals and to resolve this tragic saga.

Labour is urging the Government immediately to follow the leadership of the Labour Government in Wales and National Assembly Members, who will bring forward new legislation within weeks, or to update, at least, existing legislation to the same effect. Otherwise, what is good news for Wales could result in the 3,000 Welsh horses becoming England’s problem overnight, adding to the 2,500 already in England. We call on the Government urgently to consult on new or revised legislation and other measures to tackle fly-grazing in England and to bring forward proposals at the earliest opportunity.

The coalition of horse and animal welfare charities that produced the report “Left on the Verge”, which I have referred to, have also produced the blueprint for the way forward. With new legislation—the Welsh Government model—or with amendments to existing legislation such as the Animals Act 1971, the changes would remove the barriers that currently prevent timely action against fly-grazing. The changes would include: the ability to remove fly-grazed horses immediately and, if rehoming and all else fails, to dispose of the horses within seven days; making it easier to dispose of the horses by rehoming them or, when all else fails, by euthanising them, rather than sending them, in a costly process, to auction; reversing the burden of proof on ownership and so reducing the financial and time costs to local authorities of proving ownership; and improving enforcement and joint working in a wide range of ways.

I know that “unions” is normally a dirty word for this Government, but I ask the Minister to listen to the words of at least one union, the National Farmers Union, which is demanding that the Government match

the legislative changes in Wales or risk more horses being abandoned in England, or to the words of the coalition of horse and animal welfare groups when they say in their report that Wales is taking action—England must, too. We will support the Minister and the Government in bringing forward the necessary legislative changes at the earliest opportunity, but if the Government are minded to resist, we will make the necessary changes when we return to government.

4.14 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (George Eustice):** I add my congratulations to my hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire (Damian Hinds) on securing the debate. I, like many other hon. Members, have received lots of e-mails from constituents imploring me to attend the debate. I have been able to reply to them and say, “I’ll see what I can do.” It is a delight to be here to respond on behalf of the Government.

We have heard a little today about the scale of the problem. Although there are no official figures, the charities concerned have estimated that almost 7,000 horses are at risk. The welfare charities, in their report “Left on the Verge”, which has been cited by numerous hon. Members, have also identified a growing trend in welfare cases involving equines. Incidents of fly-grazing appear to be on the rise. Clearly, that is wrong and both a burden and a source of concern for the landowners affected.

I want to pick up on a point that my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr Heath) made about the stress that the practice can cause landowners. He makes an incredibly important point. We are talking about people who care deeply about animals and livestock, and it can be very distressing for them to find abandoned on their land horses that have not been cared for—that have been neglected, maltreated or underfed. They may have been left in fields where there is ragwort, for instance, which could affect their health. Sometimes the field is not sufficiently secure to keep the horse within it. I was very struck also by the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Vale of Glamorgan (Alun Cairns) about the school that had to spend money to put up fences to keep horses off its land as a result of this problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome also talked about the cost borne by the landowners in these cases, and it is true that that is a feature. I point out that sections 4 and 7 of the Animals Act 1971 give powers for landowners to recover that cost, but I completely accept that, as with all these things, the difficulty is in the landowners being able to bring a case to get the money back.

Let me say a little more about what laws are currently in place, or we have in the pipeline, that could be used to tackle some of the issues described today. It is important to note that quite a lot of powers are already available. First, section 7 of the Animals Act 1971, which applies in England and Wales, allows horses to be taken into the landowner’s possession, provided that certain conditions are met. After 14 days, the horses may be sold. The landowner may also claim any reasonable costs from the owner of the horses for the upkeep of the horses or any damage that they do until they are either returned to the owner or sold at market.

Secondly, as a number of hon. Members have highlighted, the Highways Act 1980 can also be used and is often used by local authorities. That Act makes it an offence for horses to stray or lie on or at the side of a highway. The police have powers to remove the horses, and reasonable costs can be recovered from the owners in doing so.

Thirdly, as we have heard today, horses that are simply abandoned or neglected are often in a poor state of welfare. I was particularly struck by the appalling anecdote told by my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley South (Chris Kelly) about horses that were literally dying on a tether in some instances and by the case cited by the hon. Member for Ogmores (Huw Irranca-Davies) involving someone who had dozens or hundreds of horses that were being neglected.

It is important to recognise, though, that in such circumstances it is possible to use section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006, which makes it an offence to fail to provide for the welfare needs of an animal. The DEFRA statutory code of practice for the welfare of horses, ponies, donkeys and their hybrids provides clear advice on how to meet the requirements of the Act. Although failure to abide by the code is not in itself an offence, it can be used in a court of law as evidence of neglect, and frequently is.

**Mr McFadden:** I thank the Minister for giving way; I know that he has limited time. He cites all this legislation. We know that it exists, but it is not working. Does he believe that it is? If it is, why do we have this problem?

**George Eustice:** I will address that point in a moment. I just want to make this point about new powers in the pipeline. Clearly, the act of leaving a horse or horses on another person's land is an example of antisocial behaviour. The Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill is currently before Parliament and, when enacted, will provide enforcers with new and much more flexible powers to tackle antisocial behaviour in all its forms, including the act of leaving a horse on someone else's land. Indeed, there have already been some instances in which the existing antisocial behaviour orders—ASBOs—have been served on perpetrators of fly-grazing.

The new antisocial behaviour measures will make it even easier for enforcers to use such powers to tackle these problems. For example, if a person is identified as having left their horse on someone else's land without permission, the local authority or police could issue a community protection notice requiring the individual to do anything reasonable to address the antisocial behaviour.

In the case of fly-grazed horses, the notice might require the individual to remove or even to sell the horses. Failure to abide by a community protection notice is a criminal offence, and anyone who does so may face a fine or other sanctions. The provisions give the authorities power to impose a forfeiture order on any item, including an animal, used to breach a community protection notice; in this case, that would be a horse.

Several hon. Members have alluded to the frustration of those who complain to the authorities about such problems but no action appears to be taken. If a complainant is dissatisfied with a local authority, either because it has not responded to their concern or because they consider that it has not dealt with the concern

effectively, it may be possible to use the new community trigger. Under the community trigger, the police, local authorities and other organisations can be required to review their response if a resident or group of residents have complained about the same problem three or more times and are not satisfied with the response.

In applying all those antisocial behaviour measures, it is necessary to know who the culprits are. We should not delude ourselves into thinking that we can tackle the problem without identifying and tackling irresponsible owners. If authorities can pool their intelligence and information, it should be possible to identify the leading perpetrators of fly-grazing and take appropriate action. If the problem is acute in certain areas—looking at the charts, Wales appears to be particularly badly affected—it should be a priority for the authorities to do whatever is necessary to deal with it. The tools are there, and we need to ensure that they are enforced.

One of the problems in dealing with fly-grazing is identifying the owners. As we know, identification of the owners of the horses involved is one of the key issues in enabling the authorities and those with whom they work to tackle fly-grazing.

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** Will the Minister give way?

**George Eustice:** I will press on, otherwise I will not cover all the points.

Revised horse passport regulations have been in force since 2009. They require all owners to obtain a passport for each horse that they own and all newly identified horses to be fitted with a microchip. We and other member states are currently considering EU Commission proposals to improve and strengthen the horse passport regime in response to the horsemeat fraud incident earlier this year.

Several measures are under consideration, including stricter standards for passports and a requirement for all member states to operate a central equine database, to which several hon. Members have alluded. DEFRA officials are working closely with the equine sector council strategy steering committee on the matter. As we have heard today, however, horses associated with antisocial behaviour are frequently not identified, so although we welcome the strengthening of the horse passport regulations, we recognise that it is not a solution in itself.

I wanted to touch briefly on another point raised by the hon. Member for Somerton and Frome about the tripartite agreement between France, Ireland and the UK. The Government are committed to protecting our equine industry from the threat of disease from overseas. European statute requires that horses that move between EU member states must undergo a veterinary inspection 48 hours prior to movement, and that they must be accompanied by a passport and health certificate. Any movement must be pre-notified to the competent authorities.

However, the existing tripartite agreement applies a derogation from those rules for horses moving between the UK, France and Ireland, on the basis that the three countries share the same health status for equines, and it seems reasonable that that should continue. We have, therefore, managed to avoid imposing unnecessary costs and burdens on horse owners.

[George Eustice]

Following considerable work with the equine sector and the member states concerned, I can confirm that a new tripartite agreement has been signed, which limits the derogation from EU health controls for intra-EU trade to groups of horses with a demonstrably higher health status. That will come into effect in May 2014. Those new changes will apply only to movements between the UK and France, and Ireland and France. The situation regarding movements between Ireland and the UK remains unchanged, because we are satisfied that on disease control grounds—bearing in mind the aims of the relevant EU directive—there is no additional risk. The new agreement between the UK, France and Ireland will hugely benefit the sector.

My hon. Friend the Member for York Outer (Julian Sturdy) highlighted the importance of co-ordination. We have been particularly struck by the protocols introduced by councils in Wakefield and York, which give guidance to local practitioners about the steps they should take to deal with the problem of fly-grazing, citing all the laws at their disposal. I emphasise to local authorities that they can use existing and future antisocial behaviour legislation to tackle that problem.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Hampshire and others have asked whether it would be possible to provide further guidance, and we are looking at that. In the case of tackling dangerous dogs, for instance, we issued specific guidance to councils so that they understood the implications of the new measures. We are keen to learn from Wakefield and York councils about whether further work can be done in the area.

On the Welsh proposals, there are a couple of limitations. My biggest concern with what is proposed in Wales is that it introduces no new powers beyond those in the Animal Act 1971, but it shortens the time scales. There is a danger of our putting the onus on local authorities to deal with the problem, rather than on tackling irresponsible owners. We could end up imposing costs and additional burdens on local authorities—

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** Order. I am sorry to interrupt the Minister. I thank all those who took part in that important debate and ask those not staying for the next debate to leave quickly and quietly.

## Cycling (London)

4.26 pm

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** As one who was knocked off his bike in London many years ago, I am delighted that Mary Macleod is leading this debate.

**Mary Macleod (Brentford and Isleworth) (Con):** It is wonderful to have this debate under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. This timely debate on safe cycling in London is about saving lives. Just recently, there were six deaths in just two weeks in London, which forced attention on the issue. Two collisions occurred on the same day, which was particularly poignant. Our thoughts are with those who have died on London streets, and with their families. Most recently, Brian Holt, Francis Golding, Roger William De Klerk, Venera Minakhmetova, Khalid al-Hashimi and Richard Muzira have died on the streets of London on their bikes.

As well as highlighting the whole issue of safety for cyclists in London, the recent spate of fatal accidents has raised serious concerns about roundabouts such as Bow, where Hounslow resident Brian Dorling died in 2011. I have a personal interest in the matter because I, too, sometimes cycle into work and around my constituency. Every time I do, I feel as though I am taking a risk, even though I abide by the rules of the road. Even cycling around Parliament square, which is right outside, it feels as though I am taking my life in my hands.

I want to encourage cycling, because it is good for health, well-being and the environment, but we need to find a way to make it safer for everyone on the roads. Some 70,000 cyclists took to the streets of London in August for the Prudential RideLondon festival, and the Barclays Boris bikes have expanded across London. I want to encourage the inspiration created by the Olympics and the Tour de France, which will come to Yorkshire in 2014. Individuals such as Bradley Wiggins, Sir Chris Hoy, Chris Froome, Victoria Pendleton, Laura Trott, Lizzie Armitstead, Jason Kenny and others have inspired a whole nation of cyclists, which has to be good.

The number of journeys made by bike more than doubled between 2000 and 2012 to more than 540,000 a day in London. The central London cycling census conducted by Transport for London in April this year calculated that bicycles accounted for up to 64% of vehicles on some main roads during the peak morning period, a time of day that recent incidents have shown to be particularly dangerous. More bicycles than cars travel across London, Waterloo, Blackfriars and Southwark bridges during that time, a setting that presents enhanced safety hazards to cyclists. In pure numbers, however, there were fewer cycling fatalities in the past six years than in the previous six. Reading the figures in a different way shows us that in London in 2012, 22% of all casualties on the road were cyclists, whereas in 2006 10% were, so there has been an increase in the percentage.

Across the country, 2012 saw the highest number of cycling fatalities, with 118. For me, that is far too many. In London specifically, there were 10 deaths in 2010, four of which involved HGVs, and 14 deaths in 2012, five of which involved HGVs. This year, we have had 14 deaths so far, nine of which involved HGVs. There is

absolutely a case for doing something. Fourteen deaths in the capital so far this year is 14 deaths too many. We should be doing something about it.

**Seema Malhotra** (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): I thank the hon. Lady for bringing an important topic to the House today. As a fellow Hounslow MP, I am sure she will join me in congratulating the Hounslow cycling campaign on its work in promoting road safety for cyclists, making roads safer and increasing the number of women cyclists. I am sure she will come on to this point, but does she agree that there is concern over the Mayor of London's comments that seemed to suggest that irresponsible behaviour on the part of cyclists was disproportionately contributing to the problem? We need roads to be safe and we need those driving large vehicles, as well as cyclists, to drive safely.

**Mary Macleod**: I thank my neighbour in London for that intervention. London councils have made an effort to create a safer environment for cycling, but I always push them, because when we have deaths, it shows that there is more to be done. The Mayor certainly stressed that there were issues with cyclists, but there are also other matters to consider. He has published "The Mayor's Vision for Cycling in London", so he is addressing the serious issues. Everyone on the roads has a responsibility. Whether we are motorists, cyclists or lorry drivers, it is important that we take responsibility. There are things that we can all do improve safety.

**Dr Sarah Wollaston** (Totnes) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that in this important debate we should stress that someone is more likely to be killed walking a mile than cycling a mile, and also stress the health benefits? Our overall life expectancy is increased if we cycle and lead an active, healthy life. We should ensure that we stress the benefits of cycling for well-being, as well as the dangers, and make it safe for those who cycle.

**Mary Macleod**: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. We want the debate to be positive, and we want to say that cycling is brilliant for everyone to participate in and has amazing benefits. I want more people to cycle, so we must make it safer for everyone.

**Stephen McPartland** (Stevenage) (Con): My hon. Friend is being generous in giving way. I am pleased that she has secured this important debate. My constituency has thousands of cyclists, who are fortunate to benefit from an integrated cycle network, so they feel safe cycling. My constituency is close to London, and over the past few months, as these unfortunate deaths have occurred, we have seen a huge increase in the number of cycles left in the cycle racks at Stevenage station, because those cyclists are now scared of cycling in London.

**Mary Macleod**: My hon. Friend makes a pertinent point. There is a fear of cycling in London. My hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) pointed out that it is important to stress the positives, but we also have a responsibility as MPs to protect people and allay some of the fears.

**Oliver Colville** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Con): I occasionally cycle in my constituency in Plymouth. Safety is not only an issue for cycling in London. We

have a big problem in Plymouth with potholes, some of which are incredibly deep, and I suspect that the situation might be the same elsewhere.

**Mary Macleod**: I agree that many issues need to be addressed. There were 118 deaths across the country last year, so we must look at what we can do to make cycling safer in every area.

This year, the Mayor appointed London's first cycling commissioner, who with the Mayor created "The Mayor's Vision for Cycling in London". There are many great ideas in that paper, which is intended to build on the Olympic legacy for all Londoners and make the roads safe for people who want to take up cycling, as I did after many years of not being on a bike. I take great pleasure in using my Brompton bicycle, which was made in my constituency. Brompton Bicycle Ltd in Brentford is a great local company.

We want to encourage more people to cycle safely. Earlier this year, city hall announced almost £1 billion in improvements over 10 years to make cycling safer. I push the Department for Transport to work closely with the Mayor, because he has responsibility for only a certain number of roads in London. More communication, co-ordination and partnership would be good, with all the stakeholders involved sitting together and working out a vision and strategy that will help everyone.

Several schemes are certainly helping. We have already heard about what is happening in the London borough of Hounslow, and there are also various initiatives such as Bikeability training for beginners, advanced cyclists and children. We must see whether more can be done. The police recently played their role in cycling safety with Operation Safeway, whereby 2,500 Metropolitan police officers were posted at junctions in London to advise on the increased road safety problems caused by the high volume of traffic.

There have been several petitions through which we can see that the public are behind us: the "Save our Cyclists" petition has 35,500 signatures; the "Get Britain Cycling" petition has 72,000 signatures; and the "Better road driving test" petition has 17,900 signatures. The public want movement. We do not need a knee-jerk reaction to the deaths, but we must have a response. That is why there is an urgent need to have measures in place before there are more deaths on the streets. I would like a co-ordinated plan for the initiatives and ideas that are coming forth on better and safer cycling, which all stakeholders can sign up to, so that we know that things are happening.

There are a lot of options to make cycling safer, such as better safety equipment on lorries—side guards, proximity sensors and side cameras. Given the number of deaths involving HGVs, the complete lack of visibility in HGV drivers' blind spots is a grave issue that I want us to take seriously. When I cycle in London, I try not to go anywhere near a lorry if I can help it, and I stay well behind them at junctions. We could be slightly more radical and ban HGVs during rush hour, as they do in Paris. Deliveries in London during the Olympics were made at night, so it could be possible to do that again. We may need to tighten up driving tests for van and lorry drivers. We have talked about having more Trixi mirrors at road junctions—big mirrors that allow better visibility, especially for lorry drivers. In some areas of London, and elsewhere, where there are very wide

[Mary Macleod]

pavements, there could be safe sharing of pavements to allow cyclists to travel more safely. It is important to crack down on cyclists breaking the rules of the road, and perhaps helmets should become a requirement.

**Oliver Colvile:** My hon. Friend raises an important issue. If someone decides to use a Boris bike—a wonderful initiative—they are not offered a cycle helmet at the same time. I am not suggesting for one moment that people should be forced to wear them, because I am a Conservative and I believe in a moderately liberal approach, but they should be offered them, particularly helmets that have lights attached, so that people can see where they are going.

**Mary Macleod:** My hon. Friend obviously knows my shopping habits. I recently bought a new light for my helmet, because I did not feel that I could be seen clearly enough from behind, even with a high-visibility jacket. That is important.

In this short debate, I would like to get a feeling from my hon. Friend the Minister about some of the things that must be considered as a matter of urgency. The first is a cycle safety summit, for want of a better term, to get all the London stakeholders around a table to discuss the vision, strategy and plan of action going forward. That would include, of course, the Department for Transport, the Mayor's office, Transport for London, the Metropolitan police and each of the London boroughs, which all have roads for which they are responsible. It would also involve the cycling safety campaign groups, and maybe even the all-party group on cycling. It would be a conversation around a table about a joint approach and a plan of action to get things moving.

The second issue that we need to consider is continuing to improve the safety of road junctions, whether with Trixi mirrors or safe cycling routes. Transport for London has increased its budget for safer junctions from £19 million to £100 million, but how far will that stretch across the key London junctions that need to be sorted out? Can TfL also address some of the other junctions that might not be its responsibility?

The third issue is better safety equipment on lorries. I feel strongly about that issue, given the scale of deaths from HGVs; nine out of the 14 deaths so far this year have been linked to HGVs. Side guards are critical to prevent people from being dragged underneath, as are close proximity sensors to let drivers know whether someone is around and side cameras to help with blind spots. Maybe we will have to prevent HGVs from entering central London unless they have safety features. If they do not, maybe the Mayor could impose a levy or fine.

The fourth issue to consider is the importance of clamping down on all road users who break the law, with on-the-spot fines for dangerous driving or cycling. Those who use the roads must respect each other; I say that as both a driver and a cyclist. I think that being a cyclist has helped me be a better driver, and I encourage everyone to try it. We might consider a fixed penalty for going into the cycles-only box at junctions. I would also like those cycle boxes and the advance stop lines extended a bit. At the moment, they are about 5 metres out, which is very close to traffic queues, especially during the morning rush hour. Maybe that could be extended to 7.5 metres.

My fifth point concerns further training for children and adults. London boroughs and the police have been reasonably good at giving support on cycling safety, and there are also videos about how HGV drivers have blind spots. Adults returning to cycling after many years, in particular, may need a refresher. Another option is changing the driving test for drivers of all vehicles, including taxis, HGVs and cars, and including cyclist awareness and safety. I have mentioned considering a rush-hour HGV ban or a levy on HGVs not fitted with safety equipment.

This debate is important because it is about saving lives in our capital as well as elsewhere around the country. We want to do something as soon as possible in order to prevent more unnecessary deaths. It will help create a better, happier, safer city in which we can all live, and will hopefully save a few lives in the process.

4.44 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Robert Goodwill):** It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Hollobone. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mary Macleod) for securing the debate, which comes after a series of fatal accidents involving cyclists on the capital's roads in recent weeks. I offer my sincere condolences to the families and friends of those who have lost their lives.

Such incidents are a sobering reminder of the dangers that road users can experience on our busy urban streets, but equally, they should not discourage people from getting on their bikes. Cycling is still generally a safe activity. Indeed, the number of fatalities in London dropped from 21 in 2003 to 14 last year. Sadly, we have already reached 14 so far in 2013, including six in the past couple of weeks.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) pointed out, we must not forget that the health benefits of cycling greatly outweigh the risks, but as the Minister with responsibility for cycling and road safety, I am determined to make cycling even safer. Since February last year, we have made an additional £159 million available to support cycling and boost safety, including £20 million to improve the design and layout of road junctions at 78 locations around the country. A further £15 million is being targeted specifically at dangerous junctions in London. More recently, we have announced £77 million to help eight cities across England realise their ambitious 10-year plans to increase cycling and make it safer.

Those investments are crucial as the number of cyclists on our roads continues to rise. After the heroics of Team GB in the Olympics and Paralympics and the success of our riders in the Tour de France, thousands of people are catching the cycling bug. Although I got the habit nearly a decade ago, I am also a Brompton rider, and I very much enjoy riding the vehicle, which was made in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth.

**Dr Wollaston:** The Minister is another Brompton rider in the Commons. I am grateful to him for pointing out the welcome boost to funding, but is he aware of the all-party parliamentary group on cycling report, which recommended that long-term stable funding is what

makes the difference? At least £10 a head for the whole population, rather than for the seven cities, is what is needed if we are to make the great strides that we have seen on the continent and allow for infrastructure improvements, particularly separation at junctions and on our most dangerous roads.

**Mr Goodwill:** The Government have certainly announced long-term funding pledges for transport infrastructure that will, with reforms to the Highways Agency, enable planning year by year, unlike the stop-go investment that we have had.

I will be on my Brompton again on Friday morning as I cycle from King's Cross station to Westminster. My officials have devised a route for me that will allow me to experience both the worst and the best of cycling roads in London.

The trend back to cycling is particularly noticeable among young people. British Cycling, the national governing body, has seen membership of under-18s soar by 42% in just a year. However, money is only part of the answer. We are also working in other ways to improve cyclist safety. For instance, we have made it simpler for councils to put in place 20 mph-limit zones, and we have encouraged local authorities to implement such limits in areas where cyclists and pedestrians are most vulnerable. Reducing traffic speeds can make roads safer and improve the local environment.

As we have heard, a high proportion of cyclist fatalities involve large vehicles, so we have given English councils the power to install Trixi mirrors at junctions. We have also made it easier for councils to install contra-flow cycling and signs saying "No entry except cycles". Awareness of other road users is paramount, particularly in big cities, so we welcome initiatives such as TfL's "Exchanging Places", in which cyclists can sit in a lorry cab and watch for a police cyclist riding up on the left side of the vehicle.

Several new driver certificate of professional competence courses now take cyclists into account. As my hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth will probably know, truck drivers must now undertake five days' training, and then one day's training every year, to achieve the certificate. The training may even require the driver to experience what it is like to be a cyclist on busy urban streets. As someone who has driven HGVs, I know where their blind spots are, and I hope that those who participate in the scheme will too.

We are investing £11 million a year in Bikeability training to help a new generation of cyclists to get the skills they need to be safe on our roads. That training is not just for children; it is for adults too. On top of the Government's funding, some local authorities provide free or subsidised training.

One of the most effective ways to make our roads safer is to change people's driving habits through hard-hitting marketing and advertising. That is why we continue to develop new campaigns through our award-winning Think! brand. In October, I launched a new Think! cyclist campaign, targeting Leeds, Manchester, Bristol, Birmingham and Cambridge, on top of the activity already launched in London. That built on a similar campaign last year that was based around the message, "Let's Look Out For Each Other".

In August, the Prime Minister announced a major programme of work to cycle-proof new trunk road projects so that they can be navigated confidently by the average cyclist. That includes a £20 million investment from the Highways Agency to fund significant junction upgrades and other improvements to remove barriers to cyclists. We also expect local authorities to up their game to deliver infrastructure that takes cycling into account from the design stage.

The delivery of the Mayor's "Vision for Cycling" could also help to make cycling safer in London. There will be a new network of better cycle routes in London, including a "Crossrail for the bike"—a fast, segregated east-west super-highway. The Mayor's plans also include prioritising major and substantial improvements at the worst junctions, and making significant improvements to existing cycle super-highways, such as the one that I use every morning when I cycle in to Parliament.

Clearly, however, if we are going to improve cycling safety in London significantly, we will have to reduce the threat of trucks where full segregation is not possible. Cyclists are no more likely to be involved in a collision with a lorry than with any other type of vehicle, but when it does happen the outcome is all too often a tragedy. In September, we set up a taskforce with Transport for London to raise awareness of safety among HGV drivers and to take targeted enforcement action against the small minority of potentially dangerous operators, drivers and vehicles.

I understand that last Monday, on the first day of the Metropolitan police's new road safety enforcement campaign, 70 lorries were stopped and 15 penalty notices were issued, for offences such as vehicles not being fit for the road. In addition, about 100 cyclists were advised of a range of road safety measures that they can take, such as wearing hi-vis jackets or helmets, or fitting their bike with lights. A number of cyclists were also stopped for riding on the pavement. Indeed, only this morning I witnessed a cyclist dangerously running a red light in this part of London.

New standards for mirrors on the passenger side of lorries have recently been agreed at international level, and the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Stephen Hammond), recently wrote to the European Transport Commissioner urging him to ensure that those standards are mandated by the necessary regulatory change within the EU. Such mirrors are crucial, as they improve drivers' visibility and make it easier for them to see cyclists on the passenger side, particularly when turning left at junctions.

The Department for Transport continues to work with international partners through the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, particularly to allow camera technology that further improves driver vision. From 29 October 2014, all new goods vehicles will have to comply with revised European rules—for example, with regard to side guards—that will permit fewer exemptions than the current legislation does.

In August, the Prime Minister also announced that we will be publishing a cross-Government cycling delivery plan. We will work with stakeholders, including TfL, on drafting the plan, which will set out how we will deliver on our vision of more people cycling more safely and more often. It will be supported by Departments across

[Mr Goodwill]

Whitehall and will include a commitment to work together to deliver a cycling infrastructure that will make Britain a cycling nation to rival our European neighbours.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth suggested that there should be a cycling summit. That is a very good idea, but I have to say that I am ahead of the curve, because even before the most recent tragedies on our roads I met Chris Boardman, British Cycling, the Cyclists' Touring Club and the charity Sustrans to discuss the issue. Indeed, I have a meeting in the diary for tomorrow with TfL to discuss some cycling issues, and on 4 December the Mayor is coming to the DFT to discuss cycling and other issues. It is important that we work together with all the stakeholders involved, including the cycling campaign groups and the all-party group on cycling, of which I used to be a member.

We can also look at other areas where we can make improvements. Mention was made of advanced stop lines, but a contribution could also be made by having early start signals, to allow cyclists to get away first before the lorries set off.

There is a huge amount going on to improve cycling safety standards in London and across the country. Our challenge is to ensure that an increase in the number of people riding bikes on our roads does not translate into more casualties. We are already making progress. Cycling in London has trebled over the past decade, yet fatalities of cyclists have fallen by 17% during the past five years. However, as the past few weeks have shown, there is absolutely no room for complacency. We have to continue working with our partners and continue delivering the investment. We must focus on key areas of threat, to continue raising safety standards for cyclists.

We should also examine some other ideas, such as those that my hon. Friend mentioned today. However, I have reservations about proximity sensors down the side of vehicles. They can often be set off by roadside furniture or other obstacles, and could actually distract a driver on some occasions. But it is absolutely imperative that we see what we can do about side guards. There are a number of vehicles that are currently exempt from having to have them, such as skip wagons, refuse wagons and some tippers, and it is important that we consider what we can do to improve the design of those vehicles, and to ensure that more and more vehicles are fitted with side guards.

As a Government, we are absolutely committed to doing what we can to improve road safety. I have considered the issue of having a ban on lorries in London. However, it must be borne in mind that in Paris the area covered by the ban is only about the size of the zone 1 area in London, so there is not an extensive ban in Paris. Of course, there are also communities in London that would resent deliveries being carried out at night as a routine measure, as that may—

**Mr Philip Hollobone (in the Chair):** Order. I am very sorry to interrupt the Minister, but we have come to the end of our time for this debate. I ask all those who are not staying for the next debate to leave Westminster Hall quickly and quietly.

## Company Boards

4.56 pm

**Jim Sheridan** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Hollobone, for calling me to speak. It is a genuine pleasure to serve under your chairmanship.

In recent months, we have lived through difficult times in relations between employees and management. Grangemouth was a black mark on industrial relations in this country, and showed the work force there being exploited and totally taken advantage of by aggressive management. In the past year, my Labour colleagues and I have also been fighting for the rights of thousands of workers who have been blacklisted and blocked from working by immoral construction companies. The Government's moves to bring in a Bill that will make being a member of a trade union all the more difficult will do nothing to improve relations. As chair of the Unite the union's parliamentary group, and with plenty of trade union experience before coming into this place, I can truly say that I am saddened by the low that we have come to and the distrust and anger that we see on all sides.

I have come to Westminster Hall today to propose not a new idea but what I think would be a productive and collaborative way to allow constructive dialogue between managers, workers and shareholders. We need to find a way to work together for the sake of the British economy and the livelihoods of our hard-working constituents.

Our economy is too shareholder-focused. The pursuit of quick profit leads to short-term thinking and a lack of investment in our companies, and our focus on shareholders means that cultural barriers may further hinder investment. In 2010, 41.2% of investors in British companies came from outside the UK, and it must be true that a shareholder in a company who has investments all over the world takes less of a direct interest in that company than an employee of that company would. It leads to examples of bankers hedging their bets and putting people's lives and jobs on the line. It also leads to a lack of training for staff and a lack investment in infrastructure, meaning that companies will last for the next few years but not for the next 40 years.

Our company structures are not good for the economy. They lead to a lack of stability and to unequal distribution of gains from growth. We know that there is a public outcry at this system in the economy, and not just from the left. It seems to me that giving workers more of a say on our boards could be a key way of improving our broken economy. People want the next boom to benefit everybody, and a responsible Government will ensure that that happens. The Leader of the Opposition has rightly pointed towards "responsible capitalism", and I hope that my proposal will form part of that under the next Labour Government, hopefully in 2015.

Of course, having worker representatives in a position on the board is good for employees, including those who feel downtrodden or that they have no job security, but who could contribute to the running of a company much more productively than people who do not know the shop floor. In a survey of workers' representatives in other EU countries, one Swedish representative said:

"We think of the employees who other board members sometimes forget."

The issue is a moral one about what we want a 21st-century UK business to look like. Do we want to return to Dickensian scenes in which profit overrides everything and workers have no rights, no pride and no say in the job in which they spend so much of their time? Or do we want management to remember that those working for them need to be considered when they make changes to the company?

Whether employees are simply forgotten or neglected when decision are taken is irrelevant. What we need is someone championing their needs, in the same way that those of shareholders and of management are put forward. It is important to remember that many employees, unlike shareholders, cannot just walk away. They have trained for that job and so cannot diversify themselves as easily as shareholders can. They are key stakeholders tied to the company, and their issues need to be heard.

Having workers' representatives on boards is good for business. The use of labour representation has been found to increase the value of firms. Employees have a detailed knowledge of the shop floor and of operations, so they become an important source of information for those making long-term decisions. In other countries, the proposal has been found to make a company more efficient. In a study of representatives, they remarked that their key knowledge of everyday business and employee matters made them specialists on the board, in the same way that other board members were specialists in, for example, accountancy or strategy.

The proposal would be good for business also because it would improve relations between the work force and management. It is telling that even Mr Ratcliffe of Ineos compared Germany with the UK and commended the good working relationship between unions and companies in Germany; this is the same Mr Ratcliffe who partly caused the problems at Grangemouth. I think a key part of that is the fact that workers in Germany sit on boards and can negotiate on issues before they get too far down the line.

**Mr Andrew Smith** (Oxford East) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on putting this important issue on the agenda; he is making a powerful case. Does he agree that, although worker representation on boards cannot and will not be a substitute for collective bargaining, it ensures that such bargaining takes place in an atmosphere that is more like a partnership, which is constructive? I have seen the benefit of that in my constituency at Cowley, where I can contrast the industrial relations in BMW with how they were in Rover and British Leyland previously.

**Jim Sheridan:** My right hon. Friend makes an excellent point. I can only use my own experience before I came to the House, when I worked for Thales, which was a progressive company. It downsized during the defence cuts, cutting thousands of jobs, but it did so by talking to the trade unions and workers' representatives. In Scotland and Portsmouth, BAE Systems is talking to its employee representatives in a progressive way and treating people like grown-ups. We can contrast that with what happened at Grangemouth.

In times of poor performance, employees are likely to be more aware of the troubles of their company and may offer concessions. Equally, they will expect returns when the company is doing well. Importantly, having a

representative on the board offers an opportunity for early consultation. A recent survey found that, in such cases, both sides tended to be more realistic about the issues at hand.

Financially, the proposal works well, with fewer days lost to strike action. Germany lost 3.7 days to strikes for every 1,000 employees in 2008, whereas the UK lost 28 days in the same year. That is not a one-off: in 2007, Germany lost 8.1 days, while the UK lost 38 days. No worker likes to go on strike; it is always the very last option and a huge deal for all involved. The contrast shows how much more effectively Germans manage differences between employees and management. They come to more compromised agreements that suit everyone early on, and negotiations with the unions much less frequently result in strike action. I cannot see how companies, or indeed the Government, could disagree with a way to reduce days lost to strike action in the UK.

Directors like the system, with more than 60% of directors and 70% of chairpersons surveyed in Sweden finding the experience "very positive" or "rather positive". Martin Gilbert, the outgoing chairman of FirstGroup, one of the few companies that use the system in the UK, said:

"The presence of employee directors on the FirstGroup board is invaluable. The few drawbacks are greatly outweighed by the benefits and having this two-way channel of communication has positively impacted on the running of FirstGroup."

The proposal is popular, with 76% of UK employees in favour, according to a Survation poll. People are beginning to recognise that we get better results if a company board is representative of its work force. I think we are all in agreement that we need more women on boards, and we all see that it would be good for employees and the work force. The difference between the situations of women and employees in general, however, is that employees will never be at board level unless we change the rules.

I propose that we follow our European colleagues and make it mandatory to have employee representatives on boards. The Minister might say that we should not model ourselves on such countries, because the UK is different. However, the responsibilities of German supervisory boards are similar to those of British and American boards. We can therefore look at the German success story and follow suit. We even have a UK FTSE 100 company, FirstGroup, to model the idea on.

The proposal is not in direct contrast to what the Government have proposed. They are keen to encourage John Lewis-style employee-owned companies through tax breaks. There is appetite on both sides of the House to give employees more of a stake in their company—their livelihood. That is especially true with regard to executive pay, with the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills proposing to make boards and remuneration committees more diverse, following a cross-party Treasury Committee report in 2009 calling for more employee representation on those committees. Extending that to boards as a whole, which would make decisions more directly applicable to employees, does not seem to be much of a stretch.

I am sure Members have heard arguments on the issue from friends in the corporate world. There is a lot of resistance to the idea from UK directors. They say that it might move the objective of a board away from

[Jim Sheridan]

maximising shareholder value towards maximising the payroll. I question whether that is really a bad thing. In these years following a financial crisis, we should be looking to make companies less short-term focused and more rounded. We want UK companies that stand the test of time and that are good for communities. A board looking to do that would be focused not only on dividends. Also, we are talking here about some employee representatives, not 50:50 representation of directors and employees. The proposal would just give employees a voice and give the board a fresh perspective.

Members might also talk about the additional burden that the proposal would bring. They might say that it would make boards bigger and therefore less efficient, with members preparing less before meetings. There is indeed evidence that smaller boards are more effective, but evidence from Swedish employee representatives shows that corporate leaders and representatives are capable of co-operating in a way that is of benefit to all. Any inefficiency would be outweighed by the benefits of greater understanding of the company's operations and more co-ordinated decision making.

Members might have been pressed about the risk of confidential information being leaked. However, we are first looking to improve relations between employees and the board, so I am confident that employees would respect the additional responsibility. Evidence from other countries shows that they are rarely tempted to whistleblow; if they are tempted to do so, does it not suggest that the company is up to no good?

British businesses are wary of employee representation, but that is because we do not have a culture of it, and because it would be likely to reduce ridiculously high executive salaries. For example, the boss of Volkswagen in Germany, Martin Winterkorn, saw his bonus for 2012 cut by 20%. Most directors are comfortable with high pay, because they are detached from reality. What they need is people on their board who can bring them back down to earth. There has rightly been scandal after scandal about bonuses and million-pound salaries. The Labour party supports having employees on remuneration committees, but I think it would be much more effective if we put them on boards, right at the top.

I understand the difficulties of forcing the proposal on to companies, but I do not understand why we cannot encourage those with whom we do business to adopt the approach. We could ensure that, in a tendering process for public services, more weight was given to companies that had adopted this collaborative approach to their board system. For companies regulated by Ofgem, Ofcom or Ofwat, we could ensure that part of the regulation was a better deal for employees through employee representatives. I am convinced that there would be wide public support for a measure that ensured that profits were spent on the right things, rather than on shareholder dividends or executive salaries and bonuses.

We can change the culture of the corporate world little by little, and employee representatives could be a first step. It would be a good deal for business, a good deal for consumers and, most of all, a fair deal for employees.

5.10 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (Jo Swinson):** I start by congratulating the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Jim Sheridan) on securing this debate, which is a helpful opportunity to discuss employee representation on the boards of UK companies. There has been a recent report by the Trades Union Congress on the topic.

I agree with much, although perhaps not all, of what the hon. Gentleman says. I may have to disappoint him on some issues, but I agree with much of his sentiment and many of his points, particularly on the positive role that the trade unions can play in industrial relations. It is sometimes far too easy to demonise trade unions without remembering that we have historically low levels of industrial action. The hon. Gentleman is right that we always want to do what we can to reduce industrial action even further, but the vast majority of trade unions work constructively and positively with employers in the workplace. Thankfully, examples such as Grangemouth, where industrial relations are in a much less positive sphere, are the exception rather than the rule.

I also agree with what the hon. Gentleman said about the downsides of pursuing short-term profit above all else, which the Government also recognise. My right hon. Friend the Business Secretary commissioned the Kay review to consider the matter, because we agree that long-termism is in the interests of the UK economy and, indeed, individual companies, but sometimes the models that we have in place reward and incentivise the pursuit of short-term goals, rather than long-term goals.

I take seriously the concerns of the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North on the abhorrent practice of blacklisting, evidence of which the Government are very open to receiving. Of course, the Select Committee on Scottish Affairs recently held an inquiry into that practice.

The benefits of employee engagement within the workplace are significant and well proven, and we definitely want to encourage such engagement. I would make the case that the only way to do that is through worker representation on company boards. I think it would be desirable if more workers were represented on boards, and there is nothing in law stopping companies from having such representation.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the FTSE 100 company First Group, which of course has such representation on its board. He read out the company's powerful testimonial on the consequent benefits to its operations, and many companies may want to consider such representation by looking at the experience of First Group. Ultimately, it is better if the decision is taken by companies, rather than being mandated across all firms, not least because choosing to do so probably means there is much more chance that a company will actually engage with the real issues and view the engagement positively than if it was forced to do so through Government intervention.

**Mr Andrew Smith:** Is there not an argument that the companies that are most reluctant might be the ones that need worker representation and could benefit from it the most?

**Jo Swinson:** That argument is always made on a range of issues, but we are trying to change the culture. The hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North rightly referred to that towards the end of his remarks, and it could be done in a variety of ways. I argue that sometimes mandation and regulation are not necessarily as effective as other methods of encouraging businesses to recognise the benefits of particular forms of behaviour. Whether on employee engagement or diversity, we need to consider what is the right tool to get the result that we want.

Further, there are a number of reasons why mandating that companies must have worker representatives on their boards would not be desirable. Part of that is because of the way in which our board system is structured. Our board system is different from other European countries that have been mentioned. We have a unitary board system, which means that anyone sitting on a board or a board committee is a director with the same responsibilities and duties as other directors, and is equally accountable to shareholders for decisions.

There is no legal distinction between different types of director, whether or not they are representing employees. All directors have a legal duty to have regard to the interests of employees in promoting the success of the company, and we need to be slightly wary of the danger that, if we force an employee representative on to boards, it could have the perverse, unintended consequence that the other directors on a board might take less seriously their existing duty to have regard to the interests of employees. We want all directors on boards to be thinking about that, rather than having it siloed into one individual position.

**Jim Sheridan:** Does the Minister agree with the comments of the now infamous Mr Ratcliffe that the events at Grangemouth would never have happened in Germany simply because there would be workers on the board who could have flagged up the problems earlier?

**Jo Swinson:** I am not sure whether I will take up the tempting offer to agree with Mr Ratcliffe, but better discussion and dialogue between workers and management is always the best way to avoid disputes. The vast majority of cases, thankfully, do not get to the stage that Grangemouth did—there were horrendous consequences, the worst of which were thankfully averted. None the less, it was difficult even to get to where we did, which is a far from ideal situation.

We must encourage such dialogue. Obviously, one way to do that could be through worker representation on company boards, but I disagree that that is the only way in which that dialogue could happen. Indeed, I suggest that employers can do a great amount, even without such representation, to ensure that they properly engage with their work force, address issues as they arise and have mechanisms in place to pre-empt difficult challenges.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned his experience at Thales, which is not far from my constituency and is still an appreciated employer. Many of my constituents work for Thales in Glasgow, but I do not know whether there is worker representation on the company's board. Even if there is not, such representation is not necessarily what drives positive engagement. As hon. Members would agree, there are many companies out there that

do not have worker representation on the board but that, none the less, manage to have very positive workplace relations, which is to be commended.

On directors, it is perfectly possible in UK law for a director to be responsible for ensuring that the views of employees are heard by the board, but having a director with a specific, legally defined responsibility for furthering employees' interests may be unhelpful because it could risk directors pursuing competing interests, rather than coming together as a board to set common objectives for the company.

It would not be fair to portray the UK as having poor employee participation, and I have mentioned that many companies are good examples of such participation. Indeed, studies and research back that up. The latest report on employee involvement by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions shows that employee participation is high in the UK—across the EU, only the Scandinavian countries score higher. That backs up my point that formal legislative mechanisms are not the only means of achieving effective employee engagement.

Indeed, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills recently supported a business-led initiative called “Engage for Success,” which outlines the benefits of employee engagement and provides practical best practice that businesses, large and small, may employ to improve the engagement levels of their work forces. Only one in three employees feels properly engaged in the workplace, so there are huge productivity gains to be realised. If the figure could be increased even to two in three, the UK economy would experience a significant boost. I encourage hon. Members to look at the “Engage for Success” website.

Engagement with employees is to be encouraged and promoted, but I would not go as far as prescribing that all companies should have worker participation on their board, which is perhaps not workable and not the best way to achieve the goals that we share.

Other EU member states have different board structures and systems of corporate governance, so we need a solution that works for the UK and our particular system of corporate governance and industrial relations, rather than a one-size-fits-all policy. The approach in Sweden and Norway, for example, is based on far greater levels of detailed negotiation and collective bargaining between employers and employees at all levels of company decision making. It is therefore simplistic to assume that we could just apply one element of such a system to the UK system.

The hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North is right to raise the issue of pay, because many hon. Members have been concerned about increased levels of executive pay in recent years. It has been excessive in many cases and the ratio between the earnings of those at the top versus those on the shop floor is also concerning. Directors' pay in particular has ratcheted upwards, but, importantly, it has not been linked to performance. In a sense, there is nothing wrong with somebody being rewarded for a specific success, such as growing a company, providing new jobs or creating wealth for the economy, but where that reward is given when the company has not necessarily been experiencing particularly fantastic results, that needs to be questioned. Excessive pay for failure or for not bringing significant success damages the long-term interests of business.

[Jo Swinson]

We brought forward reforms, which came into force on 1 October, to create a more robust framework for the setting and reporting of directors' pay. They will boost transparency, so that people can clearly and easily understand what those at the top of companies are paid. Importantly, the reforms will empower shareholders to hold companies to account through binding votes, creating a stronger, clearer link between pay and performance. We have already seen shareholders flexing their muscles in a much more welcome way on issues such as executive pay. It will take some time to see the full impact of the reforms, due to the voting and engagement patterns of investors, but there are already good examples of constructive dialogue between companies and investors.

More widely, the Government is committed to tackling short-termism through the recommendations of the Kay review. Earlier this month, the Government's response to the Select Committee on Business, Innovation and Skills set out the progress made on this important agenda. Of particular help are our reforms, now in place, of narrative reporting and the governance of executive pay. We have also secured changes to EU law to end mandatory quarterly reporting by companies and will soon implement that reform in the UK.

The Financial Reporting Council updated the stewardship code last autumn to emphasise that investors should be focused on long-term company strategy and not just on governance arrangements, but more may need to be done. The FRC is undertaking a further review of the stewardship code with a view to strengthening its application and ensuring that it enhances engagement between investors and companies focused on long-term value creation. We have seen various initiatives from investment industry groups to develop good practice on stewardship, which we hope will continue, and on the disclosure of costs and charges in the investment chain. We have committed to publish next summer a full progress report on the delivery of the Kay review's recommendations.

The hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North mentioned women on boards, and I agree that it is an important issue. Having more women on boards is important not only from the point of view of women

or equality, but also in the same way that having more diversity of ethnicity, background and discipline is important.

One would not want a board comprised solely of accountants, lawyers, men or people who happen to be white. People bringing a diversity of views and experiences to a board can stop group think and make it a much stronger group that can really drive a company forward. Worker representation can lead to such diversity, but we should not necessarily mandate it. We want a mix of talents and experiences on boards to encourage higher performance. We are making good progress on gender diversity through the proposals put forward by Lord Davies in his excellent review.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the Government's work on encouraging employee ownership, which is another way of encouraging employee participation in business. Last week, I launched the "The Nuttall review of employee ownership: one year on report", which follows up on the recommendations of the Nuttall review. Many businesses are discovering that employee ownership can be an excellent model of governance that works incredibly well and that encourages an engaged and motivated work force.

The success stories include not only John Lewis, although it is obviously a great example, particularly given its increased sales at the moment, which can partly be put down to the rather fantastic bear and hare advert, but also Arup and the Baxi partnership—now Baxendale Ownership. A whole host of small companies up and down the country are showing the benefits of this particular model. It is perhaps not right for every business, but it is an important part of the mix, which is why we are supporting it further through tax breaks that we will announce more on shortly.

The hon. Gentleman suggested that we could promote employee representation through Government procurement or regulation, and we are open to further thinking about how to encourage that. Last month, the Government asked Professor Chris Ham of the King's Fund to conduct a wide-ranging review of how best to encourage wider employee participation in health.

5.26 pm

*Sitting adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 10(13)).*

# Written Statements

Tuesday 26 November 2013

## TREASURY

### International Tax Compliance Agreements (Bermuda and Montserrat)

**The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Mr David Gauke):** Agreements to improve international tax compliance were signed with Bermuda and Montserrat on 25 November 2013. These agreements set out precise details of information which will be automatically exchanged with the UK. The text of the new agreements has been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses and will be made available on HM Revenue and Customs' website.

## CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (Mr Edward Vaizey):** The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council takes place in Brussels on 25 and 26 November. The UK's Deputy Permanent Representative, Shan Morgan, will represent the UK for the culture, audiovisual and sport sections of the Council, which will be taken on 26 November.

#### *Culture and Audiovisual*

The Council will be invited to adopt a general approach on the proposal for a recast directive on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a member state. The proposal aims to improve the operation and effectiveness of the directive and promote co-operation between member states. The UK will be able to support the general approach.

The Council is also expected to adopt conclusions on media freedom and pluralism in the digital environment. We are content that these conclusions accurately reflect the balance of competence in this area and the UK will support the adoption of the conclusions. However, we will table a minute statement setting out our position on EU-level action in the area of media freedom and plurality.

The Council will also hold a policy debate on connected citizens: changing behaviour of viewers in the converged media environment. The debate follows the Commission's Green Paper on convergence and will be based on a discussion paper circulated by the Lithuanian presidency. Its aim is to discuss whether and how quickly a revision of the audiovisual media services directive is needed. In the debate, the UK will emphasise its position that we are not yet living in a converged world and that issues arising from convergence should therefore be dealt with at national level. The UK Government have examined the situation of the media and telecoms industries,

drawn their conclusions and published their strategy. We consider that the framework for this industry is broadly working well, delivering world-class content and we are opposed to any regulation that could harm growth.

#### *Sport*

The Council will be invited to adopt a recommendation on promoting health-enhancing activities across sectors. This recommendation encourages the promotion of health-enhancing physical activity by acknowledging the EU's physical activity guidelines, co-operation between the sport and health sectors, awareness-raising on the benefits of adopting a more active lifestyle, and physical activity in supporting active ageing. We consider the text to be uncontroversial and the UK will support the adoption of the recommendation.

The Council is also expected to adopt conclusions on the contribution of sport to the EU economy, and in particular to addressing youth unemployment and social inclusion. The conclusions present sport as a tool to address the social challenges that young people face across Europe. The UK is content with these conclusions and we will support their adoption.

The Council will hold a policy debate on good governance in sport, based on a discussion paper prepared by the Lithuanian presidency. In the debate, the UK will emphasise that good governance is the bedrock for the effective performance of all sports bodies, from the grassroots right up to the elite and professional levels, and will comment on the progress within the sport movement on improving and implementing good governance and the role of Governments in this respect.

#### *Any Other Business*

The French delegation will present a paper calling for the Commission to draw up a cultural strategy for the digital era. The UK does not consider it appropriate to initiate a debate on this item, but if necessary we will make a statement that any cultural strategy must avoid imposing limitations on areas such as the internal market, state aid and trade agreements.

The presidency will provide information on the world conference on anti-doping which took place in Johannesburg on 12-15 November.

The French delegation will provide information on proposals to mark the 100th anniversary of the football matches in the trenches during the Christmas truce of 1914.

Finally, the Greek delegation will inform the Council of the work programme and priorities for their forthcoming presidency of the Council.

## FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

### Foreign Affairs and General Affairs Councils

**The Minister for Europe (Mr David Lidington):** I attended the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) on 18 November and the General Affairs Council (GAC) on 19 November. My hon. Friend the Minister responsible for international security strategy attended the European Defence Agency steering board on 18-19 November

and the Defence Foreign Affairs Council, which will be reported on in due course. The FAC and Defence FAC were chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Ashton of Upholland, and the GAC was chaired by the Lithuanian presidency. The meetings were held in Brussels.

Commissioners Barnier (international market and services), Füle (enlargement and European neighbourhood policy), Commissioner Georgieva (humanitarian aid), Piebalgs (development), and Tajani (industry and entrepreneurship) were in attendance for some of the discussions at the FAC and Defence FAC.

Commissioner Šefcovic (inter-institutional relations and administration) was in attendance for some of the discussions at the GAC.

#### FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL

A provisional report of the meeting and conclusions adopted can be found at:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/139633.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/139633.pdf).

#### *Introduction—Serbia-Kosovo*

Baroness Ashton updated Ministers on the EU-facilitated Serbia/Kosovo dialogue and the 3 November elections in Kosovo. She welcomed the rerun of the Mitrovica local elections, and praised the EU rule of law mission (EULEX) for its close working with local authorities.

#### *Introduction—Burma*

Baroness Ashton briefed the Council following the EU-Myanmar Task Force which she led on 14-15 November. She had been accompanied by three fellow Commissioners, over 100 business leaders and a European Parliament delegation. She said the taskforce had successfully brought together political, economic and development agendas, as well as holding discussions with both President Thein Sein and Aung Sang Suu Kyi. I called on member states to sustain the EU's push for constitutional reform to secure genuine democratic elections in 2015 and requested further discussion at the December FAC.

#### *Introduction—Philippines*

Baroness Ashton expressed sadness at the devastation brought by typhoon Haiyan. Some €20 million had been mobilised by the EU, with a further €100 million from member states.

#### *Eastern Partnership*

Discussion focused on the preparations for the Vilnius summit to be held on 28-29 November in Vilnius. Ministers exchanged views on Ukraine's progress in implementing the conditions for the possible signature of the EU-Ukraine association agreement. I stated that it was important to send the message to Ukraine that we hoped to sign the association agreement at Vilnius but that, even at this late stage, we still needed to see further reform from Ukraine. The summit would also see the initialling of the association agreements with the Republic of Moldova and with Georgia.

#### *China*

Baroness Ashton briefed Ministers on the preparations for the 16th EU-China summit on 21 November. She also briefed on her recent visit to Japan ahead of the EU summit on 18-19 November. Her discussions focused on security and defence policy and welcomed the strength of EU-Japan strategic relations.

#### *Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Ministers discussed the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). Commissioner Füle said that BiH leaders had until December to reach agreement on implementation of the Sejdic-Finci ruling, if it was to be incorporated into BiH's electoral law by April, ahead of the October 2014 elections. The Commission was pressing ahead with reallocating 54% of BiH's 2013 instrument for pre-accession (IPA) funding. I stressed the importance of finding a way to overcome vested interests, and the need to do more to foster a political environment that encouraged alternative voices and ensured politicians were held accountable. We needed to highlight to the Bosnian people the opportunities they are missing as a result of their leaders' failure to move forward. We needed also to target financial support as a key positive incentive for change. I supported the proposed IPA cuts.

#### *Southern neighbourhood*

Over lunch, Ministers discussed the situation in Syria. Commissioner Georgieva argued that more money was needed to respond to the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Ministers agreed conclusions which call for Geneva II to be convened quickly and welcome the National Coalition's decision to attend. They committed the EU to do its utmost to further increase its humanitarian contribution and supported the October UN Security Council presidential statement calling for increased humanitarian access. Ministers also agreed conclusions expressing grave concern about the impact of the Syria crisis on the region, especially on Lebanon and Jordan.

Ministers discussed migration issues, both through the Mediterranean and across land borders, focusing on the humanitarian and security aspects. I argued that work on tackling migration flows should be taken forward in the context of the Task Force for the Mediterranean, established by the October European Council, which is working to identify short and medium-term measures to reduce the risk of further tragedies.

On Libya, the UK underlined the need for continued efforts to support stability. The EU should continue to urge the Libyan Government and General National Congress to put aside their differences and develop a single, inclusive national dialogue. Increased EU efforts were needed to help the Libyans tackle arms proliferation, by supporting work led by the UN mine action service. Ministers approved conclusions on Libya, which condemned the recent killing of civilians and emphasised that the Libyan Government and GNC needed to work together for a peaceful democratic political transition. They also committed to enhanced EU border security assistance to Libya, including via the border assistance mission EUBAM Libya.

Baroness Ashton underlined her continued commitment to supporting Egypt, stating that the decision to lift the state of emergency and invite EU electoral observers seemed positive signs. However, concerns over inclusivity and security remained, and she would continue to be active and engaged on these issues.

Ministers approved conclusions on Tunisia, which encouraged all actors to engage in the national dialogue to agree a way for a new constitution to be adopted rapidly and elections to be held. They underlined EU support for Tunisia in tackling socio-economic and security challenges, reiterating the connection between

level of support and Tunisian progress in implementing reforms. Condemning the recent terrorist attacks, they welcomed Tunisian engagement on regional security, and indicated EUBAM Libya's potential role on this issue.

#### *Other business*

Ministers agreed without discussion a number of other measures:

The Council approved the conclusion of a protocol to the association agreement with the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on the general principles for the participation of Jordan in EU programmes.

The Council adopted the EU priorities for co-operation with the Council of Europe in 2014-2015.

The Council agreed to support the activities of the World Health Organisation in the area of biosafety and biosecurity, in the framework of the EU strategy against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The Council established the EU position for the 12th meeting of the EU-Kyrgyz Republic Co-operation Council, to be held in Brussels on 21 November 2013.

The Council decided to sign and conclude an agreement enabling the participation of the Republic of Chile in EU crisis management operations.

The Council agreed to sign and conclude an agreement establishing a framework for the participation of Georgia in EU crisis management operations.

The Council noted the report by the head of the European Defence Agency.

The Council took note of the single progress report on the development of EU military capabilities for the period from November 2012 to October 2013.

The Council endorsed a note on EU rapid response capabilities and EU battle groups.

The Council agreed a declaration extending until 31 December 2014 arrangements concerning the financing of incremental transport costs for land, sea and air deployment of battle groups at short notice to the joint area of operations.

The Council approved the exercise specifications for the MILEX 14 crisis management exercise.

#### JOINT MEETING OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL AND DEFENCE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL:

##### COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

In a joint session, Foreign and Defence Ministers welcomed the high representative's report on common security and defence policy (CSDP) ahead of the December European Council discussion on defence, spanning the three agenda items: increasing the effectiveness, visibility and impact of the CSDP; enhancing the development of defence capabilities; and strengthening Europe's defence industry. Member states set out their priorities for December Council discussion. The UK highlighted the importance of CSDP playing to its strengths as part of a comprehensive approach to crisis management operating in partnership with others, principally NATO. The European Council was an opportunity to demonstrate political will to develop capabilities and to act: but the package of proposed measures on the defence industry should not impinge on national sovereignty, nor should the Commission develop or own dual use capabilities. Ministers were unable to agree draft conclusions on CSDP at the Foreign Affairs Council, but following further discussions in Brussels working groups, they were subsequently approved by the Education, Youth and Culture Council on 25 November.

A copy of the conclusions adopted can be found at: [http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/139719.pdf](http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/139719.pdf).

#### GENERAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL

The 19 November GAC focused on: the Commission work plan for 2014; the 2014 European semester launch; the follow-up to European Council conclusions; and the agenda for the 2013 December European Council, to be attended by the Prime Minister on 19-20 December.

A provisional report of the meeting adopted can be found at:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/genaff/139649.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/genaff/139649.pdf).

#### *Commission work programme for 2014*

The Commission introduced its work programme for 2014, which continues the emphasis on delivering jobs and growth, and on completing banking union. In welcoming the Commission's document, I drew attention to priorities on better regulation and underlined the importance of the Council having input ahead of these work programmes.

#### *2014 European semester*

The incoming Greek presidency gave an update on changes with this semester compared to previous years, highlighting the role the European Council would play in focusing on the main priorities in the annual growth survey (AGS) at its December meeting, and guidelines on its implementation at the March European Council.

The Commission explained that the AGS was part of a broader package, including the alert mechanism report, in-depth reviews, single market implementation report and joint employment report.

I welcomed the single market report and the references to reducing regulatory burden, and warned against any dilution to the main focus of the semester process. On social indicators, I recommended that sectoral Councils hold political discussions of the proposed scoreboards.

#### *European Council conclusions follow-up*

The presidency presented its report on how European Council conclusions were being followed up. In welcoming the report, the Commission noted the significant progress made and the remaining work to be done, including on banking union, savings taxation and youth employment. I stated that this is an important strand of work for the GAC, both in preparing future Councils and ensuring that there is genuine momentum to achieve progress in the areas set by Heads of State and Government.

#### *Preparation of the 19-20 December European Council 2013*

The GAC discussed the draft annotated agenda for the 19-20 December European Council. This European Council, to be attended by the Prime Minister, has an extensive agenda covering: common security and defence policy; economic and monetary union; economic and social policy; enlargement; the Task Force for the Mediterranean; and energy. There was general agreement on the agenda.

Under any other business, the Netherlands Foreign Minister briefed the GAC on their review of subsidiarity which aims to identify areas where action should remain at national level, as well as areas where the Europe Union could do more. I welcomed the review as an

important contribution to building a more flexible, competitive and democratic EU. Most member states supported the report's findings, placing emphasis on different themes, with some particularly mentioning better regulation.

I drew attention to the wider context, on engaging citizens directly and using new communication technologies to do so. I made clear that the European Union had to be effective, and this meant knowing where it should limit action. Making the Europe Union work better would promote public confidence in it: this was about citizens seeing results.

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Drugs Policy

#### **The Minister for Crime Prevention (Norman Baker):**

We have taken the opportunity of the G8 presidency to galvanise international partners and institutions to meet the global challenge presented by new psychoactive substances.

The G8 meetings have developed a consensus to share more information on the emergence of new substances, their impact on public health and the supply routes. The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime has launched its global Early Warning Advisory to facilitate this exchange and the UK Government will continue to work with partners to ensure it is used effectively.

Secondly, the G8 member states agreed to work with the UN and the International Narcotics Control Board to develop mechanisms to facilitate more systematic

engagement with source countries of new psychoactive substances. We identified a need to speak with one voice to source countries, creating a space for dialogue about substances of concern and pressing for domestic controls in source countries and law-enforcement co-operation.

Thirdly, the GB partners recognised the central importance of reducing the demand for new psychoactive substances. The UK shared its experience of targeted communications activity carried out over the summer and there was a consensus that G8 and UN channels should be used to continue to share expertise.

Fourthly, there was clear support for the reinvigoration of existing international controls of new psychoactive substances via engagement with the United Nations Office on Drug and Crime and the World Health Organisation (WHO). The WHO has since initiated a consultation on re-energising the drug control process, proposing initiating risk assessments on a number of priority substances. We will continue to engage with G8 and UN partners to support a robust and timely framework for international controls which are fit for the challenges of the 21st century.

Fifthly, we initiated a discussion on enforcement best practice. We identified real challenges in terms of the paucity of the intelligence picture; diversity and pace of change within the market place; and the global nature of the market place and supply chain. Nonetheless, there was appetite for future information-sharing and collaboration through the G8 mechanism.

We will continue to work with G8 partners through the Russian presidency of the G8 in 2014.

I will keep the House informed of progress.

# Petition

*Tuesday 26 November 2013*

## PRESENTED PETITION

*Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor*

### **A14 road improvement and financing**

*The Petition of the people of Suffolk Coastal and the wider Suffolk area,*

Declares that the planned road improvements on the A14, a key route connecting the Midlands with the UK's leading container port of Felixstowe and designated

as a Trans-European Transport Network, will be welcomed by most users of the A14, particularly by residents in Cambridgeshire, and is expected to reduce congestion on this key route for commuters and businesses alike; further declares that this is one of several major road improvements proposed by Her Majesty's Government though notes that this is the only road improvement scheme proposed to be partially financed by a toll; further declares the concerns of the petitioners that this will have a detrimental effect on the economy of Suffolk.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to remove the planned requirement to toll vehicles on the A14.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Dr Thérèse Coffey.]

[P001299]



# Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 26 November 2013

## COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Local Government Finance

**Mr Betts:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much revenue has been raised from (a) council tax and (b) business rates in each year since the introduction of council tax. [175178]

**Brandon Lewis** [holding answer 12 November 2013]: Historical figures on council tax and business rates revenue can be found in the annual publication, "Local government financial statistics England", copies of which can be found online and which are also presented to Parliament each year further to section 168(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-government-finance-statistics-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/local-government-finance-statistics-england)

### Local Government: Tower Hamlets

**Andy Sawford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) what communication he has had with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets about adherence to the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity; [173993]

(2) how many local authorities he or Ministers in his Department have written to with regard to their observance of the Code of Practice on Local Authority Publicity. [173994]

**Brandon Lewis:** Ministers have corresponded on a number of occasions with councillors at Tower Hamlets, who are rightly concerned that the council continues to fail to comply with the code. Ministers recommended that the issue should be taken up with the local (district) auditor; however, it has become clear that such auditors are unwilling or unable to take action on clear breaches of the code and abuses of taxpayers' money. Hence, we are legislating via the Local Audit and Accountability Bill.

When the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity was revised in March 2011 my officials wrote to all local authority chief executives drawing their attention to the code. My officials wrote to all local authority chief executives again in April 2013, enclosing a copy of the Government's consultation document on proposals to give the code greater force.

### Non-domestic Rates: Public Houses

**Simon Danczuk:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will take steps to promote the take-up of rural rate relief by public houses when they are the last public house in the village. [175615]

**Brandon Lewis** [holding answer 18 November 2013]: This Government takes every opportunity to promote take-up of all non-domestic rates reliefs. However, having noted the content of early-day motion 599 sponsored by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol North West (Charlotte Leslie), we will be writing to local authorities to remind them of their powers in relation to rural rate relief. Information on rural rate relief is also included in the gov.uk advice to firm on business rates, at

[www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief](http://www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief)

More generally, we have also made it easier through the Localism Act for ratepayers to claim small business rate relief and have temporarily doubled the level of discount. We also continue to encourage local authorities to consider using the powers which we have given them to grant local discounts as well as discretionary hardship rate relief. Central Government automatically funds 50% of the costs of discounts granted.

### Planning Permission

**Dr Offord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what recent guidance his Department has given to local authorities on tackling unauthorised development. [176234]

**Nick Boles:** My Department published a guide entitled "Dealing with illegal and unauthorised encampments: a summary of available powers" in August 2013, at

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/227492/130807\\_Dealing\\_with\\_illegal\\_encampments\\_format\\_and\\_ISBN.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/227492/130807_Dealing_with_illegal_encampments_format_and_ISBN.pdf)

which includes planning enforcement powers.

In addition, as set out in the Budget, the Government has fundamentally overhauled planning practice guidance to ensure this provides up to date, easily accessible advice on planning. This is in line with the recommendations of Lord Taylor of Goss Moor (December 2012), providing much needed simplicity and clarity that will better support planning delivery and growth. This includes guidance on ensuring effective enforcement.

The new draft guidance suite was open on the internet for informal comment until 14 October 2013; all contributions made during this time will be taken into consideration in finalising the guidance.

**Dr Offord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will take steps to improve the procedures for using Article Four Directions to protect residents from development under permitted development rights. [176238]

**Nick Boles:** The process for making an article 4 direction is well known and was simplified in 2010. 43 local authorities having consulted their community and put a direction in place this year.

We have recently revised our guidance to ensure it provides up to date, easily accessible advice. The detailed guidance on making article 4 directions is available on the beta site of the National Planning Practice Guidance:

[http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/when-is-permission-required/what-are-permitted-development-rights/#paragraph\\_034](http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/when-is-permission-required/what-are-permitted-development-rights/#paragraph_034)

### Planning Permission: Liverpool

**Mrs Ellman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government for what reasons he has called in Liverpool city council's consideration of proposals for the Welsh Streets in Liverpool; and if he will make a statement. [176162]

**Nick Boles** [*holding answer 21 November 2013*]: Save Britain's Heritage and a number of other interested parties made a request that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government call in for his own decision the demolition and redevelopment of the Welsh Streets area of Liverpool. On 24 September, the Secretary of State issued his decision calling in the application having considered the proposal carefully against the call-in indicators set out in the written ministerial statement of 26 October 2012, *Official Report*, columns 71-72WS. The call-in decision letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

### Secondment

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many private sector employees have been seconded by the private sector to his Department; what the name was of the company from which they were seconded; and whether any of those employees have worked on drafting legislation. [175645]

**Brandon Lewis:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to PQ 175814 today, to the hon. Member for Derby North (Chris Williamson).

**Chris Williamson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many staff have been seconded to his Department over the last two years; for how long they were seconded; and from which organisation. [175814]

**Brandon Lewis** [*holding answer 18 November 2013*]: The Department seconds staff in to the organisation in order to help bring in external expertise across the Department's responsibilities such as for local government, housing, planning and communities. Since November 2011, 37 staff were seconded into the Department, details of these are in the following table.

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Start date</i>	<i>End date</i>
Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service	1 November 2011	31 October 2014
Humbly Grove Fire and Rescue Service	1 November 2011	31 December 2014
London Fire and Rescue Service	7 November 2011	31 October 2014
Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service	19 November 2011	30 June 2014
Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service	1 December 2011	30 November 2013
Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service	19 December 2011	18 December 2013
Lincolnshire Council	4 January 2012	31 March 2012
Essex Fire and Rescue Service	2 April 2012	21 September 2012
Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service	10 April 2012	28 September 2012

<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Start date</i>	<i>End date</i>
Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue Service	16 April 2012	17 September 2012
Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service	16 April 2012	21 September 2012
Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service	1 June 2012	30 September 2012
Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	1 June 2012	30 September 2012
London Fire and Rescue Service	7 June 2012	6 June 2014
Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	1 June 2012	9 September 2012
Surrey Fire and Rescue Service	1 July 2012	30 September 2012
Princes Trust	2 July 2012	1 July 2014
Cheshire Police	11 July 2012	15 July 2013
Sheffield City Council	3 September 2012	31 March 2014
University of Nottingham	10 September 2012	9 May 2013
Winchester City Council	17 September 2012	16 September 2014
London Borough of Brent	17 September 2012	16 September 2014
Audit Commission	25 September 2012	24 March 2014
Environment Agency	1 October 2012	31 March 2013
Savills	10 October 2012	18 July 2013
Nottingham City Council	30 October 2012	31 December 2013
Savills	5 November 2012	4 February 2013
New Haven Housing Association	7 January 2012	6 January 2014
Essex Fire and Rescue Service	7 January 2012	6 January 2014
Stanford Mallinson Ltd	2 April 2012	31 March 2015
Grainger Plc	1 April 2012	31 March 2015
EC Harris	29 April 2012	31 March 2015
Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service	7 May 2012	6 May 2014
Valuation Office Agency	17 July 2013	27 March 2014
Westminster City Council	3 September 2012	2 September 2014
West Sussex Council	21 October 2012	18 April 2014
Camden Council	4 November 2012	20 December 2013

### Social Rented Housing

**Stephen Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many families living in the social rented sector moved home within that sector in each year since 2008 for which data is available. [177238]

**Kris Hopkins:** The number of households with children taking up a general needs social letting having moved from within the social sector is shown in the following table.

Social lettings to households within children make up around 35-40% of all general needs social lettings each year.

	<i>Number of households with children moving within social sector</i>	<i>As percentage of total households with children taking up social letting</i>
2012-13	33,594	40
2011-12	38,648	39
2010-11	42,914	39
2009-10	41,584	39
2008-09	40,238	37

*Source:*  
Continuous Recording of Lettings (CORE)

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Animal Experiments

**Mr Laurence Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps she is taking to reduce the number of animals used in experiments; and if she will make a statement. [174598]

**Norman Baker:** In 2010, the Government made a commitment to work to reduce the use of animals in scientific research in "Coalition: our programme for Government". The Coalition Commitment is not concerned with just baseline numbers, but encompasses the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction (3R's) more broadly, putting them at the heart of a science-led approach.

We will be publishing a Delivery Plan imminently that will set out how the Government is supporting and encouraging these advances and the programmes and policies through which Government will continue to deliver its commitment. The consequence will be accelerated take-up of the 3R's both domestically and internationally, set on the tenets of good science, good animal welfare and good for the UK and economic growth.

The commitment is being delivered through a science-led programme led by the National Centre for Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs), an organisation with a strong record in reducing animal use.

The NC3Rs closely involves Government departments and agencies, the Home Office Inspectorate, the research community in both academia and industry, and others with relevant animal welfare interests.

### Consultants

**Keith Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many consultants were engaged by her Department in (a) 2010, (b) 2011, (c) 2012 and (d) 2013 to date; which companies were used; and what the cost was in each year. [176120]

**James Brokenshire:** The Home Department's commercial objectives require consultancy services to be commissioned in terms of defined output, not in terms of individuals assigned by the firms to deliver that output. Therefore, the Department does not employ individuals under contracts for consultancy services or keep records of how many individuals are working on each consultancy engagement. Carrying out an exercise to obtain these numbers would incur disproportionate cost.

The names of the consultancy companies that were used by the Home Department are listed as follows:

*Consultancy supplier list: Consultancy companies used by the Home Office during 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14*

Actica Consulting Ltd  
 Advantage Technical Resourcing  
 Ahmad El Terk  
 Alchemica  
 Alpinair  
 Altius Consulting Ltd  
 Always Thinking Associates  
 Amtec Consulting Group  
 Analysys Mason Ltd  
 Andriana Nadoo Consulting Services

Asb Action Ltd  
 Ashridge Consulting Ltd  
 Ask Europe plc  
 Aspire Recruitment Consultants Ltd  
 Assessment & Development Consultants Ltd (A&DC)  
 Atkins Management Consultants  
 Barco Control Rooms GMBH  
 Berkshire Consultancy Ltd  
 Birnberg Peirce & Partners  
 Bramble CC Ltd  
 Brian Robson  
 Bristol Muslim Cultural Society  
 Broadcasting Support Services  
 Business in the Community  
 Butler & Young  
 Capgemini UK plc  
 Capita Resourcing Ltd  
 Capital Quality Ltd  
 Cargyll Consultants  
 Centre for Accessible Environments (The)  
 Centre for International Forensic Assistance (CIFA)  
 CGMS Consulting  
 Channel 3 Consulting Ltd  
 Colliers CRE Clients Account  
 Collyer Rose  
 Concerto Partners LLP  
 Conscious Solutions  
 Cordis Bright Ltd  
 CT International Solutions Ltd  
 Cubiks Ltd  
 Dame Sue Street DCB Ltd  
 Dashwood Consulting Ltd  
 David Birch Consulting  
 DBI Consulting  
 Deloitte MCS Ltd  
 Detica Ltd  
 Digital Public Ltd  
 DMA Consultancy Ltd  
 Drivers Jonas Deloitte  
 Dulani Kulasinghe  
 Duncan Macquarrie Associates Ltd  
 Ectis Ltd  
 EDSL Ltd  
 Emerging Technology Serv Ltd  
 Emergn Ltd  
 ENDC Accounting and Consultancy Ltd  
 Ernst and Young LLP  
 Evolve Business Consultancy Ltd  
 Experis Ltd  
 Faithful & Gould  
 Fast Future Research Ltd  
 Forensic Telecommunications Services Ltd  
 Gardiner & Theobald  
 GDA Ltd  
 Global Freight Services Ltd  
 GNS-Inspire Ltd  
 Gosling Consultancy Ltd  
 Grant Thornton  
 Harmer Consulting  
 Haverstock Associates  
 Hays IT  
 ICMPD  
 Info-Assure Ltd  
 iO1 Ltd  
 Ionann Management Consultants  
 IRN Consultants Ltd

Isos Partnership  
 J L Consultancy  
 Jonathan Spencer Consultants Ltd  
 Jones Lang Lassalle  
 Judith Gardner Independent Consultants  
 Key Forensic Services Ltd  
 KIS Solutions Ltd  
 Knowledgeable Ltd  
 KPMG LLP  
 Lokahi Foundation  
 M & M Research Ltd  
 Mantech Solutions and Technologies  
 Mark Veljovic T/A CT International Solutions Ltd  
 Matrix Research and Consultancy Ltd  
 Metafore Partners LLP  
 Metaltech Consulting Services  
 Methods Consulting Ltd  
 MJMNI  
 Mott Macdonald  
 Mouchel Management Consulting Ltd  
 Navigation Consulting Ltd  
 Newsfury Ltd  
 Nichols Group Ltd  
 Novare Consulting Ltd  
 Olorin Consulting  
 PA Consulting Services Ltd  
 Paul Martin Associates  
 PCUBED  
 Pendragon Global Consulting Ltd (in administration)  
 Pentarch Consulting Ltd  
 Perpetuity Research & Consultancy International Ltd.  
 Peter Tickner Associates Ltd  
 PMMS Consulting Group Ltd  
 PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP  
 QBM  
 QI Consulting  
 Qinetiq Ltd  
 Quadrangle Group LLP  
 Quask AG Ltd  
 Reply Ltd  
 RJG Management Consulting Ltd  
 Robin Ryde Consulting  
 Roke Manor Research Ltd

RQ Consulting  
 Safety Net Associates Ltd  
 Sandhill Consultants Ltd  
 Sandy Brown Associates LLP  
 SAS Drivers Jonas (France)  
 Saville Consulting UK Ltd  
 Schellekens Consultancy (The)  
 Scott Blinder  
 Scott Wilson Ltd  
 Serco Ltd  
 Servoca Resourcing Solutions Ltd  
 Seven Questions Consulting Ltd  
 Shared Intelligence  
 SHD Consulting Ltd  
 Smart Consulting  
 Smartsourcing plc  
 Spring Technology  
 SQW Consulting  
 Stanton Marris  
 STI Consultancy Ltd  
 Stonecourt Consulting Ltd  
 Synergy Group  
 Systems Consultants Services Ltd  
 Tam Support Services Ltd  
 Tangram Architects & Designers  
 The Oxford Group  
 Thompson Aviation  
 TMP (UK) Worldwide  
 Tonic Consultants Ltd  
 Tony Hurrell Consulting  
 Tracker Network UK  
 Trenton Consultants Ltd  
 Tribal Helm  
 UCL Consultants Ltd  
 Vega Consulting Services Ltd  
 Verdant Consulting Ltd  
 Walker-Cox Ltd  
 Warwick Business Consultancy Ltd  
 Winckworth Sherwood  
 WOR Consultancy Ltd  
 WT Partnership  
 X-Net  
 Ziona Strelitz Associates  
 Zircon Management Consulting Ltd.

The cost for consultancy for the financial years 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14 to date is as follows:

<i>Consultancy spend</i>				<i>£000</i>
	<i>Annual accounts</i> <i>Year 2010-11</i>	<i>Full year</i> <i>Annual accounts</i> <i>Year 2011-12</i>	<i>Annual accounts</i> <i>Year 2012-13</i>	<i>Year to date (AP7)</i> <i>Year 2013-14</i>
Consultancy	64,194	33,301	14,762	6,632

The cost of consultancy continues to fall year-on-year since 2010-11.

### Corruption

**Anas Sarwar:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the resources dedicated to the combating bribery and corruption within the newly

announced National Crime Agency represent a net increase in total spending by the Government on efforts to combat bribery and corruption. [172179]

**James Brokenshire** [*holding answer 24 October 2013*]: As set out in the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy published on 7 October, the National Crime Agency has a range of resources focused on combating bribery

and corruption. Information on cross-Government spending on efforts to combat bribery and corruption is not held centrally.

### Deportation

**Caroline Lucas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were removed from the UK between January 2004 and May 2013 by detainee custody officers working as overseas escorts who were not properly certified and accredited by her Department in accordance with the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999; and if she will make a statement.

[175447]

**Mr Harper:** The information requested cannot be provided without collation and examination of individual records at disproportionate cost.

Detainee Custody Officers who are employed as overseas escorts are accredited by Home Office Immigration Enforcement in accordance with Detention Services Order 4/2011 which is available at:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/detention-services-orders/>

—detainee custody officer certification.

In order to receive their accreditation, officers receive compulsory training on issues including welfare, first aid and control and restraint.

### Discrimination

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity have been lodged against employees of her Department or its executive agencies by (a) current employees and (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action;

[176573]

(2) how many complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many of those complaints resulted in disciplinary action;

[176607]

(3) how many complaints of racial discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action;

[176624]

(4) how many complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action;

[176677]

(5) how many complaints of disability discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action;

[176694]

(6) how many complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department or its

executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176711]

**James Brokenshire:** The information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Drugs: Imports

**Stephen Phillips:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps her Department is taking to restrict the import of new psychoactive substances.

[175106]

**Norman Baker:** In response to the Government's Drugs Strategy, the detection of new psychoactive substances is a high priority target for Border Force, alongside existing priorities in respect of cocaine and heroin. Border Force deploys its resources according to risk, using established intelligence and targeting techniques. Border Force also works closely with other agencies, including the Police.

### Entry Clearances: Yemen

**Keith Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many (a) business and (b) visit visas were issued to Yemenis by UK overseas posts in (i) Abu Dhabi, (ii) Dubai and (iii) Cairo in each year since 2010.

[176792]

**Mr Harper:** The visa section in Dubai was closed in 2009, so the following statistics only cover visas issued in Abu Dhabi and Cairo. The figures under 'visit' are for all visit visas issued, including business visit visas. The figures under 'visit—business' are solely for business visit visas issued. The figures for 2013 are for visas issued from January to June 2013.

#### Visas issued in Abu Dhabi to Yemeni nationals

	Visit	Visit—Business
2010	284	23
2011	400	38
2012	406	41
2013	338	63

#### Visas issued in Cairo to Yemeni nationals

	Visit	Visit—Business
2010	50	18
2011	157	43
2012	159	46
2013	77	15

### Female Genital Mutilation

**Gavin Shaker:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Bishop Auckland of 11 September 2013, *Official Report*, column 744W, on female genital mutilation, which (a) Government Minister and (b) civil servants were represented at the Home Office Ministerial Roundtable on female genital mutilation on 18 July 2013.

[175425]

**Norman Baker** [holding answer 18 November 2013]: Ministers from the Home Office, Department for International Development and Department for Education

attended the Roundtable on 18 July 2013. Also in attendance was the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Metropolitan Police Service Commander for Sexual Offences, Exploitation and Child Abuse Command, and the Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on female genital mutilation.

Policy Officials were present from the Home Office, Department for International Development, Department for Education, Ministry of Justice and Department of Health. Representatives from the Crown Prosecution Service, Royal College of Midwives and the Metropolitan Police Service were also in attendance.

The non-Government organisations represented were the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Equality Now and the Foundation for Women's Health Research and Development.

### Human Trafficking

**Mr Syms:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates she has made of the number of victims of modern day slavery in (a) Dorset, (b) the South West and (c) the UK in each of the last three years. [176082]

**James Brokenshire:** The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying potential victims of human trafficking and ensuring they receive the appropriate protection and support.

946 cases were referred in 2011 and 1,186 in 2012, of which 28 and 32 respectively were from the south-west. Data are not available for Dorset specifically, nor for the south-west prior to 2011. Further information is available in the 2013 Human Trafficking Inter-Departmental Ministerial Group report available at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/251487/9794-TSO-HMG\\_Human\\_Trafficking.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/251487/9794-TSO-HMG_Human_Trafficking.pdf)

### Immigration

**Mr Thomas:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will arrange for the hon. Member for Harrow West to receive a reply to his letters of 5 September and 17 October 2013 to UK Visas and Immigration regarding Ms Suchita Dubla of Harrow. [175583]

**Mr Harper** [*holding answer 18 November 2013*]: UK Visas and Immigration wrote to the hon. Member on 20 November 2013.

### Immigration Controls: Ports

**Chris Bryant:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions passengers disembarking from ships originating (a) in the EEA and (b) outside the EEA have been allowed to enter the UK without having their passports checked at UK sea ports in (i) 2010, (ii) 2011, (iii) 2012 and (iv) 2013 to date. [169307]

**Mr Harper** [*holding answer 8 October 2013*]: Prior to 2012 Border Force risk assessed ships entering the UK, meeting only a proportion of them. Records were not kept of ships that were not checked. As such it is not possible to provide figures in response to the question

for 2010 and 2011. Following the Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), statement in the House on 7 November 2011 the practice was reformed in 2012. Since then Border Force has been working under a clear operational mandate and a requirement to record deviations from those processes.

Immigration checks completed on passengers arriving in the UK on ships vary depending on the type of ship and the nature of its voyage. In line with the Border Force Operating Mandate, some passengers are therefore currently subject to checks that do not include the physical examination of their passports. The number of these passengers is not recorded.

There were five occasions in 2012 where ship passengers were allowed to enter the UK without having their passports checked, despite this being mandated. In addition, there was a two month period in 2012 during which a single port failed to comply with the Operating Mandate. Cruise ships which were in transit for 24 hours or less were subject to security checks but there was no physical examination of passengers' passports. All passengers were checked against Home Office systems.

Following this, all regions conducted a thorough assurance process to confirm that Border Force operational staff are fully compliant with the Operating Mandate. From the beginning of 2013 to the end of August 2013 there have been no recorded events where ferry or cruise ships were allowed to enter the UK without the appropriate checks.

### Immigration officers

**Keith Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigration officers were made redundant and then re-engaged in (a) 2010, (b) 2011, (c) 2012 and (d) 2013 to date. [176118]

**Mr Harper:** The Home Office has not made any immigration officers compulsorily redundant for the period 2010 to date.

### Independent Monitoring Board

**Mr Brady:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will bring forward legislative proposals to make the Independent Monitor subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. [175944]

**James Brokenshire:** The Independent Monitor of the Disclosure and Barring Service is excluded from Schedule 1 to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and, as such, is exempt from freedom of information requests. There are no plans to have the Independent Monitor added to this Schedule to the Act.

### Internet: Offences Against Children

**Dr McCrea:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to tackle the spread of child abuse content online. [176907]

**Damian Green:** The Government takes very seriously the spread of child abuse images online, and has taken action to tackle it.

We have made real progress to block child abuse and other illegal content and to prevent offenders from accessing it. The UK has a clear process by which criminal images of child sexual abuse can be reported and for websites containing such images either to be removed completely or to be blocked by internet service providers. In 2012 the Internet Watch Foundation removed 9,550 child sexual abuse web pages worldwide.

Internet search engines have made changes to their search functions. National Crime Agency testing of these new measures shows that they have been effective in making it harder to access child abuse images, videos or pathways.

To take further action, Britain and the US have joined up to target child abuse online through a new UK-US taskforce to work with industry to counter online child sexual exploitation.

In 2012, 255 individuals were found guilty of the principal offence of possessing prohibited images of children or of possessing indecent photographs.

In the same year, 1,315 individuals were found guilty of the principal offence of taking, permitting to be taken, making, distributing or publishing indecent photographs of children.

#### Investigatory Powers Tribunal

**Sadiq Khan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) on how many occasions in each year of the Investigatory Powers Tribunal's (IPT) existence a public body has made a representation to the IPT that it did not disclose information to a complainant; and whether each such representation was (a) upheld and (b) overruled; [176454]

(2) on how many occasions in each year of the Investigatory Powers Tribunal's (IPT) existence the Government has (a) objected to and (b) opposed an IPT proposal to hold an open hearing. [176455]

**James Brokenshire:** Neither the Government nor the Investigatory Powers Tribunal centrally record the information requested.

Under rule 6 of the Tribunal Rules (Statutory Instrument 2000 No.2665) the Tribunal cannot disclose to a complainant anything that a public body has provided to the Tribunal, without the consent of the person who provided the information.

**Sadiq Khan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what the annual (a) budget and (b) total spend of the Investigatory Powers Tribunal has been in each year since its establishment. [176487]

**James Brokenshire:** For financial year 2013-14, the budget of the Investigatory Powers Tribunal and the secretariat that supports it is £296,558 and the total spend in the year to date is £177,296.37. The information sought in respect of previous years is not available as the budgets were not allocated in that way.

#### Overseas Students: Private Rented Housing

**Mr Godsiff:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what cost-benefit assessment she has made of her proposal in the Immigration Bill to require that landlords check the immigration status of

international students before allowing them to rent accommodation; how she will ensure that legitimate students are not refused permission to rent accommodation because landlords are concerned about potential fines; and what steps she plans to take to ensure compliance with data protection regulations if unregulated landlords routinely collect citizenship information from overseas students. [175953]

**Mr Harper:** An impact assessment, including an analysis of the costs and benefits of the scheme has been published and is available in the House of Commons Library.

The checks will be straightforward and quick for law-abiding landlords and tenants to comply with. Codes of Practice governing the scheme are being developed and landlords who comply with the Codes of Practice may have confidence that they will not incur a penalty. These Codes and wider guidance made available, will also remind landlords of their obligations to comply with data protection legislation.

Purpose built student accommodation is exempted from the scheme. Private landlords of student accommodation will be able provisionally to agree tenancies with overseas applicants as they do now provided that original documents are verified once the student arrives in the UK.

#### Overseas Visitors: EU Nationals

**Priti Patel:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what provisions are in place to prevent foreign nationals who have previously been served with an anti-social behaviour order within the UK from returning to the UK from another EU country. [170538]

**Mr Harper** [*holding answer 14 October 2013*]: Foreign Nationals arriving at our borders are checked against watch list data that contains information on criminals who have committed offences in the UK and abroad. These data are drawn from a variety of sources, including the police and other Government Departments. Anyone considered to present a serious threat to public safety may be prevented from entering the country. An antisocial behaviour order within the UK if part of a pattern of wider and more serious criminality in the UK and abroad would lead to a case by case consideration of a refusal of entry to the UK.

#### Police: Dogs

**Sir Bob Russell:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what her policy is on the future of police working dogs who are to retire or are no longer required; what advice she has given to each police force authority on that matter; and if she will make a statement. [177183]

**Damian Green:** The retirement of police dogs is an operational decision for police forces.

#### Prisoners: Foreign Nationals

**Mr Andrew Turner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many foreign nationals are in prison (a) in the UK and (b) on the Isle of Wight; what the nationality of such prisoners is; and how

many foreign prisoners of each nationality (i) were automatically deported, (ii) were eligible for deportation but not deported and (iii) were not eligible for deportation since 2010. [175741]

**Mr Harper** [*holding answer 18 November 2013*]: The information on number of foreign nationals in prison in the UK and in the Isle of Wight can be found in the Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin in the following link in table 1.5 and 1.6.

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/253955/prison-population-tables-Q2-2013.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/253955/prison-population-tables-Q2-2013.xls)

It is our policy not to disclose the countries to which we remove or deport foreign national offenders as this could jeopardise our diplomatic relations.

(i) The total number of foreign national offenders who were deported between January 2010 and September 2013 is 13,495. This is broken down as follows:

	<i>Total</i>
CY 2010	4,110
CY 2011	3,375
CY 2012	3,545
CY 2013	12,465

<sup>1</sup> To September 2013

Total foreign national offenders (FNOs) removed by Criminal Casework (January 2010-September 2013) 13,495.

(ii) A total of 3,210 foreign national offenders were eligible for deportation but not deported between January 2010 and September 2013. This is because of allowed appeals against deportation and human rights grounds.

(iii) National Offender Management Service are requested to refer FNOs to the Home Office who meet the following criteria:

*For non-EEA nationals*

A custodial sentence of 12 months or more either in one sentence or as an aggregate of two or three sentences over a period of five years, or a custodial sentence of any length for a drug offence (other than possession).

A court recommendation (only for those over 17 years of age)

*For EEA nationals*

A custodial sentence of 12 months or more for an offence involving drugs, violent or sexual crimes or a custodial sentence of 24 months or more for other offences.

There is no central mechanism in place for recording the number of FNOs who have served a custodial sentence but do not meet the above criteria for deportation.

These average figures are based on internal management information and are subject to change.

### Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the (1) Home Department what proportion of employees in her Department is (a) white British and (b) black, Asian and from other minority ethnic groups, by each Civil Service pay grade; [176642]

(2) what proportion of employees in her Department are (a) female and (b) male, by each Civil Service pay grade. [176590]

**James Brokenshire:** The Home Office data showing the proportion of (a) female and (b) male staff by each Civil Service pay scale are shown in the table A.

The Home Office data showing the proportion of (a) white British and (b) black, Asian and minority ethnic staff, by each civil service pay are shown in table B.

Table A: Gender table (end of October 2013)

<i>Gender</i>	<i>1. AA-AO</i>	<i>2. EO</i>	<i>3. HEO-SEO</i>	<i>4. G7-G6</i>	<i>5. SCS PB 1</i>	<i>6. SCS PB 2+</i>	<i>All SCS</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
								<i>All staff total</i>
Female	59.96	49.92	47.86	44.41	35.00	23.81	32.42	51.84
Male	40.04	50.08	52.14	55.59	65.00	76.19	67.58	48.16

Table B: Ethnicity table (end of October 2013)

<i>Ethnicity target</i>	<i>1. AA-AO</i>	<i>2. EO</i>	<i>3. HEO-SEO</i>	<i>4. G7-G6</i>	<i>5. SCS PB 1</i>	<i>6. SCS PB 2+</i>	<i>All SCS</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
								<i>All staff total</i>
Minority ethnic	26.12	25.93	18.90	11.19	7.03	0.00	5.33	23.21
White	73.88	74.07	81.10	88.81	92.97	100.00	94.67	76.79

*Data source:*

Data View—the Home Office's single source of Office for National Statistics compliant monthly snapshot corporate Human Resources data.

*Extraction date:*

1 November 2013.

*Organisational coverage:*

Figures include core Home Office (including the former UK Border Agency and Border Force) and the executive agencies; Her Majesty's Passport Office and National Fraud Authority.

*Employee coverage:*

Data are based on the headcount of all current, permanent and paid civil servants, who had made a positive declaration regarding disability. With the exception of the senior civil service, Government Departments have delegated pay and grading. For statistical purposes Departments are asked to map their grades to a common framework by responsibility level as per Office of National Statistics definitions. This table shows staff at their substantive responsibility level.

## ATTORNEY-GENERAL

### HowToCorp

**Emily Thornberry:** To ask the Attorney-General whether the Crown Prosecution Service was contacted by police for (a) pre-charge advice or (b) pre-charge

decision on fraud allegations made against the company HowToCorp. [177332]

**The Solicitor-General:** The Crown Prosecution Service has not been contacted by the police in relation to the HowToCorp allegation requesting either pre-charge advice or a pre-charge decision.

### Offenders: Foreign Nationals

**Emily Thornberry:** To ask the Attorney-General how many non-UK nationals have been prosecuted by the Crown Prosecution Service in the last six months; and for what offences these prosecutions were brought. [177316]

**The Solicitor-General:** The Crown Prosecution Service does not maintain centrally held data that would enable defendants to be identified as UK nationals or not. Such information could be obtained only through a manual search of records which would incur a disproportionate cost.

### Public Sector: Procurement

**Emily Thornberry:** To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions since 2006 the Serious Fraud Office has sought to have a company barred from public sector procurement contracts in the UK as a result of (a) bribery, (b) fraud, (c) money laundering and (d) terrorism. [177348]

**The Solicitor-General:** The Serious Fraud Office (SFO) investigates and prosecutes cases of serious fraud, bribery and corruption. Where appropriate, it seeks a range of criminal and/or civil sanctions. Disbarment from public procurement contracts may be a consequence of successful prosecution but it is not a matter for the SFO. However, individuals have been banned from acting as company directors following SFO action in several cases.

The Public Contracts Regulations (2006) set out criteria for rejection of economic operators, including for the reason that they have been convicted of fraud, bribery or money laundering.

### NORTHERN IRELAND Disabled Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of employees in her

Department have a physical or learning disability, by each Civil Service pay grade. [176662]

**Mrs Villiers:** As of October 2013, four employees in my Department, equal to 4.2% of staff, have declared that they have a disability. Given the small numbers involved, it would not be appropriate to provide any further breakdown as to do so would risk the identification of the individuals concerned.

### Discrimination

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity have been lodged against employees of her Department or its non-departmental public bodies by (a) current employees and (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176575]

**Mrs Villiers:** Because of the devolution of policing and justice functions on 12 April 2010 and subsequent reconfigurations of the Northern Ireland Office, my Department does not hold figures for the periods prior to 2010; attempting to obtain this information would incur disproportionate cost. Since 12 April 2010, no complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity have been lodged against employees of my Department.

My Department has two Executive non-departmental public bodies—the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland; and one advisory non-departmental public body—the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland. As such bodies are independent of Government, the hon. Member may wish to write to the Commissions direct on these matters—contact details are set out as follows:

<i>ALB</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Contact details</i>
Parades Commission Northern Ireland	Executive NDPB	info@paradescommission.org
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	Executive NDPB	information@nihrc.org
Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland	Advisory NDPB	bcbni@belfast.org.uk

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department or its non-departmental public bodies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many of those complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176609]

**Mrs Villiers:** Because of the devolution of policing and justice functions on 12 April 2010 and subsequent reconfigurations of the Northern Ireland Office, my Department does not hold figures for the periods prior

to 2010; attempting to obtain this information would incur disproportionate cost. Since 12 April 2010, no complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of my Department.

My Department has two executive non-departmental public bodies—the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland; and one advisory non-departmental public body—the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland. As such bodies are independent of Government, the hon. Member may wish to write to the Commissions direct on these matters—contact details are set out as follows:

<i>ALB</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Contact details</i>
Parades Commission Northern Ireland	Executive NDPB	info@paradescommission.org
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	Executive NDPB	information@nihrc.org

<i>ALB</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Contact details</i>
Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland	Advisory NDPB	bcni@belfast.org.uk

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints of racial discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176626]

**Mrs Villiers:** Because of the devolution of policing and justice functions on 12 April 2010 and subsequent reconfigurations of the Northern Ireland Office, my Department does not hold figures for the periods prior to 2010; attempting to obtain this information would incur disproportionate cost. Since 12 April 2010, no complaints of racial discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of my Department.

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department or its non-departmental

public bodies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176679]

**Mrs Villiers:** Because of the devolution of policing and justice functions on 12 April 2010 and subsequent reconfigurations of the Northern Ireland Office, my Department does not hold figures for the periods prior to 2010; attempting to obtain this information would incur disproportionate cost. Since 12 April 2010, no complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of my Department.

My Department has two Executive non-departmental public bodies—the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland; and one advisory non-departmental public body—the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland. As such bodies are independent of Government, the hon. Member may wish to write to the Commissions direct on these matters—contact details are set out in the following table:

<i>ALB</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Contact details</i>
Parades Commission Northern Ireland	Executive NDPB	info@paradescommission.org
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	Executive NDPB	information@nihrc.org
Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland	Advisory NDPB	bcni@belfast.org.uk

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints of disability discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department and non-departmental public bodies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176696]

**Mrs Villiers:** Following the devolution of policing and justice functions on 12 April 2010 and subsequent reconfigurations of the Northern Ireland Office, my Department does not hold figures for the periods prior

to 2010; attempting to obtain this information would incur disproportionate cost. Since 12 April 2010, no complaints of disability discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of my Department.

My Department has two executive non-departmental public bodies—the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland; and one advisory non-departmental public body—the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland. As such bodies are independent of Government, the hon. Member may wish to write to the Commissions direct on these matters—contact details are set out here:

<i>ALB</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Contact details</i>
Parades Commission Northern Ireland	Executive NDPB	info@paradescommission.org
Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission	Executive NDPB	information@nihrc.org
Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland	Advisory NDPB	bcni@belfast.org.uk

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department or its non-departmental public bodies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176713]

**Mrs Villiers:** Because of the devolution of policing and justice functions on 12 April 2010 and subsequent reconfigurations of the Northern Ireland Office, my Department does not hold figures for the periods prior

to 2010; attempting to obtain this information would incur disproportionate cost. Since 12 April 2010, no complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of my Department.

My Department has two executive non-departmental public bodies—the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and the Parades Commission for Northern Ireland; and one advisory non-departmental public body—the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland. As such bodies are independent of Government, the hon. Member may wish to write to the Commissions direct on these matters—contact details are set out here:

## ALB

## Status

## Contact details

Parades Commission Northern Ireland

Executive NDPB

info@paradescommission.org

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Executive NDPB

information@nihrc.org

Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland

Advisory NDPB

bcni@belfast.org.uk

**Driver and Vehicle Agency: Coleraine**

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps she has taken to retain jobs at the DVA centre in Coleraine; and what progress she has made in achieving that end. [176973]

**Mrs Villiers:** The decision on the future of the vehicle licensing work carried out at the DVA in Coleraine is the responsibility of the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Mr Goodwill). I have discussed the matter with him and his predecessor at length on a number of occasions. I have made clear to him the concern felt about the potential loss of these posts and emphasised that it is very important to look at the wider economic impacts of any possible decision that would involve removing work from the DVA. My hon. Friend will also need to weigh efficiency issues for Department for Transport and the need to deal with the deficit as well as considering the best way to ensure that drivers in Northern Ireland can access the same level of electronic and web-based services to licence vehicles that is available in GB.

**Employment Tribunals Service**

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many claims at employment tribunals have been lodged against her Department on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years; and how many such cases were found against her Department. [176558]

**Mrs Villiers:** No employment tribunals have been lodged against my Department on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in the last five years.

**Staff**

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of employees in her Department are (a) female and (b) male, by each civil service pay grade. [176592]

**Mrs Villiers:** As at November 2013, the proportion of female and male employees in my Department, by pay grade, is as set out as follows. These figures do not take account of the civil servants seconded to my Department from the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

	Percentage	
	Female	Male
SCS	0	100
Band A	54	46
Band B	62	38
Band C	48	52
Band D	65	35
Band E	62.5	37.5
Band F	15	25

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proportion of employees in her Department is (a) white British and (b) black, Asian and from other minority ethnic groups, by each Civil Service pay grade. [176644]

**Mrs Villiers:** As of October 2013, 30 employees in my Department, equal to 31.6% of staff, were recorded as white British. Two employees, equal to 2.1% of staff, were recorded as black, Asian or from other minority ethnic groups. Given the small numbers involved, it would not be appropriate to provide any further breakdown as to do so would risk the identification of the individuals concerned.

**Terrorism**

**Dr McCrea:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether the Northern Ireland Justice Minister requested additional Police Service Northern Ireland officers to tackle dissident republicanism. [176899]

**Mrs Villiers:** The Minister for Justice and I meet regularly to discuss a range of issues, including those relating to security and policing. The Government has provided additional funding of £231 million to the PSNI until 2015-16 to support their efforts in tackling the threat from terrorism in Northern Ireland.

**TRANSPORT****Cycling: Accidents**

**John Pugh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what benchmarking statistics his Department holds on (a) traffic accidents and (b) related injuries in pedestrianised town centre areas where there are (i) discrete cycling lanes and (ii) co-mingling of cycles and pedestrians. [176836]

**Mr Goodwill:** The Department collects statistics on reported personal injury road accidents that occur on public highways. No information is collected on damage only accidents. The statistics collected are published in an annual report entitled 'Reported Road Casualties Great Britain', a copy of said publication has been deposited in the Libraries of the House. The publication is also available online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-accidents-and-safety-statistics>

The publication contains a copy of the variables collected by the police (known as STATS19 data).

Tables containing the strategic framework for road safety key outcome indicators are available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/ras41-reported-casualties-rates>

The Department does not hold any information specifically on accidents in pedestrianised town centre areas.

### Disabled Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of employees in his Department have a physical or learning disability, by each civil service pay grade. [176665]

**Stephen Hammond:** The tables show the number and proportion of employees in post at 31 March 2013 who declared a disability within the Department and its six agencies. The Department does not have details on the type of disability. Staff on long-term leave (eg maternity leave, secondment etc) have not been included.

											Number
	<i>AA</i>	<i>AO</i>	<i>EO</i>	<i>HEO</i>	<i>FS</i>	<i>SEO</i>	<i>Grade 7</i>	<i>Grade 6</i>	<i>SCS PBI</i>	<i>SCS PB2, 3 and 4</i>	<i>Total</i>
Non-disabled	1,190	3,570	4,390	1,473	65	1,014	686	273	108	20	12,789
Disabled	285	558	441	143	7	81	44	12	4	0	1,575
Unknown/prefer not to say	382	916	730	321	16	237	148	54	24	11	2,839
Total	1,857	5,044	5,561	1,937	88	1,332	878	339	136	31	17,203

  

											Percentage
	<i>AA</i>	<i>AO</i>	<i>EO</i>	<i>HEO</i>	<i>FS</i>	<i>SEO</i>	<i>Grade 7</i>	<i>Grade 6</i>	<i>SCS PBI</i>	<i>SCS PB2, 3 and 4</i>	<i>Total</i>
Non-Disabled	64	71	79	76	74	76	78	81	79	65	74
Disabled	15	11	8	7	8	6	5	4	3	0	9
Unknown/prefer not to say	21	18	13	17	18	18	17	16	18	35	17
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

### Driving Tests

**Richard Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the outcome was of his Department's procurement process in respect of the driving theory test contract after 2014; what agreements were made with Pearson Vue and Learn Direct for that procurement; and what costs were incurred in the procurement process. [176789]

**Mr Goodwill:** The Driving Standards Agency (DSA) acting on behalf of the Government Procurement Service (GPS) has completed a competition to award a new framework agreement for the supply of computer-based testing for Government. The outcome was an award of the framework to Learn Direct Ltd on Friday 18 October 2013. The DSA and the Driver and Vehicle Agency Northern Ireland have agreed that the driving theory test, the largest contract under this framework, will be provided by Learn Direct Ltd from September 2016 and that Pearson Driving Assessments Ltd will continue to provide the driving theory test until that date. The cost of running the procurement process is estimated to have been £510,380. This covers pay costs of £350,865 and £159,515 non pay costs, which consists primarily of professional fees.

#### East Coast Railway Line

**John Mann:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with the Office of Rail Regulation about the 4.2 per cent cancellation rate set for the East Coast main line for the next five year control period. [176750]

**Stephen Hammond:** Regulatory targets have been set by the Office of Rail Regulation for Network Rail for punctuality on East Coast services by 2019, as part of the Office of Rail Regulation's Final Determination for the Control Period 2014-19. The Final Determination takes into account the outputs set out in the Secretary of State's rail investment strategy for the same period.

Following its consultation with user groups and the rail industry on its Draft Determination, the Office of Rail Regulation concluded that it should lower the Public Performance Measure targets it had initially proposed for punctuality for long distance services, and toughen the corresponding targets for cancellations and significant lateness. This reflected customers' and operators' views that long-distance rail users are particularly disadvantaged by serious lateness and cancellations, and that in the Office of Rail Regulation's view it was sensible to rebalance targets to focus on these areas of particular concern. The revised targets are at least as challenging for Network Rail to deliver as the original Public Performance Measure targets.

**John Mann:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the higher level of cancellations and seriously late trains on the East Coast main line for the next five year control period is in accordance with the high level output specification. [176751]

**Stephen Hammond:** The target level set by the Office of Rail Regulation for cancellations and seriously late trains on the East Coast main line for the next five year control period is, taken together with targets for other operators' services, consistent with the Department's high level output specification.

The target level for East Coast is more challenging than the level originally proposed in the Office of Rail Regulation's consultation with the industry.

### Employment Tribunals Service

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many claims at employment tribunals have been lodged against his Department on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years; and how many such cases were found against his Department; [176561]

(2) how many complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) current employees and (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176578]

(3) how many complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many of those complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176612]

(4) how many complaints of racial discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176629]

(5) how many complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176682]

(6) how many complaints of disability discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176699]

(7) how many complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176716]

**Stephen Hammond:** The information requested is in the following table:

<i>Description</i>	<i>Total lodged per year (a)</i>	<i>Disciplinary action taken</i>
Number of Employment tribunals that have been lodged against the Department on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years (column 1)	2009-<5 2010-0 2011-0 2012-0 2013-0	2009-0 2010-0 2011-0 2012-0 2013-0
The number of cases which were found against the Department, (column 2)		
The number of complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity that have been lodged against employees of the Department and its executive agencies by (a) current employees and (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years (column 1)	2009-<5 2010-0 2011-0 2012-<5 2013-0	2009-0 2010-0 2011-0 2012-0 2013-0
The number of complaints resulting in disciplinary action, (column 2)	(b) See note 1.	(b) See note 1
The number of complaints of age discrimination or harassment that have been lodged against employees of the Department and its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years, (column 1)	2009-<5 2010-0 2011-0 2012-0 2013-<5	2009-0 2010-0 2011-0 2012-0 2013-0
The number of those complaints which have resulted in disciplinary action, (column 2)	(b) See note 2	(b) See note 2
The number of complaints of racial discrimination or harassment which have been lodged against employees of the Department and its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years, (column 1)	2009-0 2010-<5 2011-<5 2012-6 2013-<5	2009-0 2010-0 2011-<5 2012-<5 2013-<5
The number of these complaints which have resulted in disciplinary action, (column 2)	(b) See note 2	(b) See note 2

<i>Description</i>	<i>Total lodged per year (a)</i>	<i>Disciplinary action taken</i>
The number of complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment that have been lodged against employees of the Department and its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years, (column 1)	2009-<5 2010-<5 2011-<5 2012-<5 2013-<5	2009-0 2010-0 2011-0 2012-<5 2013-0
The number of these complaints which have resulted in disciplinary action, (column 2)	(b) See note 2	(b) See note 2
The number of complaints of disability discrimination or harassment that have been lodged against employees of the Department and its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years, (column 1)	2009-<5 2010-<5 2011-<5 2012-<5 2013-9	2009-0 2010-0 2011-0 2012-0 2013-0
The number of these complaints which resulted in disciplinary action, (column 2)	(b) See note 2	(b) See note 2
The number of complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of the Department and its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years, (column 1)	2009-0 2010-0 2011-<5 2012-0 2013-0	2009-0 2010-0 2011-0 2012-0 2013-0
The number of these complaints which have resulted in disciplinary action, (column 2)	(b) See note 2	(b) See note 2

*Notes:*

- All recruitment and resourcing for the Department for Transport and its Executive Agencies is undertaken by the Departmental Resourcing Group (DRG). DRG do not hold this data on prospective employees, and therefore we are unable to provide a reply.
- There is no data centrally held on other individuals, only employees of the Department and its Executive Agencies.
- All totals below five have been as <5 to avoid individual cases being identified.

The data underpinning this parliamentary question is not held centrally in all cases by the Department and its Executive Agencies for the time period of the last five years. The Department has sought to provide an answer where possible from the information it does hold. The data available is as follows:

Department for Transport (Central)—data has only been centrally held from March 2013 which has been provided.

Marine and Coastguard Agency—No data centrally held for this period.

Highways Agency—Data provided for the full period.

Driving Standards Agency—data has only been centrally held from 2011 to 2013 which has been provided.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency—No data centrally held.

Vehicle Certification Agency—No data centrally held.

Vehicle and Operator Services Agency—Data provided for the full period.

### Pay Television

**Diana Johnson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether offices of (a) his Department and (b) its Executive agencies have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case. [176438]

**Stephen Hammond:** The Department does not subscribe to Sky Sports or any other equivalent premium sports television service.

### Railways: South West

**Kate Hoey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer of 4 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 45W, on railways: south west, for what reasons lease costs for rolling stock are considered to be commercially sensitive. [176544]



											Number
	AA	AO	EO	HEO	FS	SEO	Grade 7	Grade 6	SCS PB1	SCS PB2, 3 and 4	Total
Asian	25	100	142	64	10	65	32	7	1	1	447
Black	7	41	63	33	0	17	8	0	0	0	169
Mixed	22	37	78	26	1	13	10	9	0	0	196
Other	4	6	19	9	0	5	5	1	1	0	50
White	1,555	4,134	4,689	1,526	55	1,073	662	269	107	22	14,092
Unknown/Prefer not to say	244	726	570	279	22	159	161	53	27	8	2,249
Total	1,857	5,044	5,561	1,937	88	1,332	878	339	136	31	17,203

  

											Percentage
	AA	AO	EO	HEO	FS	SEO	Grade 7	Grade 6	SCS PB1	SCS PB2, 3 and 4	Total
Asian	1	2	3	3	11	5	4	2	1	3	3
Black	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Mixed	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	0	0	1
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
White	84	82	84	79	63	81	75	79	79	71	82
Unknown/Prefer not to say	13	14	10	14	25	12	18	16	20	26	13
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

## SCOTLAND

### Disabled Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of employees in his Department have a physical or learning disability, by each Civil Service pay grade. [176664]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office does not employ staff directly, all staff that join do so on an assignment, secondment or from other Government bodies, mainly the Scottish Government and the Ministry of Justice.

Information relating to staff that have a physical or learning disability would be retained by the parent bodies. However, to protect the identity and privacy of individual staff, data relating to fewer than five people is not disclosed in equal opportunities monitoring.

### Discrimination

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity have been lodged against employees of his Department by (a) current employees and (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176577]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office has not had any complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity lodged against its employees by (a) current employees or (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years.

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many of those complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176611]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office has not had any complaints of age discrimination or harassment lodged against its employees by (a) employees or (b) other individuals in each of the last five years.

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints of racial discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176628]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office has had no complaints of racial discrimination or harassment lodged against its employees by (a) employees or (b) other individuals, in each of the last five years.

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176681]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office has not had any complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment lodged against its employees by (a) employees or (b) individuals in each of the last five years.

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints of disability discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176698]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office has not had any complaints of disability discrimination or harassment lodged against its employees by (a) employees or (b) other individuals in each of the last five years.

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176715]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office has not had any complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment lodged against its employees by (a) employees or (b) other individuals in each of the last five years.

#### Employment Tribunals Service

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many claims at employment tribunals have been lodged against his Department on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years; and how many such cases were found against his Department. [176560]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office has not had any employment tribunals lodged against it on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years.

#### Pay Television

**Diana Johnson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether offices of his Department have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case. [176437]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office does not pay for any premium television channels. The London office does have access to a package of television channels, which includes Sky Sports, provided by the Palace of Westminster Television Service. The Scotland Office is not charged for the different channels supplied.

#### Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of employees in his Department are (a) female and (b) male, by each Civil Service pay grade. [176594]

**David Mundell:** The information requested is contained on page 29 of the Scotland Office and Office of the Advocate General for Scotland's Annual Report and Accounts 2012-13, a copy of which is held in the House Library or can be sourced through the website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/annual-report-and-accounts-2012-13--2>

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of employees in his Department is (a) white British and (b) black, Asian and from other minority ethnic groups, by each Civil Service pay grade. [176646]

**David Mundell:** The Scotland Office does not employ staff directly, all staff that join do so on an assignment, secondment or loan from other Government bodies, mainly the Scottish Government and the Ministry of Justice.

Information relating to ethnicity of staff would be retained by the parent bodies. To protect the identity and privacy of individual staff, data relating to fewer than five people is not disclosed in equal opportunities monitoring.

#### UK Membership of EU

**Mr Syms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions (a) he and (b) his ministerial colleagues have had with their counterparts in the Scottish Government regarding an independent Scotland's membership of the EU. [176500]

**David Mundell:** Neither the Secretary of State for Scotland, the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael), nor his ministerial colleagues, have held any discussions with their counterparts in the Scottish Government regarding an independent Scotland's membership of the EU.

As outlined in 'Scotland analysis; devolution and the implications of Scottish independence', in the event of independence the remainder of the UK would be the same state as the existing UK, while Scotland would legally become an entirely new state. Therefore the UK's EU membership would continue automatically, while an independent Scotland would need to seek membership on new terms.

Any treaty of accession that enabled an independent Scotland to become a member of the EU would require ratification from all 28 EU member states.

#### LEADER OF THE HOUSE

##### Flexible Working

**Mr Gibb:** To ask the Leader of the House how many officials in his Office make use of compressed hours arrangements as part of the Civil Service's flexible working hours scheme (a) above and (b) below director level. [177401]

**Mr Lansley:** The Office of the Leader of the House of Commons is part of the Cabinet Office. Our answer will be included in the response by the Minister for the Cabinet Office, shortly.

#### ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

##### Agriculture: China

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps his Department has taken to increase the level of agricultural exports to China. [176968]

**George Eustice:** UK food and drink exports to China are increasing rapidly. In the first eight months of this year exports were valued at £170 million, a 46% increase compared to the same period the previous year. China is now one of the UK's top 10 food and drink export markets. The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my right Friend the hon. Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson), recently led the largest ever UK delegation to the Food and Hotel China international trade fair in Shanghai. China is identified as a key market for food and drink and agri-tech exports in both the Food and Drink Exports Action

Plan and the Agri-tech Strategy, which outline wide ranging support available to help UK exporters take advantage of the opportunities.

The Government has recently concluded negotiations with the Chinese authorities to secure access for British pork, with exports increasing from £5 million for the first nine months of last year to £14 million for the same period this year. We are currently negotiating opening up market access for poultry meat, bovine and porcine semen, pigs trotters, pet food, event horses and trout to China, and beginning negotiations for ruminant meat.

#### Agriculture: Renewable Energy

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assistance his Department provides to farmers to assist them to learn about, install and utilise renewable energy. [176965]

**George Eustice:** The Government's Anaerobic Digestion (AD) loan fund, administered by the Waste and Resource Action Programme (WRAP), includes grants for business cases to help farmers decide if AD is right for them. In addition, continued Government financial support and action under our Anaerobic Digestion Strategy and Action Plan is leading to growing uptake of AD, including in the agriculture sector.

The Government's Rural Community Energy Fund also provides support for rural communities in England in developing the pre-planning stages of community-scale renewable energy projects. All renewable technologies including AD are eligible for funding, and bids from local groups including farmers wishing to develop their thinking are welcome.

#### Birds: Conservation

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what areas in the UK are important roosting areas for Brent geese; and what steps he is taking to protect those locations for future generations. [176948]

**George Eustice:** The identification and protection of important roosting areas for geese is a devolved issue. In England there are a number of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under the EU Wild Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) for the dark-bellied brent goose and the Svalbard light-bellied brent goose. Details can be found on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee website at:

<http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/page-1418>

A review of the UK terrestrial/coastal SPA network is currently being undertaken, which will report next year, following which further consideration will be given to the adequacy of the current network, including for brent geese.

#### Bovine Tuberculosis

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions he has had with (a) the Northern Ireland Assembly and (b) the other devolved assemblies on the best way to control badgers and prevent bovine tuberculosis. [176944]

**George Eustice:** DEFRA Ministers and officials frequently meet their counterparts in all the devolved Administrations to discuss many matters, including bovine TB. DEFRA hosts an official level UK TB Liaison meeting, which is normally a monthly event.

**Huw Irranca-Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether (a) the EU Directorate General for Health and Consumers, (b) the EU Directorate for Agriculture and Rural Development and (c) other European Commission officials have required a badger-culling programme to be a compulsory element of the UK tuberculosis eradication programme. [177200]

**George Eustice:** The UK is required by Council Directive 77/391/EEC to have an accelerated bovine TB eradication plan. In order to qualify for a financial contribution from the EU, the plan must satisfy minimum criteria in Council Directive 78/52/EEC. Neither directive states the explicit requirement for a badger cull.

However, in a letter of 8 November 2011 to former Food and Farming Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for South East Cambridgeshire (Sir James Paice), former Directorate General for Health and Consumers Commissioner John Dalli wrote:

'As the UK considers that badgers are a key factor for spreading the disease, a policy decision concerning this issue must be taken without further delay and implemented rapidly'.

Further details of the letter are available at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/239596/5618.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239596/5618.pdf)

Additionally, the report of the bovine TB Sub-Group of the EU Task Force for Monitoring Animal Disease Eradication mission to the UK on 27-28 March 2012 concluded that:

'It is...of utmost importance that there is a...commitment to long-term strategies to combat TB in badgers as well as in cattle...there is considerable evidence to support the removal of badgers in order to improve the TB status of both badgers and cattle.'

A copy of the report is available at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/docs/tb\\_subgroup\\_uk\\_2012\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/diseases/docs/tb_subgroup_uk_2012_en.pdf)

#### Carbon Emissions

**Kate Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) pursuant to the answer of 10 October 2013, *Official Report*, column 361W, on carbon emissions, for what reasons his Department's guidance on air quality permits additional emissions where the effect is deemed to be negligible in areas where air quality management standards are being breached; [176535]

(2) pursuant to the answer of 10 October 2013, *Official Report*, column 361W, on carbon emissions, at what point the cumulative impact of additional emissions in areas where air quality standards are already being breached would lead to a prohibition on further such emissions. [176536]

**Dan Rogerson:** In order to allow new industrial installations to operate and contribute to the economy, DEFRA's guidance on air quality permits additional

emissions in areas where air quality management standards are being breached, where the effect is deemed to be negligible.

If a European air quality standard is already being breached in a particular area, then a permit should not be issued to any new industrial installation that would cause anything beyond a negligible increase in the extent of the breach. However, if it is clear to the regulator that a combination of controls on the proposed installation and measures to reduce emissions from other sources will achieve compliance with the standard, then the installation may be permitted.

Any significant additional contribution to a breach of a domestic air quality standard has to be considered on a case-by-case basis by the regulator, taking account of the costs and advantages of measures to reduce or prevent the breach.

### Cattle

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps his Department is taking to reduce the incidence of liver fluke in cattle. [176950]

**George Eustice:** Liver fluke is not a notifiable or statutory controlled disease in either cattle or sheep so DEFRA takes no formal action in its control. Through our scanning surveillance for new and re-emerging diseases in farmed livestock we are aware that the very wet summer and winter of 2012 has led to an increased incidence of the disease both in areas where it is common and spread east to less usual areas. Vets from our Animal Health and Laboratories Agency, are providing their disease knowledge and expertise to industry groups to help them best tackle this issue.

DEFRA is also providing funding to a collaborative research project worth £500,000 seeking to develop a better diagnostic test for liver fluke. This will help farmers take more targeted and effective action to manage the disease.

### Common Agricultural Policy

**Dr Whiteford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what communications his Department had with the European Commission about how to divide the uplift money in the CAP budget between the constituent parts of the UK; and if he will make a statement; [176888]

(2) who his Department consulted before making the division of the uplift money in the CAP budget allotted to the constituent parts of the UK; [176889]

(3) what criteria the Government used to divide the uplift money in the CAP budget between the constituent parts of the UK. [176887]

**George Eustice:** Pillar 1 direct payments the UK's receipts will fall over the next budgetary period (2014-20). After having consulted the devolved Administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and accounting for the views of English stakeholders the Government concluded that the most appropriate way of allocating the cut in our direct payments was through an equal proportionate reduction in the budget of each region. Each region will therefore maintain their historic share of direct payments based on the 2012-13 regional ceilings.

Similarly, the Government has decided that the change in our Pillar 2 allocation should also be distributed equally, based on the average historic shares of Pillar 2 between each region over 2007-13.

To help inform our discussions on these matters, DEFRA officials and officials from the devolved Administrations met with the European Commission to confirm how the Commission had calculated the UK's overall budget for direct payments and rural development over 2014-20.

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent representations he has received on the implementation of CAP reform in England. [177269]

**George Eustice:** On 31 October DEFRA launched a consultation on the Implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Reform in England. To date DEFRA has received approximately 3,300 responses.

### Dogs: Imports

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment has been made of the risk of rabies entering the UK from Bulgaria or Romania through the import of puppies. [177319]

**George Eustice:** A comprehensive risk assessment carried out in 2011, prior to the UK's harmonisation with the European Union (EU) Pet Travel Scheme, concluded that the risk of an animal with rabies coming into the UK is very low and the risk of rabies being passed from a pet to a person is lower still. The details of this assessment are available at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animal-diseases/a-z/rabies/>

This risk assessment incorporated both intra-EU and third country movements. Its conclusions are valid for animals moving under both the EU Pet Travel Scheme and commercial movements, as the risk mitigation measures are the same for both categories. We are constantly monitoring the prevalence of rabies, as well as other high impact diseases, around the world. If there is a significant change in the disease situation in any country we carry out a rapid risk assessment; these assessments are made available at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animal-diseases/monitoring/poa/>

### Food: Origin Marking

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what discussions his Department has had at EU level to ensure that companies who produce British food can display the Union flag on their produce. [176942]

**George Eustice:** The EU Commission has published draft implementing rules relating to country of origin labelling for meat. We were concerned that an earlier draft might have inadvertently banned flags from meat labels and raised this issue with the Commission. The draft rules have been amended to clarify that such symbols are permitted.

The draft rules have not yet been adopted and the UK is actively involved in negotiations.

### Milk: Prices

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what help he has given to the dairy sector to maintain the price of milk; and what steps he is taking to liaise with major grocery companies to ensure that farmers receive a fair price for their produce. [176949]

**George Eustice:** DEFRA continues to support the UK dairy industry's work in a number of key areas. We have given our full support to the dairy industry's Code of Best Practice for Contractual Relations. The Code already covers in excess of 85% of raw milk production in the UK and is helping to improve contractual relationships between farmers and milk buyers.

The Government is also providing £5 million worth of new funding under the Rural Economy Grant Scheme for high quality dairy projects which can help dairy farmers explore the potential in new markets through support for collaboration and marketing.

DEFRA, in partnership with UKTI, has developed the Government's 'Exports Action Plan' for driving export growth across all farming, food, and drink sectors. The dairy industry has also established the first "Dairy Exports Forum" which is fully supported by DEFRA.

With respect to contractual terms and conditions between retailers and their direct suppliers which include milk and dairy processors, the Government has introduced the Groceries Supply Code of Practice and appointed the Grocery Code Adjudicator, Christine Tacon, who will enforce the Groceries Supply Code of Practice to ensure that large retailers are not transferring excessive risk to their direct suppliers.

### Nature Reserves: Enfield

**Nick de Bois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment he has made of the proposals of the Environment Agency to use rotenone in Turkey Brook, Enfield; and if he will place a moratorium on the use of that substance in the absence of a formal impact assessment. [177346]

**George Eustice:** Piscicides are currently used by the Environment Agency to deliver its strategic invasive non-native species management programmes to eradicate high risk invasive species from the aquatic environment and counter the threats they pose to habitats, species and valuable recreational fisheries nationwide.

This contributes to the delivery of improvements to the aquatic environment under the Environment Agency's National Water Framework Directive programme (WFD). The WFD programme falls under the Strategic Environmental Assessment Regulations 2004 and has been screened accordingly.

The proposal to use rotenone to eradicate topmouth gudgeon from Turkey Brook, North Enfield is an operational matter for the Environment Agency. The site planned for eradication is connected to locally important fisheries on the River Lea and the spread of topmouth gudgeon poses a significant threat to those fisheries if not controlled. Nonetheless, any such projects requiring the use of piscicides are reviewed as part of the operational assessment process and rigorously planned to ensure that impact to the wider environment is minimised and where appropriate mitigated.

The use of rotenone is currently being reviewed under the EU Biocides Regulation; the outcome of this scientific assessment will determine its future usage across the EU. As such there are no current plans to place a moratorium on its use in England, and the Environment Agency will continue to be licensed to use it in exceptional circumstances.

### Phytophthora Ramorum

**Glyn Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what proportion of larch trees infected with phytophthora ramorum have been (a) treated, (b) felled, (c) not treated to date and (d) not felled to date. [177263]

**Dan Rogerson:** Forestry is a devolved issue. However, I can provide information on phytophthora ramorum with relation to larch trees in England. There is no known cure for this disease in trees so there is no treatment available. There will inevitably be some trees that have been infected and have not yet been identified so it is not possible to calculate the proportion of larch affected.

The latest information from the Forestry Commission in England, which records information by woodland area and estimated timber volume, not tree numbers, is set out in the following table. This shows the area of woodland and volume of timber under Statutory Plant Health Notices (SPHN) requiring the trees to be felled, as well as the volume estimated of trees under Notice still to be felled.

	Felling area under SPHN (hectares) <sup>1</sup>	Total estimated volume (cubic metres)	Total estimated volume not yet felled (cubic metres)
2010	1,107.3	186,000	3,000
2011	492.8	86,000	1,000
2012	482.3	86,000	8,000
2013	579.6	114,000	<sup>2</sup> 108,000
Total	2,662.0	472,000	120,000

<sup>1</sup> All figures are as at 1 November 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Felling of trees placed under SPHN in 2013 is work in progress, therefore the figure of 108,000 is likely to be overstated.

The hon. Member may wish to contact Welsh Ministers to discuss the position in Wales.

### Poultry: Animal Welfare

**Mr Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what assessment his Department has made of compliance with Halal strictures of electric stunning of chickens. [176518]

**George Eustice:** It is for halal organisations to decide whether the stunning parameters in the European Union (EU) Regulation 1099/2009, on the protection of animals at the time of killing, comply with their strictures.

### Reservoirs

**Stephen Barclay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what estimate his Department has made of the potential effect on (a) the number of reservoirs built by landowners on private land and (b) water resilience capacity of introducing tax relief for capital costs of the construction of reservoirs. [177341]

**Dan Rogerson:** DEFRA has not estimated either the number of additional reservoirs that could be built or the potential water resilience capacity as a result of introducing tax relief for capital costs on the construction of reservoirs.

**Stephen Barclay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what environmental benefits assessment his Department has undertaken in respect of the benefits of additional reservoirs being constructed by private landowners. [177343]

**Dan Rogerson:** DEFRA has not undertaken an assessment of the environmental benefits of additional reservoirs being constructed by private landowners.

**Stephen Barclay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if he will publish his Department's most recent cost-benefit analysis of tax relief for the construction of reservoirs on private land; and when his Department last undertook such an analysis. [177345]

**Dan Rogerson:** We will be publishing a report in the new year called "Water for agriculture: collaborative approaches and on-farm storage". The report will look at the costs and benefits of on-farm reservoirs and will help our understanding of the role tax relief may play on investment in reservoirs on private land. DEFRA presented an estimate of potential costs of capital allowances to HM Treasury on 12 March 2012, assuming no change from previous patterns of reservoir construction.

### Sheep Meat

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that there is availability of local lamb. [176947]

**George Eustice:** While eating locally produced food, including lamb, has become a major trend recently as consumers discover its superior quality and economic and environmental benefits, the Government cannot control its availability. This is dictated by commercial considerations and local initiatives.

### Written Questions

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs pursuant to the answers of 31 October 2013, *Official Report*, column 280W, on pesticides, columns 278-9W, on drinking water: contamination, and columns 282-4W, on pesticides: poisoning, if he will publish the direct weblinks to the information referred to in those answers as being available online. [177057]

**Dan Rogerson:** Pursuant to my answers of 7 November 2013, *Official Report*, columns 278-9W on drinking water: contamination, column 280W on pesticides and columns 282-4W on pesticides: poisoning, I have provided the direct web links to the information described below, together with the Hansard references.

Hansard: columns 278-9W on drinking water contamination, the record of all prosecutions of water companies since 1990 for the offence of supplying water unfit for human consumption (s70 of the Water

Industry Act 1991) in England and Wales can be found on the Drinking Water Inspectorate's website at:

<http://dwi.defra.gov.uk/press-media/incidents-and-prosecutions/prosecution-record.pdf>

Hansard: columns 280W pesticides, GB survey reports and data (and from 2010 UK data) are published on the Food and Environment Research Agency's website at:

<http://pusstats.fera.defra.gov.uk/index.cfm>

Hansard: columns 282-4W on pesticides: poisoning, data from the Health and Safety Executive's Pesticide Incidents Appraisal Panel (PIAP) report is published on the HSE's website at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/aboutus/index.htm>

The 2010/11 report, for example, is published on HSE's website at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/fod/pir1011.pdf>

The Human Health Enquiry and Incident Survey (HHEIS) reports on the requirement for authorisation holders for products to provide details of all human health related reports or enquiries involving their products. The results are published at:

<http://www.pesticides.gov.uk/guidance/industries/pesticides/topics/pesticide-approvals/enforcement/annual-questionnaire-on-the-possible-effects-of-pesticides-on-human-health.htm>

## WOMEN AND EQUALITIES

### Long Term Unemployed People: Middlesbrough

**Tom Blenkinsop:** To ask the Minister for Women and Equalities what assessment she has made of the reasons for the increase in long-term unemployment amongst women in Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland constituency between May 2010 and October 2013. [176488]

**Esther McVey:** I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

Between May 2010 and May 2011 the number of women in Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland claiming jobseeker's allowance for more than 12 months fell from 125 to 115. From June 2011 to September 2012 the number rose to 345.

This trend reflects that under the New Deal programme operating until June 2011, young people were not allowed to claim JSA continuously for more than a year and adults were not allowed to claim for more than two years. This held the number of long-term claimants below its true level, with some people who had been out of work for an extended period, having been moved onto a training allowance before returning to JSA, counted as short-term unemployed. The number of long-term JSA claimants rose because this no longer happened—individuals joining the Work programme continue to receive JSA until they find regular employment.

In the last year the number of women with a long-term JSA claim in Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland has started to fall, reaching 305 in October 2013.

## DEFENCE

### Afghanistan

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the total cost of military action in Afghanistan has been to date. [177407]

**Mr Francois:** The net additional costs of military operations in Afghanistan are included in the Ministry of Defence's Annual Report and Accounts 2012-13 (HC 38), which are available in the Library of the House, and can also be found online at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-annual-report-and-accounts-201213>

### Armed Forces Covenant

**Mr Heath:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which local authorities have not signed up to the community covenant. [174257]

**Anna Soubry** [*holding answer 12 November 2013*]: As of 12 November 2013, only 16 local authorities in Great Britain had not signed a community covenant. Of these, five have a planned signing date, and we are holding constructive discussions with the remainder.

	<i>Planned signing date</i>
West Lancashire Borough Council	14 November 2013
Havant Borough Council	14 November 2013
Leicester City Council	21 November 2013
Bridgend County Borough Council	22 November 2013
Lancashire County Council	29 November 2013
Lancaster City Council	—
Bristol City Council	—
Isles of Scilly Council	—
Blaby District Council	—
Charnwood Borough Council	—
Harborough District Council	—
Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council	—
North West Leicestershire District Council	—
Oadby and Wigston Borough Council	—
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	—
Fareham Borough Council	—

### Armed Forces: Suicide

**Mrs Moon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many (a) serving armed forces personnel and (b) veterans committed suicide between 2002 and 2012; and if he will make a statement. [174249]

**Anna Soubry:** Every suicide is a tragedy and our thoughts remain with the families of all those who have sadly taken their own lives. However, suicide among members of the armed forces remains extremely rare and is generally lower than comparative rates in the civilian population. All three services have seen a declining trend in suicide rates since the 1990s.

Between 1 January 2002 and 31 December 2012, there were 158 coroner-confirmed suicides or open verdict deaths among UK regular armed forces and deployed reservist personnel. Between 2007 and 2012 there were a further 20 deaths which are currently awaiting the outcome of a coroner's inquest where the mechanism of death suggests suicide.

The Ministry of Defence does not hold information on the number of suicide and open verdict deaths among all veterans, but does hold information on the cause of death (including suicide) among veterans of the 1982 Falkland campaign, Gulf 1 conflict and a Gulf era-comparison group. Between 2002 and 2012 there were 188 post-service suicides and open verdict deaths among these groups. Although an analysis of the 2002-2012 figures has not been conducted, taken overall these groups have a statistically significantly lower risk of suicide and open verdict deaths compared to the UK population.

### Army

**Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Army recruits enlisted in financial year 2012-13 aged 18 years old or above dropped out before completing their phase 2 training. [177103]

**Anna Soubry:** The number of Army recruits aged 18 or above who have dropped out before completing their phase 2 training during financial year (FY) 2012-13 is shown in the following table:

*Outflow from 1 April 2012 to 30 September 2013, of the untrained inflow in FY 2012-13111*

	<i>Number</i>
Officer	60
Other ranks	1,400

#### *Notes/caveats:*

1. The figures are for trained regular army only and therefore exclude Gurkhas, full-time reserve service, mobilised reserves, TA and all other reserves, but includes those personnel that have transferred from Gurkha trained army manpower to UK trained adult population.
2. Where rounding has been used, totals and sub-totals have been rounded separately and so may not appear to be the sum of their parts.
3. Figures have been rounded to 10; numbers ending in '5' have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias, "—" denotes zero or rounded to zero. Information relates to number of flows rather than the number of individuals.

#### *Source:*

Defence Statistics (Army)

**Mr Russell Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what proportion of soldiers promoted to each NCO rank of lance corporal and above in each of the last 10 years were aged under 18 at enlistment. [177271]

**Anna Soubry:** The following tables show the number and percentage of regular soldiers promoted to each non-commissioned officer rank of lance corporal and above. Information prior to 2007 is not held in the format requested.

	<i>Promoted to:</i>							
	<i>Lance corporal</i>		<i>Corporal</i>				<i>Sergeant</i>	
	<i>Under 18 on entry</i>	<i>As % of all promotions to rank</i>	<i>Under 18 on entry</i>	<i>As % of all promotions to rank</i>	<i>Under 18 on entry</i>	<i>As % of all promotions to rank</i>	<i>Under 18 on entry</i>	<i>As % of all promotions to rank</i>
2007-08	2,140	44.3	1,300	39.6	1,040	42.2		
2008-09	1,870	42.4	1,380	39.2	1,140	41.8		
2009-10	1,840	40.9	1,450	38.9	970	39.8		

	Promoted to:					
	Lance corporal		Corporal		Sergeant	
	Under 18 on entry	As % of all promotions to rank	Under 18 on entry	As % of all promotions to rank	Under 18 on entry	As % of all promotions to rank
2010-11	1,510	36.0	1,090	37.8	770	37.0
2011-12	1,420	32.8	1,220	38.4	880	38.8
2012-13	1,320	32.7	1,170	36.8	940	40.1

  

	Promoted to:					
	Staff sergeant		Warrant officer 2		Warrant officer 1	
	Under 18 on entry	As % of all promotions to rank	Under 18 on entry	As % of all promotions to rank	Under 18 on entry	As % of all promotions to rank
2007-08	860	47.5	740	58.4	380	61.9
2008-09	810	44.0	730	53.7	360	63.6
2009-10	710	43.6	590	51.9	340	59.3
2010-11	560	42.8	420	47.9	270	59.9
2011-12	610	39.6	470	42.3	270	57.4
2012-13	650	41.8	410	42.9	260	56.6

*Notes:*

1. Figures have been rounded to 10; numbers ending in "5" have been rounded to the nearest multiple of 20 to prevent systematic bias. Totals and sub-totals have been rounded separately and so may not appear to be the sum of their parts.

2. Unrounded figures are used in the calculation of percentages.

*Source:*

Defence Statistics (Army).

## Burma

**Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with ethnic civil society organisations in Burma's conflict zones before offering training to the Burmese army. [177189]

**Mr Francois:** Educating the Tatmadaw (Burmese military) in their role within a democratic society is part of a wider HMG approach to security sector reform in Burma. Officials have met with members from NGOs who have interests in Burma, in order to ensure that their concerns about our engagement are listened to and in some cases, our approach has been tailored to support their views. During Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's visit to the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, she asked for our help in instilling in the Burmese military an understanding of the value—including to themselves—of being a professional and apolitical Army. Indeed, Daw Suu particularly liked the fact that the education that we intend to provide to the Burmese military will be jointly delivered by military and civilian academic staff. We will continue to review our engagement in Burma in the light of the Tatmadaw's evolving stance on reform.

**Paul Blomfield:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how Burmese soldiers who receive training from the UK are monitored after such training to ensure they do not commit human rights abuses. [177320]

**Mr Francois:** The Tatmadaw (Burmese military) hold 25% of the seats in the Burmese Parliament on an unelected basis; our programme to influence and educate them is a key part of HMG's contribution to the process of democratic reform in Burma.

In January 2014 a team from the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom will travel to Burma to deliver a course called Managing Defence in a Wider Security Context. The academic team will provide education, to

30 members of the military and other government departments, that will explore the civil-military relationship in a democratic society, address topics such as governance, accountability and also human rights and the rule of law. The course does not offer the Tatmadaw any form of training that would enhance their combat capability.

However active post-course monitoring of participants is not practicable although through long-term dialogue, we will enquire about their progress. It is our desire that the enduring lessons of this course will form a part of the process to ensure that the Tatmadaw continues on its road to reform.

## Discrimination

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) current employees and (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176568]

(2) how many complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many of those complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176602]

(3) how many complaints of racial discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176619]

(4) how many complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176672]

(5) how many complaints of disability discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176689]

(6) how many complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176706]

**Anna Soubry:** This information is not held in the format requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

It is Ministry of Defence policy that discrimination and harassment, on any grounds, is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the workplace. The Department has robust procedures in place for individuals who feel they are being discriminated against or harassed. In addition, the annual 'Your Say' staff survey highlights where advice on such issues can be found.

#### Employment Tribunals Service

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many claims at employment tribunals have been lodged against his Department on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years; and how many such cases were found against his Department. [176551]

**Anna Soubry:** It is MOD policy that discrimination and harassment, on any grounds is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the workplace.

The Department has robust procedures in place for individuals who feel they are being discriminated against or harassed. In addition, the annual 'Your Say' Staff Survey highlights where advice on such issues can be found.

The number of claims at employment tribunal lodged against the Department or its trading funds on the ground of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years, and the outcome, is shown in the following table.

	<i>Number of employment tribunal claims on grounds of pregnancy or maternity<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Number of cases found against the Department</i>
2009	0	0
2010	0	0
2011	Fewer than five	One withdrawn—no settlement
2012	Fewer than five	Some withdrawn—settled out of court One withdrawn—no settlement
2013 up to 21 November 2013	Fewer than five	Ongoing

<sup>1</sup> All figures have been rounded.

#### Germany

**Mr Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent discussions he has had with his German counterpart regarding restrictions imposed on the support provided to the US defence communications network through use of UK military bases, facilities and personnel. [R] [176766]

**Mr Francois** [*holding answer 22 November 2013*]: No such discussions have taken place.

#### Members: Correspondence

**Mr Kevan Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 22 October 2013, *Official Report*, column 98W, on Afghanistan, when the Minister of State for the Armed Forces plans to write to the hon. Member for North Durham with the requested information. [177360]

**Mr Francois:** The information requested is being collated. I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

#### Military Intelligence

**Mr Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 11 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 414W, on military intelligence, whether the Crossbow real time imagery analysis of Full Motion Video includes imagery from intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance assets operated by the USA which are not under joint International Security Assistance Force command. [R] [176846]

**Mr Francois** [*holding answer 22 November 2013*]: No.

#### Ministry of Defence Police

**Angus Robertson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) on how many occasions he or his officials have met the Chairman of the Defence Police Federation in relation to his Department's Report on Ministry of Defence Police Pensions; [177234]

(2) whether he has any meetings planned with the Defence Police Federation Chairman before the publication of his Department's Report on Ministry of Defence Police Pensions. [177241]

**Anna Soubry:** There have been a number of meetings with the Defence Police Federation as part of the Ministry of Defence Police (MDP) Terms and Conditions of Service Review. These have included discussions regarding pensions. The MDP review team have an undertaking to meet with the Defence Police Federation informally at least every six weeks as part of that review.

A copy of the Department's final report into the likely effect of section 10 of the Public Service Pensions Act 2013 on the MDP and Defence Fire and Rescue Services will be made available to the Defence Police Federation prior to publication.

#### RAF Croughton

**Mr Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library copies of any Memoranda of Understanding and other agreements regarding arrangements under which the UK Government makes RAF Croughton available for communications activities by the US. [R] [176768]

**Mr Francois** [*holding answer 22 November 2013*]: RAF Croughton is made available for use by the United States Visiting Forces under the terms of the NATO

Status of Forces Agreement of 1951 (Cmd 9363) of January 1955, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. This document is also available on the NATO website at:

[http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official\\_texts\\_17265.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17265.htm)

There are no separate arrangements regarding RAF Croughton's role as a communications facility.

**Mr Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will introduce a moratorium on communications activities carried out by US officials at RAF Croughton and initiate a departmental review of the type and purpose of all communications activities undertaken at that base; [R] [176770]

(2) pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leeds North East of 25 March 2013, *Official Report*, column 940W, on USA, if he will review the current legal framework and procedure in place for ensuring oversight of communications activities carried out at RAF Croughton; and if he will make a statement. [R] [176844]

**Mr Francois** [*holding answer 22 November 2013*]: The Ministry of Defence remains satisfied with the arrangement that is currently in place regarding the use of RAF Croughton by the US. The Department has no plans to review this arrangement nor review the activities undertaken by the US at the base.

### RAF Police

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what partnership training takes place between RAF protection police and personnel from other nations. [176951]

**Mr Francois:** I have taken the term "RAF protection police" to mean RAF Police in this instance. Currently the RAF police conduct no partnership training with personnel from other nations.

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for International Development about possible assistance by the RAF protection police to his Department in its work overseas. [176953]

**Mr Francois:** I have taken the term "RAF protection police" to mean RAF police in this instance. No discussions have taken place.

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what joint training takes place between the RAF protection police and their equivalents in (a) the US, (b) Canada and (c) other NATO countries with regard to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear training. [176954]

**Mr Francois:** I have taken the term "RAF protection police" to mean RAF Police in this instance. No joint chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear training takes place between the RAF police and their equivalents in the US, Canada or any other NATO country. The RAF Defence Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Wing undertakes joint training, but this unit does not include any member of the RAF police.

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what the role of the RAF protection police will be after Operation Herrick in Afghanistan in 2015. [176955]

**Mr Francois:** We have yet to determine the precise nature and contribution of UK armed forces in Afghanistan post 2014, beyond our firm commitment to the Afghan National Army Officer Academy. Therefore, no decisions have yet been taken on the composition of our military capability, in Afghanistan in 2015.

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many recruits from Northern Ireland have joined the RAF protection police in each of the last five years. [176956]

**Anna Soubry:** I have taken the term "RAF protection police" to mean RAF police in this instance.

The information is not held in the format requested. The following table gives details of those recruited through the recruitment offices in Northern Ireland in each Recruiting Year since 2008-09. This gives an indication of recruitment into the RAF Police in Northern Ireland. However, this information may not provide a comprehensive picture of individuals recruited from Northern Ireland as recruits can join the services at any Careers Office irrespective of where they reside.

	<i>Number recruited</i>
2008-09	1
2009-10	1
2010-11	1
2011-12	0
2012-13	0

<sup>1</sup> 5 or fewer.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act, and our obligations in relation to the protection of confidentiality when handling personal data, this data has been rounded.

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what training takes place between Afghan police and the RAF protection police in (a) the UK and (b) Afghanistan. [176957]

**Mr Francois:** I have taken the term "RAF protection police" to mean RAF police in this instance. No training currently takes place between Afghan police and RAF police personnel in either the UK or Afghanistan.

However, the RAF police did conduct mentoring roles as part of a police advisory team in Afghanistan until the end of October 2013.

## BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

### Average Earnings

**Mr Bain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will make an assessment of the effect of skills levels on weekly or monthly wages for persons in employment in each of the last three financial years. [177071]

**Matthew Hancock:** Information on the mean hourly wage of full-time employees aged 19 to 59/64 by level of highest qualification held in England (based on the

Labour Force Survey) is published in a Supplementary Table to a Statistical First Release. This table is published at the following link:

[http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/F117C12B-B33D-4C5F-A273-F119E0F4E68A/0/LFS\\_supplementary\\_Mean\\_Hourly\\_Wage\\_April13.xls](http://www.thedataservice.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/F117C12B-B33D-4C5F-A273-F119E0F4E68A/0/LFS_supplementary_Mean_Hourly_Wage_April13.xls)

BIS Research Paper numbers 45 and 53 provide the Department's latest estimates of the wage returns to higher qualifications and to intermediate and low-level vocational qualifications respectively. These reports are published at the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-qualifications-returns-and-benefits>

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/r/11-1282-returns-intermediate-and-low-level-vocational-qualifications>

### Business: EU Law

**Caroline Nokes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps his Department is taking to assist UK businesses seeking amendment of Commission Regulation 900/2008 to correct the anomalies in the test methodology as set out in article 2(3)b of that Regulation; and if he will make a statement. [175101]

**George Eustice:** I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Imports of some processed agricultural products incur a duty based on the levels of milk fat and whey protein they contain. European Commission Regulation 900/2008 lays down the methods of analysis for determining these levels. The methods have been challenged by importers of high protein whey products who suggest that they are not reliable when applied to their particular products.

The Government is working with the European Commission to address the anomalies in the test method in Regulation 900/800 for high protein whey products where the analytical marker present from milk is used to measure milk fat levels and has been chemically modified during the production process. The Commission is looking to amend Regulation 900/08 to take account of these anomalies.

### Charity Research Support Fund

**Julie Elliott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent discussions he has had with the Higher Education Funding Council for England on funding to be allocated to the Charity Research Support Fund in (a) 2014-15 and (b) 2015-16. [177331]

**Mr Willetts:** The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, the right hon. Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), has not had any recent discussions with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) concerning the funding allocated by HEFCE towards the charity support element of Quality Related research funding.

The Government recognise the significant contribution made by charitable funders of research. The charity support element of Quality Related research funding, provided by HEFCE, recognises the public benefit arising

from research funded by charities. HEFCE was asked, as part of the science and research allocation for the spending review period 2011-15, to protect support for institutions leveraging funding from external sources, such as the charitable and business sectors. HEFCE has clearly signalled that this instruction will continue to guide its allocations through to 2014-15. It will of course be for the HEFCE board to determine the levels of future funding to deploy from within its overall research allocation.

Decisions on the strategic priorities and levels of science and research funding for 2015-16 allocated to HEFCE, the Research Councils and others will be made in due course. I cannot however pre-empt subsequent decisions which are the responsibility of the HEFCE Board about detailed distribution of this funding.

### Disabled Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what proportion of employees in his Department have a physical or learning disability, by each Civil Service pay grade. [176651]

**Jo Swinson:** 69% of BIS staff have made a diversity declaration relating to disability. Of that 69%, 9% declared a disability of some type. The latest available data for core BIS is as follows:

Grade	Yes	No	Percentage
			Prefer not to say
AA	14	50	36
AO	15.5	65.5	19
EO	8	57	35
HEO	6	58	36
SEO	7	63	30
Grade 7	4	64	32
Grade 6	4	70	26
SCS	4	64	32

The information supplied is dated 30 August, as BIS has transferred to a new system for collecting workforce information and more recent analysis is not yet available.

Although we are not currently able to differentiate between physical or learning disabilities, the introduction of the new system will allow us to make this distinction in future. We do not mandate staff to complete a diversity declaration.

We have recently begun a programme of activity and communication to encourage staff to declare their diversity information and we anticipate an improvement in the number of declarations by the end of December.

### Employment Tribunals Service

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many claims at employment tribunals have been lodged against his Department on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years; and how many such cases were found against his Department. [176547]

**Jo Swinson:** There have been no ET claims against the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills in the last five years relating to maternity or pregnancy.

#### EU External Trade

**Stephen Gilbert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how much compensation has been paid by the (a) UK and (b) EU under current investor-state dispute settlement agreements in each of the last five years. [177235]

**Michael Fallon:** The UK and EU have paid no compensation under the investor-state dispute settlement system during the last five years.

#### EU External Trade: USA

**John Healey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the answer of 12 November 2013, *Official Report*, columns 597-8W, on EU external trade: USA, (1) who the members are of the strategy group of senior level officials from relevant departments and on which dates meetings of that group have been held; and if he will place in the Library copies of the minutes of those meetings; [176543]

(2) who the members are of the European Affairs Committee of the Cabinet. [176891]

**Michael Fallon:** The strategy group chaired by Tom Scholar is one of a number of processes for co-ordinating government policy on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The senior officials that attend this group depend on the items under discussion but include directors general from key Departments such as Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, HM Treasury, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Department of Energy and Climate Change, Department for Culture, Media and Sport, Home Office, Department of Health and Ministry of Justice.

The group meets on a roughly monthly basis, although the exact frequency will depend on the pace of the TTIP negotiations. Since May it has met five times. As was the case under previous Administrations information relating to internal discussion, advice and policy development is not normally disclosed.

The revised membership of the European Affairs Committee of the Cabinet will be announced shortly in a written ministerial statement.

#### Food: Manufacturing Industries

**Mr Iain Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) how many officials in his Department work on policy relating to food and drink manufacturing; [176924]

(2) whether there is a dedicated team within his Department which deals with policy relating to food and drink manufacturing. [176925]

**Michael Fallon:** DEFRA is the lead Department in Whitehall responsible for Government relations with the UK food and drink manufacturing sector; BIS does not have a dedicated team of policy officials that deals

in this area. BIS Ministers and staff have discussions with representatives of this industry when any departmental policies may affect the sector. In addition, the Department has a Relationship Management role with key food and drink companies, including participation in virtual teams as part of UKTI's Strategic Relationship Management programme.

#### Gas Masks

**Jim Sheridan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment he has made of the risk of the inhalation of crocidolite asbestos through the use of Second World War gas masks in schools for demonstration purposes; and if he will make an estimate of the number of people involved in such demonstrations. [176795]

**Mike Penning:** I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

The risk of inhalation of asbestos fibres from a Second World War gas mask during a demonstration is dependant on the condition of the mask and how it is demonstrated. The Health and Safety Executive's assessment is that the risk of inhaling any asbestos fibres during the demonstration of Second World War gas masks in good condition is low. Nevertheless, if the mask is damaged or deteriorating there is an increased risk that asbestos fibres will be released. As all these gas masks are old, and assessing the condition of the filter is not straightforward, the Health and Safety Executive's advice is that it is not appropriate for children or teachers to handle for demonstration purposes any Second World War gas mask that could contain asbestos.

#### Heart Diseases and Cancer

**Mr Sheerman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of funding for medical research on (a) cancers and (b) coronary heart disease. [176934]

**Mr Willetts:** The Government has not made a specific assessment of the adequacy of funding into cancers and coronary heart disease. National analyses of spending on health research in the UK are undertaken and published by the UK Clinical Research Collaboration. The latest edition of the UK Health Research Analysis is available from the following link:

<http://www.ukcrc.org/publications/reports/>

#### ICT: Israel

**Dr Offord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (1) what estimate he has made of the benefit of the UK-Israel Tech Hub to the economies of Israel and the UK; [176235]

(2) in which countries there are bilateral UK tech hubs. [176236]

**Michael Fallon:** The UK-Israel Tech Hub helps economic growth in both countries by partnering UK companies with the best of Israeli innovation. UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) is tracking the benefits of the hub through a range of metrics including innovation partnerships signed,

strategic innovation benefit delivered to major UK companies, and inward investment leads generated by engaging Israeli companies. Benefits to date include:

hundreds of introductions between UK and Israeli companies resulting in several commercial partnerships for UK companies, and many more in negotiation;

help for Israeli tech companies to expand globally in partnership with the UK, including tens of inward investment leads, and active targets for UKTI;

work with major UK corporations such as GlaxoSmithKline and Arup to develop strategic innovation partnerships in Israel; and

increased awareness, and exchanging of best practice, among policy and business leaders, for instance through the visits to Israel of Joanna Shields, CEO, Tech City UK, and the Government Chief Technology Officer, Liam Maxwell.

There is one further bilateral tech hub, which is the UK-Jordan Tech Hub. This hub was unveiled at a reception hosted by King Abdullah of Jordan on 20 October 2013.

#### Industrial Disputes Independent Review

**Ian Murray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what progress has been made on setting up the Independent Review into Industrial Disputes to be chaired by Bruce Carr QC; and if he will make a statement. [177179]

**Jo Swinson:** Details of the review are being finalised and will be announced in due course. The intention is to have a balanced review involving employers and employee representatives.

#### Land Registry

**David T. C. Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills to what depth the Land Registry recognises ownership of land under a property. [177100]

**Michael Fallon:** The ownership of land will normally extend to some extent both below and above the surface. How far it extends in this vertical way will vary from one "title" to another.

Where it is sufficiently clear that the mines and minerals below the surface are included in, or are excluded from, a title which the registrar is registering for the first time, a note will be entered in the register to that effect. However, in many cases the title deeds do not make the position clear and so no such note is made.

After the title has been registered it sometimes happens that the owner is able to produce evidence to show that the title to the surface does in fact extend to the mines and minerals. In these circumstances they can apply for a note to be entered in the register to the effect that the registered title includes the mines and minerals.

Such notes might refer to the mines and minerals generally or be limited—for example, to those below a certain depth—depending on the information supplied to the registrar.

#### MentorsMe

**Toby Perkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many people making contact with the MentorsMe website in each month since its inception have done so to register to become a (a) mentor and (b) mentee. [176820]

**Matthew Hancock:** We do not collect data on the number of people who visit MentorsMe to become a mentor or mentee. However, the following table provided

by the British Bankers Association, who run MentorsMe, shows the number of people who visit the web pages on finding a mentor and becoming a mentor.

#### Finding a Mentor

Number of unique visitors landing on the url:

<http://mentorsme.co.uk/finding-a-mentor/results>

#### Becoming a Mentor

Number of unique visitors landing on the url:

<http://mentorsme.co.uk/become-a-mentor/getting-into-mentoring>

	<i>Finding a Mentor (unique page views)</i>	<i>Number Becoming a Mentor (unique page views)</i>
<i>2013</i>		
October	2,530	525
September	2,399	464
August	2,417	507
July	2,363	587
June	1,955	530
May	2,010	501
April	2,726	648
March	2,414	581
February	2,708	671
January	2,329	660
<i>2012</i>		
December	1,389	367
November	2,133	567
October	2,235	624
September	2,454	660
August	2,434	662
July	5,385	1,026
June	2,640	764
May	4,065	1,065
April	3,774	926
March	3,470	1,050
February	5,438	1,368
January	3,909	1,022
<i>2011</i>		
December	1,683	478
November	4,037	1,398
October	2,654	933
September	1,869	715
August	3,444	1,203
July	7,392	3,440

**Toby Perkins:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what the date, time and location has been of all the central meet-ups of mentors and mentees arranged through the MentorsMe programme to date. [176821]

**Matthew Hancock:** This information is not available.

#### New Businesses

**Seema Malhotra:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many (a) men and (b) women have benefited from the Start Up loan scheme in each month since April 2011. [177353]

**Matthew Hancock:** I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 28 October 2013, *Official Report*, column 365W.

### Pay Television

**Diana Johnson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills whether offices of (a) his Department and (b) its executive agencies have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case. [176422]

**Jo Swinson:** The Department has no access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service.

I have approached the chief executives of the Department's executive agencies (Insolvency Service, Companies House, National Measurement Office, Intellectual Property Office, UK Space Agency, Ordnance Survey, Met Office, Land Registry and the Skills Funding Agency) and they will respond to the hon. Member directly.

*Letter from Dr Richard Judge, dated 20 November 2013:*

The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills has asked me to reply to your question, whether offices of (a) his Department and (b) its executive agencies have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case.

The Insolvency Service does not have access to Sky Sports or any other premium sports television service.

*Letter from Tim Moss, dated 20 November 2013:*

I am replying on behalf of Companies House to your Parliamentary Question tabled 19 November 2013, UIN 176422 to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

Companies House does not subscribe to Sky Sports or any equivalent premium sports television service.

*Letter from Kim Thorneywork, dated 20 November 2013:*

Thank you for your question in asking the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, whether offices of (a) his Department and (b) its executive agencies have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case. (176422).

Please be advised that the Agency does not have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service and therefore there is no cost to the public purse.

*Letter from Peter Mason, dated 21 November 2013:*

I am responding in respect of the National Measurement Office (NMO), an executive agency of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), to your Parliamentary Question tabled on 19 November 2013 asking whether offices of BIS and its executive agencies have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service.

This Agency uses the single television installed in our offices only for the purpose of accessing news services and we do not subscribe to Sky Sports or any equivalent premium sports television service.

*Letter from Dr Vanessa Lawrence CB, dated 20 November 2013:*

As Director General and Chief Executive of Ordnance Survey, I have been asked to respond to your Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, "whether offices of (a) his Department and (b) its executive agencies have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case".

The answer is that Ordnance Survey does not subscribe to any television channels. All of the television services used by Ordnance Survey are free to air and thus the only cost incurred is that of the standard television licence.

I hope this information is helpful.

*Letter from David Parker, dated 21 November 2013:*

Thank you for your question addressed to the Secretary of State for the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills asking whether offices of (a) his Department and (b) its executive agencies have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case.

The UK Space Agency is an Executive Agency of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills and its offices and premises are Polaris House, Swindon, One Victoria Street, London and the Electron Building, Harwell. None of these offices have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television services.

*Letter from Ed Lester, dated 22 November 2013:*

I write on behalf of Land Registry in response to Parliamentary Question 176422 tabled on 19 November 2013 which asked the following:

To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, whether offices of (a) his Department and (b) its executive agencies have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case.

I can confirm that Land Registry has not purchased any premium sports TV packages.

I hope that you find this information useful.

*Letter from John Alty, dated 25 November 2013:*

I am responding in respect of the Intellectual Property Office to your Parliamentary Question tabled on 19 November 2013, to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) is an Executive Agency and Trading Fund of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. The IPO does not provide access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service.

*Letter from John Hirst, dated 25 November 2013:*

I am replying on behalf of the Met Office to your Parliamentary Question tabled on 19 November 2013, UIN 176422, to the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

The Met Office does not provide access to Sky Sports or any equivalent premium sports television service.

I hope this helps.

### Post Office

**Ian Murray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what funds from his department's budget have been allocated to Post Office Ltd in each of the next three years. [177344]

**Jo Swinson:** Funding of £330 million has been allocated for 2014-15 to modernise and support the post office network. An announcement on funding for the subsequent period will be made shortly.

### School Milk

**David T. C. Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent assessment he has made of the role of the Nursery Milk Scheme in ensuring that children from low income families have access to a healthy diet. [177130]

**Dr Poulter:** I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department of Health.

No recent assessment has been made of the specific health benefits of the Nursery Milk Scheme for children from low income families. However Government guidelines, published by the Food Standards Agency, recommend that all healthy individuals should consume moderate amounts of milk and dairy products and national health service advice recognises the benefits of calcium in dairy foods for strong teeth and bones.

This is why the Government has restated our commitment to maintaining free nursery milk as a universal benefit for all under-fives in nursery and child care settings within the June 2012 consultation document about modernising the Nursery Milk Scheme.

### Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what proportion of employees in his Department is (a) white British and (b) black, Asian and from other minority ethnic groups, by each civil service pay grade. [176633]

**Jo Swinson:** The latest available information on the ethnicity of BIS employees by pay grade is:

	White	BME	Percentage Undeclared
AA	36	18	46
AO	35	23	42
EO	29	20	51
HEO	34	13	53
SEO	40	9	50
G7	39	7	54
G6	48	5	47
SCS	49	3	48

BIS encourages all staff to declare their diversity information so that we can ensure our culture and policies are inclusive and work equally well for everyone. However, this is not mandatory and some people simply prefer not to do so.

### Travel

**Chris Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what the cost of travel within the UK was for his Department in each year since 2010; and how much of this was spent on (a) hire cars, (b) helicopter hire, (c) hotel accommodation and (d) subsistence. [176828]

**Jo Swinson:** The cost of travel within the UK for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (Core Department including UKTI) each year since 2010 is as follows:

	£
2010/11	1,822,985
2011/12	2,713,914
2012/13	3,210,695
2013/14	<sup>1</sup> 1,644,401

<sup>1</sup> April to September.

Included within these figures the following was spent on:

	Hire cars (£)
2010/11	41,217
2011/12	48,902
2012/13	47,752
2013/14	<sup>1</sup> 27,326

<sup>1</sup> April to September

	Helicopter hire (£)
2010/11	0
2011/12	90

	Helicopter hire (£)
2012/13	0
2013/14	0

	Hotel Accommodation (£)
2010/11	704,973
2011/12	750,215
2012/13	824,182
2013/14	<sup>1</sup> 374,174

<sup>1</sup> April to September

	Subsistence (£)
2010/11	120,875
2011/12	93,139
2012/13	114,011
2013/14	<sup>1</sup> 58,055

<sup>1</sup> April to September

## JUSTICE

### Crime Prevention

**Dan Jarvis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice which early intervention crime-prevention schemes have received reduced funding from his Department since May 2010. [173607]

**Norman Baker** [holding answer 4 November 2013]: I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Home Department.

Funding streams provided by the Home Office to local areas for crime reduction and prevention have frequently been multi-purpose, with discretion given to local areas as to how to use funds to achieve desired outcomes. It is not possible therefore to disaggregate precise amounts spent on early intervention crime prevention initiatives over the period in question. At the same time, specific funding streams have been consolidated within the police main grant to enable Police and Crime Commissioners flexibility to allocate funding to locally identified policing and crime, priorities as appropriate. Alongside the main police grant, for 2013-14 a transitional Community Safety Fund of £90 million (which comprises some previously separate funding streams) has been established to assist Police and Crime Commissioners in funding local crime and policing projects. While this is not specifically designated for early intervention programmes some local schemes may have an early intervention element. It is intended that this fund will be incorporated into the police main grant from 2015/16. In addition, in 2013/14, £400,000 has been provided to fund Advocates for young people, and £700,000 provided to tackle knives, gangs and youth violence (neither of these schemes was running in May 2010).

### Criminal Proceedings

**Dan Jarvis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the average time taken is for each type of Class A criminal offence to reach court. [172518]

**Mr Vara:** Table 1 shows the average (mean) number of days from offence to first listing at court for all completed Class A criminal cases, England and Wales, annually 2010-012, quarterly Q2 2010 - Q2 2013.

Caution should be taken when interpreting averages based on a small numbers of defendants. The relatively low frequency of Class A offences can lead then to be more susceptible to the impact of individual outliers (e.g. a single historic case or a particularly lengthy investigation).

The time between an offence being committed and subsequently reaching court encompasses a number of distinct stages (e.g. reporting, investigation and charge) and associated criminal justice organisation. As such variations in duration are largely driven by the timing of initial reporting, the relative seriousness of the offence and the possible complexity of a case.

*Average (mean) number of days taken from offence to first listing for completed criminal cases in England and Wales, annually 2010-12, quarterly Q2 2010—Q2 2013<sup>1</sup>*  
2, 3, 4

Year	Quarter	Defendants	Murder <sup>5</sup>		Defendants	Manslaughter <sup>6</sup>	
			Offence to charge or laying of information	Charge or laying of information to first listing		Offence to charge or laying of information	Charge or laying of information to first listing
2010 Q2-4 <sup>11</sup>	—	335	71	2	53	132	5
2011	—	546	91	2	59	205	17
2012	—	574	100	2	75	262	13
2010	Q2	122	65	1	20	151	3
	Q3	98	76	2	15	171	6
	Q4	115	74	1	18	79	7
2011	Q1	141	73	2	25	187	19
	Q2	103	150	1	6	102	13
	Q3	122	67	3	12	220	31
	Q4	180	87	2	16	259	5
2012	Q1	117	38	1	13	227	9
	Q2	117	130	6	18	334	22
	Q3	180	131	1	27	290	13
	Q4	160	87	1	17	165	9
2013	Q1	97	88	1	15	275	7
		165	75	3	7	316	13

Year	Quarter	Defendants	Infanticide <sup>7</sup>		Defendants	Child destruction <sup>8</sup>	
			Offence to charge or laying of information	Charge or laying of information to first listing		Offence to charge or laying of information	Charge or laying of information to first listing
2010 Q2-4 <sup>11</sup>	—	1	83	2	—	—	—
2011	—	—	—	—	1	1	1
2012	—	—	—	—	1	4	1
2010	Q2	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Q3	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Q4	1	83	2	—	—	—
2011	Q1	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Q2	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Q3	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Q4	—	—	—	1	1	1
2012	Q1	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Q2	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Q3	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Q4	—	—	—	1	4	1
2013	Q1	—	—	—	—	—	—

Year	Quarter	Defendants	Soliciting to commit murder <sup>9</sup>		Defendants	Attempt to cause explosion likely to endanger life or property <sup>10</sup>	
			Offence to charge or laying of information	Charge or laying of information to first listing		Offence to charge or laying of information	Charge or laying of information to first listing
2010 Q2-4 <sup>11</sup>	—	21	75	1	2	80	1
2011	—	27	192	2	7	125	7
2012	—	24	198	1	4	1	17
2010	Q2	8	95	1	—	—	—
	Q3	3	43	1	1	158	0
	Q4	10	70	1	1	1	1

Year	Quarter	Soliciting to commit murder <sup>9</sup>			Attempt to cause explosion likely to endanger life or property <sup>10</sup>		
		Defendants	Offence to charge or laying of information	Charge or laying of information to first listing	Defendants	Offence to charge or laying of information	Charge or laying of information to first listing
2011	Q1	3	346	10	4	148	7
	Q2	12	65	1	2	142	8
	Q3	4	112	2	1	0	2
	Q4	8	367	1	—	—	—
2012	Q1	3	188	1	—	—	—
	Q2	10	287	1	1	1	25
	Q3	6	187	1	2	2	22
	Q4	5	39	1	1	1	0
2013	Q1	3	42	1	1	5	1

“—” = Nil

<sup>1</sup> Excludes breaches and cases with an offence to completion time greater than 10 years.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics are sourced from the CREST linked court data and included around 95% of completed cases.

<sup>3</sup> Only one offence is counted for each defendant in the case. If two or more cases complete on the same day, the case with the longest duration is included.

<sup>4</sup> Included all criminal cases which have received a verdict and concluded in the specified time period, in either the magistrates' courts or the Crown court.

<sup>5</sup> “Murder” includes offences relating to victims aged under and over one year old under Common Law; Offences against the Person Act 1861, S.9; International Criminal Court Act 2001, SS.51 and 53.

<sup>6</sup> “Manslaughter” includes offences under Common Law; Offences against the Person Act 1861, S.9.

<sup>7</sup> “Infanticide” includes offences under Infanticide Act 1938, S.1(1).

<sup>8</sup> “Child destruction” includes offences under Infant Life (Preservation) Act 1929, S.1.

<sup>9</sup> “Soliciting to commit murder” relating to victims aged under and over one year old under Common Law; Offences against the Person Act 1861, S.4; International Criminal Court Act 2001, SS.51 and 53.

<sup>10</sup> “Attempt to/cause explosion likely to endanger life or property” under Explosive Substances Act 1883, S.2; Explosive Substances Act 1883, S.3; Malicious Damage Act 1861, SS.35, 36, 47 and 48; Criminal Damage Act 1971, S.1(2).

<sup>11</sup> TAR figures are only available from April 2010, so data for 2010 is presented above for Q2 to Q4 only.

Source:

Criminal Court Statistics, Justice Statistics Analytical Services (REF: PQ 172518)

### Defamation Act 2013

**Sir Edward Garnier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice when the provisions of the Defamation Act 2013 not already in force will be implemented; and if he will make a statement. [R] [176749]

**Mr Vara:** As my right hon. Friend Lord McNally announced in the House of Lords on 19 November 2013, *Official Report*, column GC377, we intend to bring the Defamation Act 2013 into force on 1 January 2014.

### Employment Tribunals Service

**Ian Murray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice in how many employment tribunal cases costs orders were issued in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12, (c) 2012-13 and (d) 2013-14 to date. [176174]

**Mr Vara:** The number of cost orders that have been made by employment tribunals annually is published by the Ministry of Justice as Official Statistics. The most recent such statistical release is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employment-tribunal-and-employment-appeal-tribunal-statistics-gb>

**Ian Murray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice in how many cases an employment tribunal judge used case management powers in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12, (c) 2012-13 and (d) 2013-14 to date. [176175]

**Mr Vara:** The Employment Tribunals (Constitution and Rules of Procedure) Regulations 2013 provide employment judges/tribunals with a range of case management powers including in respect of disclosure of documents; attendance at hearing; and strike out and deposit orders.

HM Courts and Tribunal Service staff are not required to collate data about the exercise of judicial case management powers. To provide it, it would be necessary to retrieve it manually from hard copy files, orders and/or judgments. Accordingly, this information could be provided only at a disproportionate cost by manually checking hard copy tribunal files or judgments.

**Ian Murray:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many employment tribunal cases in each region were overlisted from April 2012 to April 2013. [176183]

**Mr Vara:** The listing and management of hearings in employment tribunals (including the taking of decisions about cancellation, postponement or adjournment of cases) is a judicial function.

In accordance with judicial listing policy, it is possible that some cases listed for hearing on a particular day might not be reached during the course of that day. Such cases are then re-listed for an alternative day.

HM Courts and Tribunals Service staff are not required to collate and record information about these cases. Those that do record relevant information do not report the data in a manner that can be collated and reported on centrally. Accordingly, it is not possible to provide the information requested without manually retrieving and collating the information from hard copy tribunal files or other records at disproportionate cost.

### Energy

**Ian Swales:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what progress he has made on improving the energy efficiency of his Department. [175989]

**Mr Vara:** The Ministry of Justice has a programme of initiatives to tackle its greenhouse gas emissions, including capital investment on energy conservation

measures, energy surveys and optimising building management systems; working with facilities management providers to improve day to day building management, conducting behavioural change campaigns and ongoing maintenance.

Details of the Ministry of Justice's performance are published in its Annual Report and Accounts.

### Forest Bank Prison

**Kate Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice (1) what the turnover of education staff has been at HM Prison Forest Bank since it was opened; [176510]

(2) how many days of sick leave have been taken by education staff at HM Prison Forest Bank in each year since 2010; [176511]

(3) what steps have been taken at HM Prison Forest Bank to improve teaching standards and conditions since the most recent inspection by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons; [176513]

(4) what steps he is taking to ensure education staff employed at HM Prison Forest Bank are provided with (a) sufficient training and (b) opportunities for career development. [176514]

**Jeremy Wright:** The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) does not hold the detailed staffing information requested. HMP Forest Bank is managed by Sodexo Justice Services (Sodexo) and the education staff employed there are employees of Sodexo or other contracted organisations.

Following the inspection by the HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, an action plan was prepared based on the areas identified for improvement. The prison has completed the actions identified by the inspection and is continuing to seek ways to improve the delivery of education.

As the employer of teaching staff, Sodexo is responsible for providing them with training and career opportunities. Sodexo has stated its commitment to investing in its education staff, to ensure each member reaches his or her full potential.

I understand that teaching staff at Forest Bank have full access to Sodexo's corporate learning and development opportunities, as well as to training from wider organisations, to enable them to deliver effective teaching.

### Parole

**Steve Rotheram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many sex offenders currently awaiting parole are considered to be (a) high risk, (b) medium risk and (c) low risk; and how many sex offenders are enrolled in the multi-agency public protection arrangements system in prisons in England. [176995]

**Jeremy Wright:** Information on the risk levels of sex offenders currently awaiting parole could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The required information is not held centrally on one system and would require matching together information from a number of different operational systems to identify the parole status and risk assessment of each offender. The data on parole status are held on the Public Protection Unit Database; the data on the risk of serious harm assessment are held on the Offender Assessment System (OASys) and further details required for accurate matching are held on the prison case management system (PNOMIS). Data from

these systems are available centrally but they are not routinely matched. The information requested is held together on local individual case files but these are not available centrally.

All sex offenders who have been convicted of a specified sexual offence and/or to whom the notification requirements under part 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 apply will be subject to supervision under Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements following release from prison custody for as long as they are on licence or for the length of their notification requirement, whichever is longer.

**Steve Rotheram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many offenders who have been released by the Parole Board in each of the last five years have completed an accredited offender behaviour programme. [176996]

**Jeremy Wright:** In order to provide the number of offenders released by the Parole Board in each of the last five years who had completed an accredited offending behaviour programme, a manual check of all released offenders' files would be required as these data are not available centrally. That would mean that the information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The completion of an accredited offending behaviour programme in itself is not a requirement for release. In deciding whether to direct the release of offenders who have completed their minimum period of imprisonment, the Parole Board will consider all the available evidence about an offender's current risk of harm. Thus, the Board will consider not only whether offenders have completed relevant targets on the sentence plan, but also their behaviour while in custody, current risk assessments and, finally, the proposed risk management plan for their release.

### Pay

**Stephen Barclay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many successful prosecutions there have been for failure to comply with wage slip regulations in each of the last three years. [176092]

**Jeremy Wright:** The Ministry of Justice holds no record of prosecutions pertaining to wage slip regulations, as such it is not possible to provide the information requested.

### Prisons and Probation

**Nick de Bois:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what real-terms changes in spending on (a) prisons and (b) the Probation Service he plans will take place between 2012 and 2017. [176027]

**Jeremy Wright:** The following table provides a direct resource expenditure on public and private sector prisons for 2012-13 and draws a comparison with the budget figures for 2013-14. It also provides the outturn and budget figures across the two years on probation trusts.

Please note that the allocated budgets for 2013-14 may be subject to change during the financial year. Due to changes in priorities, scope and accounting treatment the figures may not be directly comparable. The 2012-13 outturn on prisons has been adjusted to reflect this.

	2012-13 Outturn (£ million)	2013-14 Budget (£ million)	Variance (£ million)	Variance (%)
Prisons	2,196,121	2,015,116	-181,005	-8
Probation	305,859	798,982	-6,877	-1

I am unable to provide information for future years as allocations to MOJ's business groups beyond 2013-14 have not been agreed and because settlements beyond spending round 2013 (2015-16) have yet to be negotiated.

### Prisons: Security

**Sadiq Khan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many incidents of lost keys in each prison have been reported in each month since May 2010. [176847]

**Jeremy Wright:** While the number of incidents of key loss reported by prison establishments is recorded centrally, it has not been possible to provide the data for this answer in the time available. I will write to the right hon. Member as soon as the information has been produced.

### Probation

**Richard Harrington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how offenders will be moved between community rehabilitation companies and the new National Probation Service; and what steps he has taken to mitigate other potential problems that may arise from urgent reclassification of offender risk levels under the Transforming Rehabilitation proposals. [173593]

**Jeremy Wright:** Protecting the public is our top priority. Under our reforms, management of the offenders who pose the highest risk of serious harm, or who have committed the most serious offences, will be the responsibility of the National Probation Service (NPS), and management of medium and low risk offenders will be the responsibility of the Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs).

CRCs will be required to refer a offender to the NPS if they believe the risk of serious harm is escalating to high. If a CRC refers a low or medium risk offender to the NPS, and the NPS decides that the risk of serious harm has escalated to high, the responsibility for the management of the case will transfer to the NPS. These case transfers will happen in a way that minimises the chance of destabilising the offender. For example, the CRC could continue to be involved in delivering interventions to the offender even though the case responsibility has moved.

The NPS and CRCs will be expected to work closely together and we expect that partnership working would often be facilitated by co-location.

### Roads: Accidents

**Jim Fitzpatrick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many prosecutions of drivers accused of causing the death of a cyclist have resulted in convictions in each of the last three years; and what sentence was handed down in each such case. [176266]

**Jeremy Wright:** The Government has made sure that significant penalties are available for those who cause death on the roads; the most serious offences of causing death by dangerous driving or causing death while under the influence of alcohol or drugs are punishable by up to 14 years imprisonment, causing death by careless driving is punishable by five years. There is no specific offence of causing the death of a cyclist so those who cause the death of a cyclist through dangerous or careless driving will be charged with the relevant offence.

The Ministry of Justice Court Proceedings Database holds information on defendants proceeded against, found guilty and sentenced for criminal offences in England and Wales. This database holds information on offences provided by the statutes under which proceedings are brought but not the specific circumstances of each case. It is not possible to identify from these centrally held data whether or not the victim of any offence of causing death while driving for which a defendant was proceeded against was a cyclist. This detailed information may be held by the courts on individual case files which due to their size and complexity are not reported to Justice Statistics Analytical Services. The information requested can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

### Young Offenders

**Dan Jarvis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the average time was between arrest and sentencing for a young offender in each year since 2009-10. [176384]

**Jeremy Wright:** The average time from arrest to completion for youth criminal cases since 2010-11 can be viewed in the following table.

Completed cases include those sentenced, acquitted and withdrawn. It is not possible from centrally collated data to identify separately those sentenced.

The time between an offender being arrested and subsequently reaching completion in court encompasses a number of distinct stages, (for example investigation, charge and hearing at the court) and associated criminal justice organisations. Variations in duration are affected by the complexity and seriousness of a case both in terms of charging an offender and subsequent case management.

Table 1: Average number of days taken from arrest to completion for youth criminal cases in England and Wales, by financial years 2010-11 to 2012-13<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>.

	All completed criminal cases <sup>5</sup>	
	Defendants	Arrest to completion <sup>6</sup>
	Number	Average <sup>7</sup>
2010-11	97,357	45
2011-12	80,411	45
2012-13	60,757	46

<sup>1</sup> Excludes breaches and cases with an offence to completion time greater than 10 years.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics are sourced from the CREST linked court data and included around 95% of completed cases.

<sup>3</sup> Only one offence is counted for each defendant in the case. If two or more cases complete on the same day, the case with the longest duration is included.

<sup>4</sup> Included all criminal cases which have received a verdict and concluded in the specified time period, in either the magistrates' courts or the Crown court.

<sup>5</sup> TAR figures are only available from April 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Around 15% of defendant do not have an arrest date.

<sup>7</sup> The median

**Dan Jarvis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what measures he has introduced to reduce young offending in the 100 most deprived UK communities.

[177154]

**Jeremy Wright:** Preventing young people from offending is a Government priority. Considerable progress has been made in recent years in reducing the number of first time entrants to the criminal justice system, including through the work of youth offending teams. First time entrants to the youth justice system peaked in the 12 months ending June 2007 at 105,482 and has decreased by 76% since then to 25,332 in the 12 months ending June 2013.

The Department and the Youth Justice Board (YJB) do not produce their own deprivation index. The Department for Communities and Local Government publishes a number of deprivation indices, one of which is the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). This provides a comprehensive overall indicator of deprivation by geographical area and is widely used to identify the most deprived areas in England. The latest was published in 2011, for the year 2010. The index scores Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) and the table in the following link provides the details of the top 100 most deprived LSOAs:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6872/1871524.xls](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6872/1871524.xls)

The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) monitors the youth justice system in England and Wales and identifies, promotes and disseminates good practice to youth justice practitioners.

Youth offending teams (YOTs) are multi-disciplinary teams which deliver youth justice services in the local area. Each local authority or two or more local authorities acting together are required to establish a YOT to provide youth justice services to young people in their area. YOTs have the discretion to apply measures they consider will best address the needs of the young people in their area. In doing so they will be informed by the YJB's published advice and guidance including the information within the YJB's effective practice library. This contains examples of practice submitted to the YJB by the sector which are categorised according to the strength of the evidence to support their effectiveness.

#### Young Offenders: Human Trafficking

**Mr Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice with reference to the answer of 18 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 818W, on young offenders, when he expects his Department to hold full offence data on the number of young people in custody for human trafficking offences.

[176484]

**Jeremy Wright:** The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) collects data on the offence for which young people in custody have been sentenced.

Human trafficking was not recorded as a separate offence within the database used for data collection between 2008-09 and 2011-12. Any cases where the young person was in custody for human trafficking would be under the category "other" and cannot be extracted. A new database, which separately identifies human trafficking offences, has been in use since 2012-13 for data collection. Implementation issues have resulted

in incomplete offence data and therefore it is not currently possible to answer reliably the question with regard to the number of young people in custody for human trafficking offences.

It may be possible to provide information relating to the 2013-14 period after the end of the financial year, but we will need to assess the quality of the data when it is available before we can determine whether it is reliable to use.

#### Youth Justice Board

**Dan Jarvis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what the budget was of the Youth Justice Board in each year since 2009-10.

[176385]

**Jeremy Wright:** The budget of the Youth Justice Board has reduced from £501 million in 2009-10 to £311 million in 2013-14, in line with the reduction in spending on the youth estate: the number of young people in custody has reduced from an average of 2,418 in 2009-10 to an average of 1,561 in 2012-13.

The following table shows the YJB's budget every year since 2009-10:

YJB budget	Fiscal resource (£ million)				
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
MOJ/DFE	468	434	390	358	311
Home Office	33	31	15	7	—
Total	501	465	405	365	311

The YJB was previously sponsored jointly by the Ministry of Justice and the Department of Education (DFE), with both Departments providing funding. In 2010-11 sponsorship for the YJB transferred to the Ministry of Justice, with the Home Office continuing to contribute funding in that year and the following year.

#### FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

##### China

**Chris Williamson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise the issue of forced organ harvesting (a) in general and (b) from Falun Gong practitioners in China with the Chinese government.

[177111]

**Mr Swire:** I refer the hon. Member to my previous answer dated 5 November 2013 to the hon. Member for Chesterfield (Toby Perkins), *Official Report*, column 107W.

##### Climate Change

**Kerry McCarthy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the contribution made by projects funded by the Prosperity Fund to tackling climate change in emerging economies.

[177202]

**Mr Swire:** Over half of the Prosperity Fund has been dedicated to tackling climate change in emerging economies. Notable examples include award-winning work on a software tool for comparing long-term energy choices which China and many other countries have adopted; the support for a new Climate Change Law in Mexico

and the cooperation of the launch of new energy efficiency targets for industry in India. The Fund remains under regular review to ensure that it gives the best possible value for money for the British taxpayer.

**Kerry McCarthy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had on the future of the Commonwealth green capital fund; and if he will make a statement. [177213]

**Mr Swire:** I believe that the hon. Lady is referring to the Green Climate Fund, which was discussed at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, held earlier this month in Colombo. Although it is not a Commonwealth initiative, Heads recognised the importance of the Fund for helping developing countries to respond to climate change. We look forward to further progress towards the Fund's implementation at future meetings of the Green Climate Fund Board.

**Kerry McCarthy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consideration he has given to expanding the number of target countries supported by funding from the Prosperity Fund. [177278]

**Mr Swire:** The Prosperity Fund this year is worth £19.6 million and supports over 300 projects in 29 target countries. The qualifying countries are reviewed annually and the Fund remains open to outstanding projects from outside these countries.

The Fund supports efforts to create the conditions for sustainable global growth, to ensure access to resources and to create more open global markets. It is a crucial part of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's contribution to the Government's growth agenda and has given notable support to our economic objectives overseas—ranging from, for example, supporting research for the People's Bank of China on the internationalisation of its currency, the renminbi; supporting the Mexican Federal Commission on changes in competition rules, which saved £300 million of Mexican public money and opened up the telecommunications sector; to helping Colombia's President Santos to launch a high level anti-corruption reporting system, in line with OECD standards.

### Disabled Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of employees in his Department have a physical or learning disability, by each Civil Service pay grade. [176659]

**Hugh Robertson:** All Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) staff have been encouraged to provide personal diversity data—including on disability—to be held anonymously. Provision of this information is voluntary and to date this record is not completed by enough staff to provide an accurate overall picture of those with physical or learning disabilities. The FCO Diversity and Equality Report 2013 lists the percentage of employees who declare having a disability by grade and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fco-diversity-and-equality-report-2013>

Please note that this report does not go into any detail about the disability.

### Discrimination

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) how many complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity have been lodged against employees of his Department or its Executive agencies by (a) current employees and (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176572]

(2) how many complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its Executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many of those complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176606]

(3) how many complaints of racial discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its Executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176623]

(4) how many complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its Executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176676]

(5) how many complaints of disability discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176693]

(6) how many complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176710]

**Hugh Robertson:** Over the five years in question (2008-13) there have been no formal complaints from Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) UK based staff or the staff of its Executive agencies in relation to age, race, homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment. There have also been no formal complaints of discrimination in relation to pregnancy or maternity made by FCO UK-based staff, the staff of its Executive agencies or prospective employees, and only one employment tribunal case lodged that was subsequently withdrawn.

The number of formal complaints relating to disability and sexual discrimination or harassment in each of these years is five or less. However in line with Cabinet Office guidance the FCO cannot disclose more detailed information on these cases, including whether they resulted in misconduct, for reasons of confidentiality, and to avoid the possibility of revealing the identities of individual staff.

In addition to this, records for complaints made by employees against locally employed members of staff or by other individuals are not held centrally, and to obtain these figures would incur disproportionate costs.

### Gibraltar

**Mr Dodds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the 2006 Cordoba Agreement and the commitment of each of the signatures to fulfil their commitments. [176517]

**Mr Lidington:** The 2006 Cordoba Agreement was a positive step forward in improving relations between the Governments of the United Kingdom, Gibraltar and Spain in respect of Gibraltar. We stand by the commitments made under the Cordoba Agreement, including on aviation, which is the key aspect of the agreement which Spain is now seeking to resile from.

It is important that Gibraltar is included in all EU aviation legislation. We cannot accept a return to the pre-2006 Cordoba Agreement practice of suspending Gibraltar airport from EU aviation measures. We have raised this with the Spanish Government and the European Commission and we are continuing to seek a mutually acceptable solution.

### Gibraltar: Spain

**Mr Dodds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many meetings he has had with (a) the Spanish Ambassador and (b) his Spanish counterpart on Spain's relations with Gibraltar in the last six months. [176505]

**Mr Lidington:** The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), has not met the Spanish ambassador to discuss Gibraltar in the past six months. On the two occasions when the Spanish ambassador has been summoned to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office during this period, he has been seen by the Permanent or Acting Permanent Under-Secretary, in line with diplomatic protocol for the summoning of ambassadors. The Secretary of State called the Spanish Foreign Minister on 7 August to raise our serious concerns regarding the ongoing situation at the Gibraltar-Spain border. The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister and I also spoke to our Spanish counterparts during August, and the Prime Minister raised the issue again during a meeting with the Spanish Prime Minister at the G20 summit in September.

**Mr Dodds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of proposals by the Spanish government to introduce a fee to cross the border to Gibraltar. [176506]

**Mr Lidington:** I refer the right hon. Member to my response of 29 October 2013, *Official Report*, column 413W.

**Mr Dodds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking at (a) an EU, (b) an UN and (c) a bilateral level to reduce checks imposed by the Spanish government at its border with Gibraltar. [176739]

**Mr Lidington:** The Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), and I have all called our Spanish counterparts to protest in the strongest terms about delays at the Gibraltar-Spain border. We most recently made clear our concerns when we summoned the Spanish ambassador to the UK on 19 November and we protest formally to the Spanish Government about all delays experienced at the Gibraltar-Spain border.

In August, the Prime Minister asked European Commission President Barroso to send a monitoring mission to Gibraltar-Spain border. We welcome the fact that the Commission sent a mission on 25 September and subsequently, on 15 November, made recommendations for the Spanish Government to improve the functioning of the border. We fully expect Spain to act on those recommendations without delay.

The border between Spain and Gibraltar is an EU border governed by EU law, and we have therefore taken action primarily at a bilateral and EU level. We do not rule out raising this at the UN in future.

**Mr Dodds:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the European Commission's ruling on the legality of checks by Spanish border authorities at its border with Gibraltar. [176741]

**Mr Lidington:** We welcome the fact that the Commission has put Spain on notice and has made recommendations to the Spanish Government to improve the functioning of the border which, if implemented, would reduce delays. We expect the Spanish Government to act on these recommendations without delay.

It is unsurprising that the European Commission was unable to conclude that EU law has been infringed: the border operated much more smoothly than normal during the Commission visit. This is not the same as confirmation that Spain has acted lawfully.

We remain confident that Spain has acted—and continues to act—unlawfully, and we will continue to provide evidence of that to the European Commission.

### Haiti

**Mr Stewart Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of (a) human rights and (b) representative democracy in Haiti; and if he will make a statement. [176777]

**Mr Swire:** The UN Independent Expert issued a report on human rights in Haiti in February 2013. The British Government agrees with the recommendations in that report, particularly those around strengthening the rule of law, guaranteeing the economic and social rights of Haitian citizens and addressing gender-based violence. The UK remains particularly concerned by the delay to local and senate elections and the implications for representative democracy in Haiti. I raised these concerns with the President and Foreign Minister of Haiti during my visit to open the new British embassy in Port-au-Prince in June and, more recently, in writing to the President of the Haitian Senate.

### Middle East

**Richard Burden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment his Department has made of the implications of the proposed Mount Scopus Slopes National Park for (a) the Palestinian neighbourhoods of Al-Issawiya and At-Tur and (b) the ongoing peace negotiations.

[176499]

**Hugh Robertson:** Our officials in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem report that, if implemented, the Mount Scopus Slopes National Park plans would designate the eastern slopes of Mount Scopus—land which is in the most part privately owned by Palestinian residents of Issawiyeh and At-Tur—as a national park. The park would have serious implications for the bordering Palestinian neighbourhoods, which have no further space for natural growth in other directions.

Recent settlement announcements have had a detrimental impact on trust between the parties and have led to the Palestinian negotiating team offering their resignations. During my recent visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, I made clear our concerns about these announcements and our opposition to settlements.

We have raised our strong concerns over the Mount Scopus Slopes National Park plans with Israeli ministers and officials.

### Pay Television

**Diana Johnson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether offices of (a) his Department and (b) its executive agencies have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case.

[176431]

**Mr Lidington:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and its executive agencies do not subscribe to Sky Sports or premium channels of any kind in the UK. This does not capture subscriptions sourced locally overseas as it would incur disproportionate cost to obtain this information.

Sky Sports 1 is one of the eight channels provided via the Palace of Westminster feed and while some Departments in the FCO do have access to it; the FCO does not subscribe nor pay for it.

### Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of employees in his Department are (a) female and (b) male, by each civil service pay grade.

[176589]

**Hugh Robertson:** The proportion of employees by gender and grade can be found in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Diversity and Equality Report 2013, see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fco-diversity-and-equality-report-2013>

The specific statistics on this are set out as follows:

Grade	Percentage	
	Female	Male
Senior management	23	77
D7	34	66

Grade	Percentage	
	Female	Male
D6	36	64
C5	34	66
C4	42	58
B3	53	47
A2	59	41
A1	52	48
Overall	43	57

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of employees in his Department is (a) white British and (b) black, Asian and from other minority ethnic groups, by each Civil Service pay grade.

[176641]

**Hugh Robertson:** The proportion of employees by ethnicity and grade can be found in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Diversity and Equality Report 2013:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fco-diversity-and-equality-report-2013>

The specific statistics on this are set out as follows:

Grade	Percentage of Declared Ethnic Minority	
	Female	Male
Senior Management		4
D7		6
D6		4
C5		8
C4		8
B3		17
A2		30
A1		21
Overall		12

### Syria

**Dr Offord:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make an assessment of the number of Syrian refugees treated at the Galilee Hospital in the Golan Heights area of Israel.

[176790]

**Hugh Robertson:** According to information from the Israeli National Security Council, approximately 300 Syrians have been treated in the Western Galilee Hospital. The hospital is situated in the Israeli town of Nahiriya, not in the Occupied Golan Heights.

**Keith Vaz:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will investigate the use of frozen Syrian government assets for humanitarian aid for the population of that country.

[176791]

**Hugh Robertson:** I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave on 25 November, *Official Report*, column 79W.

## ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

### Renewables Obligation

**Caroline Flint:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what the monetary value of renewable obligation certificates received by (a)

Centrica plc, (b) EDF Energy plc, (c) E.ON, (d) Iberdrola, (e) RWE AG and (f) SSE plc was in each year from 2005 to date. [176744]

**Michael Fallon:** Renewable obligation certificates (ROCs) are issued to accredited generators by Ofgem on the basis of their reported renewable generation. Information on the number of ROCs issued to all accredited stations is published in the ROC register. This is available on Ofgem's website at:

<https://www.renewablesandchp.ofgem.gov.uk/>

It is not always clear from the register, however, who owns which generation assets, so the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

An estimate of the value of support for each generating station can be calculated by multiplying the number of ROCs issued by the value of the ROC. The nominal value of a ROC in any given year is equal to the buyout price (the amount a supplier must pay for every ROC they do not present to Ofgem in order to comply with their obligation) plus the recycle value (the amount re-distributed to suppliers from the buyout and late payment funds on a pro-rata basis depending on how many ROCs they presented to Ofgem) for that year. This information can be found in Ofgem's annual reports which are available on their website at:

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-programmes/renewables-obligation-ro>

The nominal value represents the maximum worth of a ROC to a generator but is not necessarily the amount paid by a supplier.

### Wind Power

**Ian Swales:** To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what his Department's recommended minimum distance between housing and a 140 metre onshore wind turbine is. [176776]

**Gregory Barker:** The National Planning Policy Framework expects local councils to design their policies to ensure that adverse impacts from renewable energy developments are addressed satisfactorily and makes clear that a planning application for renewable energy should be approved only if the impact is, or can be made, acceptable.

To help implement the Framework, we published new planning practice guidance for renewable and low carbon energy. The guidance is clear that the need for renewable energy does not automatically override environmental protections and the planning concerns of local people.

The guidance explains that local planning authorities should not rule out otherwise acceptable renewable energy developments through inflexible rules on buffer zones or separation distances. This is because other than when dealing with set back distances for safety, distance of itself does not necessarily determine whether the impact of a proposal is unacceptable. Distance plays a part, but so does the local context including factors such as topography, the local environment and nearby land uses. This is why it is important to think about in what circumstances proposals are likely to be acceptable and plan on this basis.

## CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

### Churches: North Yorkshire

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the right hon. Member for Banbury, representing the Church Commissioners, what plans the Church Commissioners have to visit churches in North Yorkshire. [177268]

**Sir Tony Baldry:** A number of the different parts of the Church Commissioners have made frequent visits to the North Yorkshire area in the last few years following the last full review in 2007. The Church Commissioners undertake these formal visits to two Diocese a year. There are mechanisms in place to visit a Diocese should this be required on a more frequent basis such as a number of similar issues facing several churches in one diocese.

More informal meetings and visits take place throughout the year as part of the usual cycle of business. Such meetings usual involve among others the staff from the Pastoral and Closed Churches team and the Property and Investments Division, Rural Estates team and Strategic Land team.

This year the following parts of the Church Commissioners have specifically visited the North Yorkshire area:

The Rural Estates team and Strategic Land team have made a number of visits this year to York Diocese and to the wider estate in the North and West Yorkshire area.

The Pastoral Committee have visited St Margaret's High Bentham which is part of North Yorkshire but falls under the jurisdiction of Bradford Diocese.

In recent years between 2007 and 2013 the Commercial team and Strategic Land team and Rural Estates team have also visited parts of the Diocese of Ripon and Leeds, Diocese of York, focusing on the areas of Hambleton, Selby and Kirkstiles, Leeds and Northallerton, Skipton and Ripon.

The Church Commissioners will continue to visit and engage with the staff of the Church in the North Yorkshire area however, there are currently no plans in place for another full review of the York Diocese for a number of years.

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### British Steel: Pensions

**Paul Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether his proposals on reducing widows' benefits include restrictions on the British Steel pension scheme. [177134]

**Steve Webb:** We have no plans to reduce existing widows' benefits paid by occupational pension schemes, and are not placing new restrictions on schemes in respect of such benefits.

The Pensions Bill 2013, introduces the single tier state pension and under these proposals, from April 2016 there will no longer be an additional state pension to contract out of. This means, in future schemes that were contracted-out will not have to meet the minimum standard that currently applies to contracted-out schemes. Pension entitlement, including entitlement to survivors' pension, derived from employment before that date will be unaffected.

We expect that, following the end of contracting out, these schemes will continue to provide survivors' benefits as they have always tended to be more generous than

mandated by the contracting-out requirements. If sponsoring employers or trustees choose to alter scheme benefits, only pension rights accrued after the change would be affected, and changes would be subject to any restriction in scheme rules concerning changes to scheme benefits.

### Children: Maintenance

**Kate Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what progress he has made on the implementation of his new child maintenance system; and if he will make a statement. [177101]

**Steve Webb:** The 2012 scheme opened as a pathfinder, on 10 December 2012, and the caseload has steadily expanded since then. On the 25 November 2013, the Government opened the 2012 scheme to all new applicants. We will no longer be accepting new applications to the 2003 statutory scheme.

New applications will first need to go through a gateway conversation, delivered by the child maintenance options service. Child maintenance options provides information and support to help parents consider a family based arrangement, before turning to the statutory service.

The 2012 scheme will act as a backstop for parents who cannot make their own family based arrangements. Experimental 2012 scheme statistics published today show that, for the months of August and September 2013, between 3,000 and 4,000 new applications a month have been handled. These statistics are available on the following link:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/260599/2012-child-maintenance-scheme.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/260599/2012-child-maintenance-scheme.pdf)

### Housing Benefit

**Mr Bain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make an estimate of levels of expenditure by each local authority of their total allocation for 2013-14 for discretionary housing payments in the first six months of the current financial year. [177070]

**Steve Webb:** The Department for Work and Pensions requests that local authorities provide six monthly returns detailing their committed DHP expenditure.

We are currently gathering this information from local authorities and conducting the relevant quality assurance process.

This year, in addition to the original Government contribution, local authorities are able to bid for funding from a £20 million discretionary housing payment reserve fund. The scheme is open to bids until 3 February 2014.

### Housing Benefit: Social Rented Housing

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people who will be affected by the under-occupancy penalty in (a) the Vale of Clwyd, (b) North Wales and (c) Wales are aged (i) 60 and over but under the qualifying age for state pension credit, (ii) under 60 and registered as a couple with children, (iii) under 60 and a lone parent, (iv) under 60 and registered as a couple without children and (v) under 60 and single. [176818]

**Esther McVey:** The information requested is not readily available by age. However, work is in progress to include these data as part of the information already available through StatXplore, see the following hyperlink:

<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk>

Guidance on how to extract information from StatXplore can be found here:

[https://sw.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/StatXplore\\_User\\_Guide.htm](https://sw.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/online-help/StatXplore_User_Guide.htm)

### Innovation Fund

**Sheila Gilmore:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much of his Department's £14 million Innovation Fund: Support for Separated Families has been allocated in the first two rounds of funding awards; how much has been paid out by his Department to organisations with whom it has now signed contracts for delivery of Innovation Fund projects; and what his Department's plans are for the balance remaining in the fund. [177347]

**Steve Webb:** Projects in rounds one and two of the Innovation Fund have been allocated worth £6.5 million and £3.4 million respectively. The Department has so far been invoiced for £585,000 in respect of projects in round one. Contracts have yet to be signed for round two. The Department plans for the remainder of the fund to cover spending on rounds one and two as well as evaluating the projects. The actual spend on these will depend on the performance of the projects, as payments to organisations are a mix of milestone payments and payments based on numbers of participants, and the outturn cost of evaluation.

### Jobcentre Plus

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many of his Department's employees in Jobcentre Plus have undergone formal or informal poor performance procedures for not making enough sanctions referrals under the Work Programme. [177135]

**Esther McVey:** None because we do not issue targets for sanctions.

**Mr Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 26 November 2013 to the hon. Member for Wentworth and Dearne, *Official Report*, column 153W, on telephone services, if he will publish a list of companies which made revenue from 0845 calls to Jobcentre Plus centres in 2012-13; and what amount was made by each company. [177340]

**Esther McVey:** Jobcentre Plus 0845 telephone numbers are provided to DWP by BT as part of the Integrated Communications Networks Services (ICONS) contract.

DWP does not incur costs for calls to Jobcentre Plus 0845 telephone numbers as the customer making the call is charged by their respective service provider for the call. DWP cannot, therefore, provide details of revenue generated by private companies as a result of calls to Jobcentre Plus 0845 telephone numbers.

### Long Term Unemployed People: Tyne and Wear

**Mr Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what programmes his Department supports which focus on long-term unemployment in the Tyne and Wear travel to work area. [177434]

**Esther McVey:** The Work programme provides support, work experience and training for up to two years to help claimants that are long-term unemployed or face significant challenges, to find and stay in work.

Claimants who do not find sustained work during their time on the Work programme receive intensive Jobcentre Plus support to build on their time on the Work programme. From April 2014, under 'Help to Work', this will be expanded to include community work placements.

There are a number of local projects in the Tyne and Wear area that offer support to unemployed people, including the long-term unemployed that have completed the Work programme.

### Mesothelioma

**Mr Hepburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people have died from

mesothelioma in (a) Jarrow constituency, (b) South Tyneside, (c) the North East and (d) the UK in each year since 1997. [177380]

**Mike Penning:** Mesothelioma data are not recorded at the constituency level.

The following table shows the number of mesothelioma deaths for South Tyneside, the North East and for Great Britain in each year from 1997 to 2011, and the number of deaths registered in Northern Ireland for each year from the earliest data available in 2001 to 2011. 2011 is the most recent year for which the data is available.

There is a small distinction between the figures for Northern Ireland and Great Britain; the figures for Northern Ireland are based on when a death from mesothelioma was registered, whereas the figures for Great Britain are for the year in which the person died of mesothelioma. This small distinction explains why figures are provided separately as Great Britain and Northern Ireland, rather than combined to produce a United Kingdom total.

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
South Tyneside	15	12	8	15	18	9	8
North East	126	100	119	123	154	127	112
Great Britain	1367	1541	1615	1633	1860	1867	1887
Northern Ireland	— <sup>1</sup>	— <sup>1</sup>	— <sup>1</sup>	— <sup>1</sup>	58	42	49
United kingdom	— <sup>1</sup>	— <sup>1</sup>	— <sup>1</sup>	— <sup>1</sup>	1918	1909	1936

  

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011 <sup>2</sup>
South Tyneside	15	10	10	8	19	16	18	21
North East	134	160	118	137	167	159	180	160
Great Britain	1978	2049	2060	2176	2265	2336	2360	2291
Northern Ireland	54	40	50	36	40	42	35	52
United Kingdom	2032	2089	2110	2212	2305	2378	2395	2343

<sup>1</sup> Not available.

<sup>2</sup> Provisional.

Source:

GB data—Health and Safety Executive, British Mesothelioma Register, cases based on date of death.

NI data—Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland cases based on date of registration.

### Pay Television

**Diana Johnson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether offices of (a) his Department and (b) its executive agencies have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case. [176441]

**Esther McVey:** The DWP does not subscribe to Sky Sports. A small number of offices have access to the parliamentary annunciator service. The annunciator service gives information about parliamentary proceedings, including live feeds from the Commons and Lords Chambers and Westminster Hall, on screens throughout the parliamentary estate. The feed received by DWP includes the same channels, including Sky Sports, as are provided in the Palace of Westminster. There is no extra cost to the DWP.

### Publications

**Mr Frank Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will (a) make available online and (b) place a copy in the Library of his Department's (i) Labour Market Decision Makers Procedural Guide, (ii) Jobseeker's Allowance Procedural Guidance, (iii) Get Britain Working Guide, (iv) Labour Market Conditions Guide and (v) Decision Maker's Guide. [177187]

**Esther McVey:** Government information is now published on the GOV.UK website. GOV.UK is run by Government Digital Services (GDS), who are part of Cabinet Office. We can publish information on GOV.UK if there is a statutory requirement or a clear user need.

The Decision Makers Guide is already published on GOV.UK

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/decision-makers-guide-staff-guide>

We will investigate whether these other guides can also be published and will pursue this with GDS.

I will place a copy of these guidance products in the Library of both Houses.

### Social Security Benefits

**Stephen Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of whether everyone in receipt of jobseeker's allowance or employment support allowance who is sanctioned is now given a written statement explaining the reason for the sanction; and if he will make a statement. [177240]

**Esther McVey:** Jobseeker's allowance and employment support allowance decision notices provide reasons for decisions, but claimants also have the right under the Social Security Act 1998 to request a fuller statement of reasons.

### Social Security Benefits: Greater Manchester

**Barbara Keeley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many benefit sanctions were applied to claimants in Worsley and Eccles South constituency in each of the last five years. [177178]

**Esther McVey:** The available information on how many benefit sanctions were applied to claimants in Worsley and Eccles South constituency in each of the last five years is shown in the following table.

*Number of benefit sanctions and disallowances applied by year of decision and benefit, Worsley and Eccles South parliamentary constituency: 1 January 2009 to 30 June 2013*

Year of decision	Total	Benefit		
		Jobseeker's allowance (JSA)	Employment and support allowance (ESA)	Income support for lone parents (ISLP)
2009	1,110	810	40	260
2010	1,620	1,250	80	280
2011	1,460	1,210	10	240
2012	1,240	1,000	30	210
2013	1,110	990	40	80

*Notes:*

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest ten. Totals may not sum due to rounding. "—" denotes nil or negligible.

2. The number of benefit sanctions applied is the number of sanction or disallowance referrals where the decision was found against the claimant.

3. Figures show the year in which the decision to apply a sanction was made. JSA figures for 2012 do not include sanctions applied between 1 June and 21 October, inclusive, which are not readily available by parliamentary constituency. Figures for 2013 include sanctions applied up to and including 30 June which is the latest data available.

4. New regulations introduced a new revised sanctions regime for JSA and ESA claimants from 22 October and 3 December 2012 respectively.

*Sources:*

JSA and ESA—DWP Information, Governance and Security Directorate: Sanctions and Disallowance Decisions Statistics Database.

ISLP—DWP Income Support Computer System.

The information requested for JSA sanctions applied between 1 June 2012 and 21 October 2012 is not readily available by parliamentary constituency and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Unemployment: Young People

**Stephen Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions with reference to the EU Permanent Representatives Council document 10660/1/13 REV1, published on 19 June 2013, what

assessment he has made of the recommendation that the UK could build on the current Youth Contract to implement a youth guarantee and address the problem of youth unemployment and those not in education, employment or training. [177214]

**Esther McVey:** The UK values the European semester as a mechanism to share knowledge and best practice between member states. Country specific recommendations form a valuable part of the process, encouraging and supporting member states to make necessary reforms.

The Government broadly agrees with the European Council's recommendation 3 for the UK—that tackling youth unemployment should be a priority. That is why the Government implemented the Youth Contract in April 2012, providing almost £1 billion of additional support for young people over three years. And we have seen positive progress—the jobseeker's allowance claimant count for 18 to 24-year-olds has fallen in each of the last 17 months.

However, while the Government support the aims of the EU's Youth Guarantee and agree with much of the supporting guidance, it does not believe a four month guarantee is right for the UK. Over 80% of 18 to 24-year-olds flow off of jobseeker's allowance within six months. Implementing a four month guarantee would mean spending money on many young people who would move off benefits anyway so wouldn't be cost effective.

### Work Programme

**John McDonnell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what proportion of those claimants who have completed the Work Programme are still claiming benefits. [177126]

**Esther McVey:** Statistics are not held on the proportion of claimants who have completed the Work programme that are still claiming benefits.

The latest statistical release (which covers the period 1 June 2011 to 30 June 2013) does show that of the 1.31 million claimants who have been referred to the Work programme 54,000 claimants returned to Jobcentre Plus after completing 104 weeks on the scheme.

**Stephen Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 11 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 501W, on work programme, how many Work Programme providers have been required to rectify shortcomings identified in the monthly survey of claimants. [177350]

**Esther McVey:** Claimant data collected by the Department forms part of a suite of information used in Work Programme provider contract performance reviews to identify opportunities to improve customer services.

**Stephen Timms:** To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 11 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 521W, on the Work programme, how many customer complaints have been submitted to each Work programme prime provider in each month since that programme began work. [177351]

**Esther McVey:** The Department does not hold information on the number of complaints received by Work programme providers. Records of any complaints they have received are kept by providers.

We require providers to work directly with individuals to resolve complaints about their service. If the individual is not happy with the final response from that provider they can take their complaint directly to the Independent Case Examiner's Service; an independent complaints review service which investigates complaints about the Department for Work and Pensions and its providers.

## DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

### British Constitution

**Miss McIntosh:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what further plans he has for constitutional reform. [177270]

**Greg Clark:** The Government continues to work on constitutional reform, particularly devolving more powers from Whitehall to our cities and regions. Work also continues on the implementation of individual electoral registration as well as on our legislative programme, which includes the Transparency Bill. In addition, the Government has already demonstrated its willingness to support common sense changes to the rules governing the membership of the House of Lords.

### Electoral Register

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister whether electors currently on the electoral register who fail to register under individual electoral registration (a) will be able to vote in the May 2015 General Election and (b) will be counted for the purposes of any boundary redrawing in December 2015. [176817]

**Greg Clark:** The transition to IER is being phased in over two years to allow those not individually registered to continue to be able to vote in the 2015 general election.

The Government's current intention is for the transition to conclude later in 2015. However, the decision on when to end these transitional arrangements will be made after the next general election and with it the basis of the electoral register used in any redrawing of boundaries.

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Deputy Prime Minister what progress he has made in implementing individual voter registration; what assessment he has made of the effect of individual voter registration on the size of the electorate; and if he will make a statement. [176819]

**Greg Clark:** The Government is on track to introduce individual electoral registration (IER) in the summer of 2014. The Government has recently successfully completed a test of the system, including the IT, people, and processes, which will be used to transfer the overwhelming majority of electors across to the new IER register in 2014. The Government report on this work can be viewed here:

<http://data.gov.uk/dataset/individual-electoral-registration-confirmation-dry-run-data>

The Electoral Commission and the Association of Electoral Administrators have produced readiness assessments for IER, all of which support implementation

in line with proposed schedules. These are supplemented by a review of the programme undertaken by the Major Projects Authority. The reports will help inform the ministerial decision on whether to proceed with IER to the current timetable. An announcement will be made in due course.

As outlined in the Individual Electoral Registration impact assessment the completeness of the register is expected to be approximately maintained.

## EDUCATION

### Academic Year

**Dan Jarvis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what consultation his Department has carried out on schools choosing their own holidays and the effect of such a policy on families whose children attend different schools. [177480]

**Elizabeth Truss:** The Department for Education has consulted informally with head teachers and local authorities, as well as a wide range of organisations including teacher and head teacher unions, the Local Government Association, the Family and Childcare Trust, Netmums and Mumsnet. There was support for the proposal for all schools to be able to vary their school year. Around 48% of pupils already attend a school that can already do so. Schools have told us that they would continue to co-ordinate term-dates to avoid unnecessary disruption to parents or teachers.

### Academies: Finance

**George Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education with reference to the report of the Education Funding Agency investigation into Kings Science Academy published in October 2013, whether he plans to bring forward amendments to the Academies Financial Handbook. [176444]

**Mr Timpson:** The Academies Financial Handbook sets out all areas, of HM Treasury's "Managing Public Money" that directly apply to academy trusts, as public bodies, including those operating free schools. It also incorporates the relevant requirements arising from academy trusts' status as companies and charities.

This framework of financial accountability has been in place since the beginning of the academies programme. The framework is more extensive and robust than that which applies to local authority maintained schools as academy trusts are required to take full control of their financial affairs and must ensure regularity, propriety and value for money in their management of public funds. Trusts must ensure trustees and managers have the skills, knowledge and experience to run the academy trust; prepare financial plans so as to secure the academy trust's short-term and long-term financial health; have in place sound internal control and risk management processes; ensure trustees and managers monitor the academy trust's current and forecast financial position; be able to show that public funds have been used as intended by Parliament; and prepare annual financial statements which are audited by a registered auditor. Trust auditors are also required to provide an independent audit report on regularity.

### Animal Welfare: Education

**Dan Jarvis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will consider making it compulsory to teach children about animal welfare. [177483]

**Elizabeth Truss:** The new national curriculum programmes of study for science at key stages 1 and 2 include frequent references to animals and their environment. For example, in year 1 pupils should use the local environment throughout the year to explore and answer questions about animals in their natural habitat. They should also understand how to take care of animals taken from their local environment and the need to return them safely after study. In addition, pupils can learn about caring for animals in personal, social, health and economics education.

It should be left to schools and teachers to decide what further topics and activities they offer to meet the learning needs of their pupils.

### Children's Centres

**Mr Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many (a) paid and (b) unpaid staff are currently working in children's centres; [177273]

(2) how many children's centres have reduced their opening hours since 2010; [177274]

(3) which children's centres have reduced their opening hours since 2010; [177275]

(4) how many children's centres were within a 20 minute walk from their target users in (a) 2010 and (b) 2013. [177276]

**Elizabeth Truss:** The Department does not hold the information in the format requested.

### Discrimination

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many of those complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176604]

**Elizabeth Truss:** Neither the Department nor its executive agencies received any complaints of age discrimination or harassment in any of the last five years.

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176708]

**Elizabeth Truss:** Neither the Department nor its Executive Agencies received any complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination in each of the last five years.

### Free School Meals

**Mel Stride:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how the costs of (a) additional staff, (b) kitchen adaptations and (c) other expenses required for the provision of universal free school meals for infants will be funded. [177028]

**Mr Laws:** Since the Deputy Prime Minister's announcement in September, departmental officials have held a number of discussions with schools, local authorities, representative organisations and other stakeholders in order to assess the challenges that primary schools will face in implementing this policy. We are also taking into account the experience of those primary schools that presently offer universal free school meals, as well as the evidence available to us from previous pilots of universal free school meal provision to inform our thinking about how the Department can best support schools.

We expect to announce further details in due course.

### Grammar Schools: Admissions

**Martin Horwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education which Minister in his Department is responsible for the oversight of admissions testing for grammar schools. [177203]

**Mr Laws:** I am the Minister responsible for school admissions policy in relation to state funded schools. However, responsibility for the oversight of admissions testing for grammar schools sits with the school's admissions authority. Grammar schools, like all state schools are accountable through the Schools Admission Code 2012 for ensuring that testing arrangements are fair, objective and transparent.

The School Admissions Code can be found online, paragraphs 1.31 and 1.32 provide the requirements for test selection:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schooladmissions/a00195/codes-regs>

### Hamzah Khan

**George Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will establish a fully independent inquiry into the circumstances leading to the death of Hamzah Khan in Bradford in 2009 and the changes that need to be made in public services following his death. [176890]

**Mr Timpson:** There is already an established statutory process, through serious case reviews, to establish what happened in such cases, why it happened and any changes that need to be made as a result. We expect reviews to provide full answers so that lessons can be learned and the public can hold their professional agencies to account.

On 13 November, Bradford Safeguarding Children Board published its serious case review into the tragic death of Hamzah Khan. I had serious reservations about the published review, which missed significant elements of what happened. That is why I wrote to the Independent Chair of the Bradford Safeguarding Children Board setting out 10 important questions that need to be answered and put in to the public domain. I have placed a copy of my letter of 13 November in the House Library.

**Schools: Admissions**

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many state-funded primary schools were operating at or above full capacity in each year since 2009-10. [176804]

**Mr Laws:** The information requested is in the following table:

	<i>Number of primary schools</i>	<i>Number of primary schools that are not full</i>	<i>Number of primary schools that are full or have one or more pupils in excess of school capacity</i>
2009/10	16,964	13,520	3,444
2010/11	16,873	13,435	3,438
2011/12	16,812	13,388	3,424

The data for May 2013 are currently being finalised and will be published later in the year.

**Martin Horwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the safeguards in place to ensure admissions testing is fair for students with learning difficulties. [177206]

**Mr Laws:** The Schools Admissions Code 2012 sets out for schools the requirements for admissions testing. Tests for all forms of selection must be clear and objective and give an accurate reflection of the child's ability or aptitude, irrespective of sex, race or disability. Additionally, schools must ensure that tests are accessible to children with special needs and disabilities, having regard to the reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils required under equalities legislation.

Children with a special educational need statement that names a particular school on the statement must be admitted regardless of the outcome of any testing arrangements in place.

The School Admissions Code can be found online, paragraphs 1.31 and 1.32 provide the requirements for test selection:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/schooladmissions/a00195/codes-regs>

**Schools: Fraud**

**Mr Ward:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what his policy is on a principal remaining in post after they have been interviewed under caution by the police regarding an alleged fraud at their school. [177237]

**Mr Timpson:** In a maintained school, the governing body is responsible for the general conduct within the school, including dealing with any disciplinary matters. In an academy or free school, the academy trust is responsible for these matters, including the handling of any disciplinary action.

**Schools: Standards**

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many (a) converter academies and (b) maintained schools achieved an annual increase in the proportion of students achieving five GCSEs A\* to C than in (i) 2010-11, (ii) 2011-12 and (iii) 2012-13; [176798]

(2) how many (a) converter academies and (b) maintained schools achieved an annual increase in the proportion of students achieving five GCSEs A\* to C including English and mathematics (i) 2010-11, (ii) 2011-12 and (iii) 2012-13. [176800]

**Mr Timpson:** The requested information for the 2010/11 and 2011/12 academic years has been provided in the following table.

Data for the 2012/13 academic year will only be available once the performance tables have been published in January 2014.

*GCSE and equivalent results of pupils at the end of key stage 4 by school type—Years: 2009/10 - 2011/12 (Final)—Coverage: England*

*Converter academies<sup>1</sup>*

	<i>Number of schools<sup>3</sup> achieving an annual increase<sup>4</sup> in the proportion of students achieving:</i>		<i>Percentage of pupils in schools achieving:</i>		<i>Total number of schools<sup>5</sup></i>
	<i>5+A*-C GCSE</i>	<i>5+A*-C GCSE inc. English and mathematics</i>	<i>5+A*-C GCSE</i>	<i>5+A*-C GCSE inc. English and mathematics</i>	
2009/10 <sup>6,7</sup>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2010/11 <sup>8</sup>	16	15	92	77	25
2011/12 <sup>9</sup>	404	299	88	69	680

*State-funded schools<sup>2</sup>*

	<i>Number of schools<sup>3</sup> achieving an annual increase<sup>4</sup> in the proportion of students achieving</i>		<i>Percentage of pupils in schools achieving</i>		<i>Total number of schools<sup>5</sup></i>
	<i>5+A*-C GCSE</i>	<i>5+A*-C GCSE inc. English and mathematics</i>	<i>5+A*-C GCSE</i>	<i>5+A*-C GCSE inc. English and mathematics</i>	
2009/10 <sup>6,7</sup>	2,177	2,046	n/a	n/a	2,870
2010/11 <sup>8</sup>	1,941	1,739	82	60	2,764

	State-funded schools <sup>2</sup>				Total number of schools <sup>5</sup>
	Number of schools <sup>3</sup> achieving an annual increase <sup>4</sup> in the proportion of students achieving		Percentage of pupils in schools achieving		
	5+A*-C GCSE	5+A*-C GCSE inc. English and mathematics	5+A*-C GCSE	5+A*-C GCSE inc. English and mathematics	
2011/12 <sup>9</sup>	1,269	1,059	83	58	2,044

<sup>1</sup> "n/a" = not applicable

<sup>2</sup> Excludes special schools.

<sup>3</sup> Includes local authority maintained mainstream schools (community schools, voluntary aided schools, voluntary controlled schools and foundation schools) and mainstream free schools, university technical colleges (UTCs) and studio schools.<sup>3</sup> School with suppressed results have been excluded.

<sup>4</sup> Excludes schools with no pupils at the end of key stage 4 in the previous year.

<sup>5</sup> Only includes schools with at least one pupil at the end of key stage 4.

<sup>6</sup> No converter academies had published data in the 2009/10 performance tables.

<sup>7</sup> Performance in 2009/10 has been compared to 2008/09.

<sup>8</sup> Performance in 2010/11 has been compared to 2009/10.

<sup>9</sup> Performance in 2011/12 has been compared to 2010/11.

Source:

2011/12 key stage 4 attainment data (Final)

## Secondary Education: Standards

**George Galloway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of concerns expressed by the governing body of Immanuel College in Bradford on the proposed changes to the 2014 Key Stage 4 performance tables. [175979]

**Mr Laws:** We will respond directly to the concerns raised by the governing body of Immanuel college in Bradford about the changes to the way qualifications will be counted in performance measures.

The Government had little option other than to take swift action to tackle the increasing use of early entry by some schools. The analysis we published in 2011, and Ofsted's report on early entry that was published in 2012, present compelling evidence that some schools are using high levels of early entry where there is limited or no evidence of the positive impact on standards.

The Department's most recent research shows that, in 2012, only 62% of pupils with an initial C grade in GCSE mathematics retook their exams, whereas 98% of pupils with an initial D grade took their exams again. This same trend is seen in English, where 53% of pupils with an initial C grade retook their exams, compared to 96% of pupils with an initial D grade. This clearly demonstrates that many schools do not re-enter students with an initial C grade later on in the year, denying them the opportunity to improve their grades. This practice of 'banking' a C grade is clear evidence of schools not acting in the best interests of their pupils.

Schools such as Immanuel college Bradford can continue to enter pupils early if they believe they are adequately prepared to gain the best possible result.

## Teachers: Training

**Kevin Brennan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of regional teaching supply needs before the publication of the current provisional initial teacher training allocations. [177013]

**Mr Laws:** The Department estimates the number of trainee teachers required nationally each year.

The Department builds in a 9% over-supply to ensure a competitive labour market and regional coverage across the country.

## Travel

**Chris Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education what the cost of travel within the UK was for his Department in each year since 2010; and how much of this was spent on (a) hire cars, (b) helicopter hire, (c) hotel accommodation and (d) subsistence. [176825]

**Elizabeth Truss:** The Department for Education's financial systems record travel data at a top line level only and does not sub-categorise travel data to the level of granularity requested. Expenditure at this level is set out in the table.

Data for 2011-12 are not comparable to data for earlier years and data for 2012-13 are not comparable to data for 2011-12 or for earlier years. This is because the Department has brought arm's length bodies (ALBs) within the Department over this period, with part of their remit transferring to the Department.

	£			
Category	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14 <sup>1</sup>
Travel <sup>2</sup>	3,015,339	3,260,663	6,112,209	2,608,563
Subsistence	136,487	178,537	405,771	249,463

<sup>1</sup> 2013-14 data refers to the first half of this financial year.

<sup>2</sup> The Department makes no distinction between UK and non-UK travel when recording travel in its systems.

## TREASURY

### Banks: Loans

**Ian Murray:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress is being made against the targets set for the Funding for Lending scheme; how many loans have been made in excess of £100 million under the scheme to date; and what proportion of funding under the scheme has been granted to each industrial sector. [177267]

**Sajid Javid:** The funding for lending scheme has contributed to a transformation of the bank funding environment and banks are now passing these on through improved credit availability and cheaper credit to the real economy including to small businesses.

As part of the monitoring of the funding for lending scheme, the Bank of England publishes the net lending data of individual banks on a quarterly basis. The Bank

does not hold details of individual loans, which are a commercial decision for providers, or breakdowns for different industrial sectors.

### Corporation Tax

**Caroline Lucas:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many of the penalty notices issued to companies as a result of their failure to submit a corporation tax return on time in each of the years (a) 2009-10, (b) 2010-11, (c) 2011-12 and (d) 2012-13 were withdrawn as a result of successful appeals by the companies to whom they were issued; what value of penalties was waived as a result of such appeals in each such year; and if he will make a statement. [174035]

**Mr Gauke:** The information requested is not centrally collated and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

### Discrimination

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many claims at employment tribunals have been lodged against his Department on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years; and how many such cases were found against his Department; [176562]

(2) how many complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) current employees and (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176579]

(3) how many complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many of those complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176613]

(4) how many complaints of racial discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176630]

(5) how many complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176683]

(6) how many complaints of disability discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176700]

(7) how many complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176717]

**Nicky Morgan:** The Treasury has had no upheld complaints or employment tribunals regarding discrimination or harassment lodged against it over the past five years.

### Environment Protection: Taxation

**David T. C. Davies:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what his policy is on green levies; and if he will make a statement. [173889]

**Nicky Morgan:** The Prime Minister announced a review of green levies at Prime Minister's questions on 23 October 2013. This will report by the autumn statement.

### High Speed 2 Railway Line

**Mrs Gillan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to improve mobile connectivity in constituencies affected by the proposed route for HS2. [176981]

**Danny Alexander:** As announced in the autumn statement 2012, the Government has included powers in the High Speed 2 Hybrid Bill to provide the capacity for a fixed communications network to be provided alongside the railway in the future, maximising the potential value for public investment.

### Members: Correspondence

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the hon. Member for Thurrock will receive a reply to her letter of 11 October 2013, addressed to Nick Lodge, Director-General HM Revenue and Customs, in respect of her constituents' tax credits. [176977]

**Nicky Morgan:** HM Revenue and Customs replied to my hon. Friend on 7 November 2013.

### Mortgages: Government Assistance

**Steve McCabe:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what proportion of Help to Buy applicants to date were aged 39 and over; [176479]

(2) how many people have had their application for a Help to Buy mortgage accepted in principle in (a) Birmingham, (b) Birmingham, Selly Oak constituency and (c) the West Midlands; [176480]

(3) what proportion of applicants to the Help to Buy scheme to date have not been first-time buyers. [176481]

**Sajid Javid:** The Government is committed to making the aspiration of home ownership a reality for as many households as possible. The Government wants current and future generations to experience the benefits of owning their own home, in the same way their parents were able to. Since the financial crisis, larger deposit requirements and falling equity values mean many credit-worthy households cannot get a mortgage, or are trapped in their existing homes unable to take the next steps.

In the one month since the publication of the scheme rules on 8 October, more than 2,000 people have put in applications to lenders under the Help to Buy: mortgage guarantee scheme totalling £365 million of new mortgage lending. Lenders will submit details of their loans to the scheme when it opens in January.

More than three quarters of the applicants are first time buyers and many in their early thirties, demonstrating

that the Help to Buy: mortgage guarantee scheme is helping hardworking people realise their home-owning aspirations.

Once the Help to Buy: mortgage guarantee scheme opens in January, the Government will collect data on mortgages covered by the guarantee, and will report in due course.

#### Non-domestic Rates

**Dr McCrea:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring forward legislative proposals to freeze business rates. [176902]

**Mr Gauke:** The Chancellor keeps all taxes, including business rates, under review.

#### Pensions: Scotland

**Mr Bain:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make an assessment of the effect on the sustainability of (a) state and (b) private pensions in Scotland in the event of Scottish independence. [177375]

**Esther McVey:** I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions.

It will be for the Scottish Government to assess the sustainability of state and private, pensions in the event of Scottish independence.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies recently highlighted that the outlook for public borrowing in future is less favourable for Scotland than for the UK as a whole because of demographic pressures, including on the cost of pensions and pensioner benefits.

The Scottish Government published its proposals for pensions on 23 September 2013 in Pensions in an independent Scotland, and has also published its White Paper this morning, which the UK Government is considering.

#### Public Sector Debt

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the UK's level of debt within the G7 in (a) May 2010 and (b) the most recent period for which figures are available by percentage of GDP. [176460]

**Mr Gauke:** In 2010 this Government inherited the largest deficit since the second world war, with the IMF forecasting the UK to have the largest budget deficit, and the fourth highest net debt-to-GDP ratio in the G7.

In response, the Government set out a long-term sustainable economic plan to reduce the deficit. In the three years since 2009-10 the deficit has been reduced by a third as a percentage of GDP.

The IMF's latest forecasts show the UK net debt level as a percentage of GDP falling below the G7 average by 2017.

#### Railways

**Mrs Gillan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport about the benefits to the economy of good wi-fi and mobile connectivity across the UK rail network. [176978]

**Danny Alexander:** Government Ministers and officials exchange routine correspondence as part of the process of policy development and delivery. As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government's practice to provide details of all such exchanges.

The rail industry has agreed to fund and improve mobile services for passengers travelling by rail from mid-2014. Network Rail is leading industry co-ordination.

Furthermore, as announced in the autumn statement 2012, the Government has included powers in the High Speed 2 Hybrid Bill to provide the capacity for a fixed communications network to be provided alongside the railway in the future, maximising the potential value for public investment.

**Mrs Gillan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what assessment he has made of the consequences for the UK economy of mobile not spots across the UK's rail network; [176979]

(2) what representations he has made to rail companies on the need for investment in wi-fi technology and mobile connectivity across the UK's rail network. [176980]

**Danny Alexander:** The Department for Transport lead on the Government's engagement with the rail industry and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport lead on the Government's engagement with the mobile network operators. The rail industry has agreed to fund and improve mobile services for passengers travelling by rail from mid-2014. Network Rail is leading industry co-ordination.

#### Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what proportion of employees in his Department are (a) female and (b) male, by each Civil Service pay grade; [176596]

(2) what proportion of employees in his Department is (a) white British and (b) black, Asian and from other minority ethnic groups, by each Civil Service pay grade; [176648]

(3) what proportion of employees in his Department have a physical or learning disability, by each Civil Service pay scale. [176666]

**Nicky Morgan:** HM Treasury publishes information on the proportion of its employees by gender, ethnicity and disability by each civil service pay scale. The most recent information, March 2013, is in HM Treasury's Annual Report and Accounts 2012-13, page 43, available on the Treasury's external website.

#### Tax Allowances: Reservoirs

**Stephen Barclay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate his Department has made of the potential cost to the public purse of introducing a tax relief for landowners on the capital cost of constructing a reservoir; and when his Department last made such an estimate. [177342]

**Mr Gauke:** The Department has made no estimate of the cost to the Exchequer of a tax relief for landowners on the capital cost of constructing a reservoir.

## INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Developing Countries: Females

**Mrs Spelman:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps she is taking to establish and increase partnerships with faith groups to tackle violence against women and girls. [R] [177025]

**Lynne Featherstone:** Faith and faith groups play an important role in international development. In June 2012, the coalition Government launched the “Faith Partnership Principles Paper” to strengthen and guide DFID’s future collaboration with faith groups on international development. DFID is now working with a joint Working Group of faith groups to operationalize the principles.

DFID is already collaborating with faith groups in our programming which tackles violence against women and girls. For example, in 2011, DFID-funded World Vision to launch 15 new projects, helping to protect 200,000 vulnerable girls from such harmful practices as child marriage in Malawi and sexual abuse in DRC. In Ethiopia, DFID is funding a programme to end early and forced marriage for 200,000 girls in the Amhara region. As a part of this programme, religious leaders are speaking out about the harmful effects of early and forced marriage in order to spearhead social change in their communities.

As part of DFID’s programme to tackle female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), we have provided support to the UN Joint Programme on FGM/C. The programme has prompted 4,095 religious and traditional leaders in 15 African countries to make public declarations de-linking FGM/C from religion, including 1,070 leaders in Somalia, where an estimated 98% of women have undergone FGM/C.

### Developing Countries: Health Services

**Martin Horwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what her policy is on including universal health coverage in the post-2015 millennium development goals. [177204]

**Lynne Featherstone:** The UK Government welcomed the Report of the High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including the emphasis it placed on improving access to health services through universal health coverage, which is seen as a benefit in itself as well as a means to improved health outcomes.

### Developing Countries: Maternity Services

**Martin Horwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps her Department is taking to increase provision of maternal health services in low and middle income countries. [177205]

**Mr Duncan:** DFID is investing in a broad range of cost-effective interventions to reduce maternal mortality in the poorest countries. Our programmes address care from pre-pregnancy to early childhood.

Examples of our work include investments in family planning; antenatal, pregnancy and postnatal care; and vaccines, disease management and health systems

strengthening. Our water, sanitation hygiene, nutrition, education and livelihoods programmes also contribute to achieving the millennium development goal on improving maternal health; We also work in partnership with others to improve value for money from combined global efforts for example through the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.

### Disabled Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what proportion of employees in her Department have a physical or learning disability, by each Civil Service pay grade. [176661]

**Mr Duncan:** The information is as follows:

Pay band	Physical or learning disability (percentage)
SCS	1—
A (G6, G7, and SEO)	0.56
B (HEO and EO)	0.79
C (AO and AA)	1—

<sup>1</sup> Number too low to disclose for data protection reasons.

#### Notes:

1. These data set are made of DFID HCS staff.
2. Percentages are accurate to two decimal places and owing to rounding.
3. The sum may not be equal to 100%.

### Discrimination

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) how many complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department or its non-departmental public body by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many of those complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176608]

(2) how many complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176712]

(3) how many claims at employment tribunals have been lodged against her Department on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years; and how many such cases were found against her Department; [176557]

(4) how many complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity have been lodged against employees of her Department or its non-departmental public body by (a) current employees and (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176574]

(5) how many complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department or its non-departmental public body by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176678]

**Mr Duncan:** None.

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many complaints of racial discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176625]

**Mr Duncan:** Fewer than five formal grievances alleging racial discrimination have been lodged against employees of DFID in the last five years to 31 October 2013. No complaint resulted in disciplinary action.

We are withholding the precise number of allegations raised each year under section 40 (2) (Personal information) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Releasing these details would breach the legitimate expectation of an individual's right to the protection of their personal information.

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many complaints of disability discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of her Department and non-departmental public body by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176695]

**Mr Duncan:** Fewer than five formal grievances alleging disability discrimination have been lodged against employees of DFID in the last five years to 31 October 2013. No complaint resulted in disciplinary action.

We are withholding the precise number of allegations raised each year under Section 40 (2) (Personal information) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Releasing these details would breach the legitimate expectation of an individual's right to the protection of their personal information.

#### Overseas Aid

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what estimate her Department has made of the amount of money donated by the public for international aid causes and projects in the last year. [176451]

**Mr Duncan:** DFID survey a representative sample of UK NGOs to estimate the amount of private flows on international development which in 2012 totalled £849 million. This is estimated from the responses received from NGOs and is based on their own assessment of expenditure that is ODA-eligible.

#### Pay Television

**Diana Johnson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development whether offices of (a) her Department and (b) its non-departmental public body have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case. [176434]

**Mr Duncan:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Barnsley East (Michael Dugher), on 8 October 2013, *Official Report*, column 127W.

#### Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what proportion of employees in her Department is (a) white British and (b) black, Asian and from other minority ethnic groups, by each Civil Service pay grade. [176643]

**Mr Duncan:** The information is as follows:

Pay band	White- British	Black, Asian and from other minority ethnic groups	Percentage
			Unknown (includes 'prefer not to say' and 'not reported')
SCS	1.58	2.46	0.79
A (G6, G7, and SEO)	19.62	23.47	20.36
B (HEO and EO)	11.41	7.37	779
C (AO and AA)	2.41	1.48	1.25

#### Staff: Gender

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what proportion of employees in her Department are (a) female and (b) male, by each Civil Service pay grade. [176591]

**Mr Duncan:** At 18 November 2013 the proportion of female and males within DFID are shown in the following table:

Civil Service Pay Grade	Percentage	
	Female	Male
SCS	38	62
Grade 6	46	54
Grade 7	55	45
SEO	49	51
HEO	57	43
EO	60	40
AO	60	40
AA	14	86
Grand total	52	48

#### CABINET OFFICE

##### Civil Servants

**Mr Nicholas Brown:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the gender ratio is of staff of each grade in the Civil Service. [177436]

**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 November 2013:*

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the gender ratio is of staff of each grade in the Civil Service. 177436

Please find as follows a table taken from the Annual Civil Service Employment Survey March 2013, with the breakdown of gender ratio of staff of each grade in the Civil Service.

Civil service employment by responsibility level and gender, all employees, 31 March 2013

Responsibility level <sup>1,2,3</sup>				Headcount	
	Male	Female	Total	Male ratio	Female ratio
<i>Administrative</i>					
Administrative assistant (AA)	15,743	16,960	32,703	48.1	51.9
Administrative officer (AO)	67,923	96,879	164,802	41.2	58.8
<i>Other management</i>					
Executive officer (EO)	50,552	65,677	116,229	43.5	56.5
Higher executive officer (HEO)	30,179	27,516	57,695	52.3	47.7
Senior executive officer (SEO)	20,551	15,032	35,583	57.8	42.2
Grade 7	14,799	11,049	25,848	57.3	42.7
Grade 6	5,639	3,540	9,179	61.4	38.6
<i>Senior management</i>					
Senior civil service: Pay band 1/1A	1,995	1,235	3,230	61.8	38.2
Senior civil service: Pay band 2	619	275	894	69.2	30.8
Senior civil service: Pay band 3	127	54	181	70.2	29.8
Senior civil service: Permanent Secretary	30	5	35	85.7	14.3
<i>Unknown</i>	2,145	311	2,456	87.3	12.7
<i>All employees</i>	208,157	238,222	446,379	46.6	53.4

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the senior civil service, Government Departments have delegated pay and grading. For statistical purposes Departments are asked to map their grades to a common framework by responsibility level.

<sup>2</sup> This table shows staff in their substantive responsibility level unless on temporary promotion in which case staff are recorded at the higher responsibility level.

<sup>3</sup> Unknown—Departments were not able to confirm the grades for these staff.

### Discrimination

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) how many claims at employment tribunals have been lodged against his Department on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years; and how many such cases were found against his Department; [176548]

(2) how many claims at employment tribunals have been lodged against the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years; and how many such cases were found against his Office; [176552]

(3) how many claims at employment tribunals have been lodged against No. 10 Downing Street on the grounds of pregnancy or maternity discrimination in each of the last five years; and how many such cases were found against No. 10 Downing Street; [176559]

(4) how many complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) current employees and (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176565]

(5) how many complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity have been lodged against employees of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister

by (a) current employees and (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176569]

(6) how many complaints of discrimination related to pregnancy or maternity have been lodged against employees of No. 10 Downing Street by (a) current employees and (b) prospective employees in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176576]

(7) how many complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many of those complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176599]

(8) how many complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many of those complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176603]

(9) how many complaints of age discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of No. 10 Downing Street by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many of those complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176610]

(10) how many complaints of racial discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176616]

(11) how many complaints of racial discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176620]

(12) how many complaints of racial discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of No. 10 Downing Street by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176627]

(13) how many complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176669]

(14) how many complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176673]

(15) how many complaints of sexual discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of No. 10 Downing Street by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176680]

(16) how many complaints of disability discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies

by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176686]

(17) how many complaints of disability discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176690]

(18) how many complaints of disability discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of No. 10 Downing Street by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176697]

(19) how many complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of his Department or its executive agencies by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176703]

(20) how many complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action; [176707]

(21) how many complaints of homophobic or transphobic discrimination or harassment have been lodged against employees of No. 10 Downing Street by (a) employees and (b) other individuals in each of the last five years; and how many such complaints resulted in disciplinary action. [176714]

**Mr Maude:** The Prime Minister's Office and the Deputy Prime Minister's Office are integral parts of the Cabinet Office.

In the last five years fewer than five formal complaints have been lodged in the Cabinet Office on any of the grounds questioned.

None resulted in disciplinary action. In line with the practice of successive Administrations, when numbers are five or fewer, exact numbers are not usually disclosed to protect individual privacy.

No employment tribunal cases have been lodged on grounds of pregnancy or maternity related discrimination.

#### **Electoral Register: Fraud**

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many people were fined following a prosecution for electoral registration fraud in each of the last 10 years. [176814]

**Greg Clark:** The Government do not collect or hold these data.

#### **Local Government: ICT**

**Dr Phillip Lee:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) if he will make it his policy that local authorities should permit employees to use their own personal technology devices in order to access non-sensitive information remotely, in accordance with the Public Services Network Code of Connection; [176306]

(2) if he will reduce the administrative burden imposed on local authorities of obligatory security checks, including the Baseline Personnel Security

Standards, which will be instigated as part of the Public Services Network accreditation applications by 2015; [176307]

(3) if he will take steps to enable public sector bodies to sign up to the Public Services Network Code of Connection, and in cases where applications are refused, allow the public body to amend or provide suggestions for improvement on the aspects of their application which do not comply with the relevant standards, rather than having to re-submit the whole application. [176308]

**Mr Hurd:** PSN is a key part of the UK Government's ICT strategy and is at the heart of our shared services and cost reduction agendas, it provides a single more capable and open network enabling government to safely share services and collaborate in new ways that are more effective and efficient than ever before. It will also ensure that these public service networks have an appropriate level of protection.

The Government supports in principle any action that delivers a more efficient and joined-up public sector, as long as they do not breach the statutory obligations and legal requirements on information handling or damage the Government's objective to make the UK one of the most secure places in the world to do business.

Officials from the Cabinet Office are currently engaged with local authority officials and their representative bodies and have agreed revisions to the Public Services Network compliance regime. They have written to councils outlining the range of measures available to support organisations that demonstrate a genuine appetite and realistic plans to achieve compliance.

#### **Mesothelioma**

**Tracey Crouch:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) how many people have been (a) diagnosed with and (b) died from mesothelioma in each (i) parliamentary constituency and (ii) region in each of the last five years; [177371]

(2) how many (a) men and (b) women have (i) been diagnosed with and (ii) died from mesothelioma as a result of secondary exposure in each of the last five years; [177372]

(3) how many people have been (a) diagnosed with and (b) died from mesothelioma by (i) gender and (ii) age decile in each of the last five years. [177373]

**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 November 2013:*

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your recent questions asking the Minister for the Cabinet Office:

1. How many people have been (a) diagnosed with and (b) died from mesothelioma in each (i) Parliament constituency and (ii) region in each of the last five years. [177371]

2. How many (a) men and (b) women have (i) been diagnosed with and (ii) died from mesothelioma as a result of secondary exposure in each of the last five years. [177372]

3. How many people have been (a) diagnosed with and (b) died from mesothelioma by (i) gender and (ii) age decile in each of the last five years. [177373]

Table 1 provides the number of newly diagnosed cases of mesothelioma (incidence) in each region in England for each year from 2007 to 2011 (the latest year available). Please note that these numbers may not be the same as the number of people diagnosed with mesothelioma, because one person may be diagnosed with more than one primary mesothelioma although this is rare. The release of data on cancer incidence, particularly for small geographical areas and less common cancers, is constrained for reasons of confidentiality, to prevent the disclosure of patient information. Consequently it is not possible to provide incidence data for mesothelioma by parliamentary constituency.

Table 2 provides the number of deaths from mesothelioma in each parliament constituency in England for each year from 2008 to 2012 (the latest year available). A copy of Table 2 has been placed in the House of Commons Library.

Table 3 provides the number of deaths from mesothelioma in each region in England for each year from 2008 to 2012 (the latest year available).

Table 4 provides the number of newly diagnosed cases of mesothelioma (incidence) by sex and age deciles for each year from 2007 to 2011 in England (the latest year available). Lower age deciles have been aggregated to prevent disclosure of patient information.

Table 5 provides the number of deaths in England from mesothelioma by sex and age decile for each year from 2008 to 2012.

It cannot be determined how many men and women have (i) been diagnosed with or (ii) died from mesothelioma as a result of secondary exposure as this information is not routinely recorded on the cancer registration record.

According to the Health and Safety Executive, while nearly all mesothelioma cases are caused by exposure to asbestos, a small number of cases occur in people with no history of exposure. There is evidence to suggest that these 'spontaneous mesotheliomas' comprise up to 5% of total cases. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/statistics/causdis/mesothelioma/index.htm>

It is not possible to exclude spontaneous mesotheliomas from the figures provided.

The latest published figures on cancer incidence in England are available on the National Statistics website at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-302299>

### Pay Television

**Diana Johnson:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office whether offices of (a) his Department and (b) its executive agencies have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case. [176424]

**Mr Maude:** I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Barnsley East (Michael Dugher) on 8 October 2013, *Official Report*, column 170W.

The Government Procurement Service does not have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service.

### Public Sector: Procurement

**Emily Thornberry:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office on how many occasions since 2006 a company has been debarred from public sector procurement contracts in the UK as a result of (a) bribery, (b) fraud, (c) money laundering and (d) terrorism. [177349]

**Mr Hurd:** The information requested is not held centrally. It is the responsibility of individual contracting authorities to exclude suppliers in accordance with Public Contracts Regulations 2006.

### Staff

**Mrs Hodgson:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) what proportion of employees in his Department are (a) female and (b) male, by each civil service pay grade; [176582]

(2) what proportion of employees in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister are (a) female and (b) male, by each civil service pay grade; [176586]

(3) what proportion of employees in No. 10 Downing street are (a) female and (b) male, by each civil service pay grade; [176593]

(4) what proportion of employees in his Department is (a) white British and (b) black, Asian and from other minority ethnic groups, by each civil service pay grade; [176634]

(5) what proportion of employees in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is (a) white British and (b) black, Asian and from other minority ethnic groups, by each civil service pay grade; [176638]

(6) what proportion of employees in No. 10 Downing street is (a) white British and (b) black, Asian and from other minority ethnic groups, by each civil service pay grade; [176645]

(7) what proportion of employees in his Department have a physical or learning disability, by each civil service pay grade; [176652]

(8) what proportion of employees in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister have a physical or learning disability, by each civil service pay grade; [176656]

(9) what proportion of employees in No. 10 Downing street have a physical or learning disability, by each civil service pay grade. [176663]

**Mr Maude:** The Prime Minister's Office and the Deputy Prime Minister's Office are integral parts of the Cabinet Office.

The following table sets out the proportion of employees in my Department who are (a) female and (b) male by civil service grade:

October 2013

Percentage

		Band A <sup>1</sup>		Band B2 <sup>1</sup>		Band B1 <sup>1</sup>		Band C <sup>1</sup>		
	Permanent secretary <sup>2</sup>	SCS3 <sup>2</sup>	SCS2 <sup>2</sup>	SCS1 <sup>2</sup>	Grade 6/7 <sup>2</sup>	SEO/HEO <sup>2</sup>	B-Faststream <sup>2</sup>	EO <sup>2</sup>	AA/AO <sup>2</sup>	Total
Female	0.0	42.9	37.2	40.9	45.1	50.9	50.0	59.9	60.0	49.9
Male	100.0	57.1	62.8	59.1	54.9	49.1	50.0	40.1	40.0	50.1

<sup>1</sup> CO pay bands

<sup>2</sup> CS pay bands

Figures for ethnicity and disability by grade are not available. Cabinet Office does not compel staff to declare against workforce diversity indicators, including ethnicity and disability.

### Unemployment: Young People

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the long-term youth unemployment rate was in each of the last 30 years. [176737]

**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 November 2013:*

As Director General for the Office for National Statistics, I have been asked to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the long-term youth unemployment rate was in each of the last 30 years. 176737

Information regarding youth unemployment is available from the Labour Force Survey. The number and proportion of 16 to 24 year olds who have been unemployed for over 12 months are included in the table. Estimates on a comparable basis prior to 1992 are not available.

*Long term<sup>1</sup> unemployment among people aged 16 to 24 July to September, each year UK, seasonally adjusted*

Year	Thousand and percentage	
	Level	As a percentage of all unemployed 16 to 24 year olds
1992	238	27
1993	285	33
1994	237	30
1995	185	25
1996	157	22
1997	136	21
1998	86	14
1999	72	13
2000	73	13
2001	67	12
2002	61	11
2003	67	12
2004	66	11
2005	75	12
2006	103	15
2007	112	16
2008	121	16
2009	198	21
2010	218	24
2011	258	25
2012	266	28
2013	282	29

<sup>1</sup> Unemployed for over 12 months

Source:

Labour Force Survey (LFS)

## HEALTH

### Neuromuscular Care Advisers: West Midlands

**18. Steve McCabe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to increase the provision of neuromuscular care advisers and consultants in the West Midlands. [901275]

**Norman Lamb:** NHS England is responsible for commissioning specialised services, including neuromuscular services, and published the service specification ‘Neurosciences: Specialised Neurology (Adult)’ in July

2013. This directs that care is provided for patients with neuromuscular disorders via “multidisciplinary and cross organisational working”. This multi-disciplinary team includes neuromuscular care co-ordinators.

NHS England is working with providers to ensure compliance.

### GP Surgeries: Extended Opening

**19. Julie Elliott:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what change there has been in the number of GP surgeries offering extended opening hours since May 2010. [901276]

**Norman Lamb:** The most recent general practitioner (GP) patient survey results (for July 2012 to March 2013) show that 77% of patients say their surgery is open at times that are convenient for them.

Through the GP contract, from April 2014, we are promoting greater innovation in how practices offer extended access. This could be, for example, through networks of practices offering shared clinics at evenings and weekends.

In addition, a £50 million fund has been set up to support innovative GP practices in improving services and access for their patients to include seven day per week opening and evening opening hours.

### Congenital Heart Disease Review

**20. Stuart Andrew:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent progress has been made on the Congenital Heart Disease review. [901277]

**Jane Ellison:** NHS England is responsible for conducting the new review of congenital heart disease services.

We understand that NHS England aims to work closely with all stakeholders to develop, test and revise a proposition for the review and to undertake work to identify a preferred approach to implementation by June 2014.

### Integrated Care Pioneer Projects

**21. David Rutley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made by the integrated care pioneer projects. [901278]

**Norman Lamb:** Following over 100 expressions of interest and a rigorous selection process, we announced the final 14 integration pioneer sites on 1 November. These sites will receive dedicated support from national partners in integration to help them break down barriers and deliver integrated care at scale and at pace.

### Long-term Chronic Conditions: GP Prescribing

**24. Stephen Phillips:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent representations he has received on prescribing by GPs for people with long-term chronic conditions. [901282]

**Norman Lamb:** The Department has received a number of representations from hon. Members, noble Lords, patient groups, patients and the public on a number of issues relating to the prescribing of medicines for people with chronic long-term conditions.

### Accident and Emergency Departments

**Barbara Keeley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many higher trainee ST4 posts in emergency medicine were (a) available and (b) filled in (i) 2013-14 to date, (ii) 2012-13, (iii) 2011-12 and (iv) 2010-11. [175466]

**Dr Poulter:** In emergency medicine the number of higher trainee ST4 posts available and filled for the dates requested are:

Recruitment year	Vacancies	Posts filled
2010 Round 2.1	87	26
2010 Round 2.2	82	17
2011 Round 2.1	200	83
2011 Round 2.2	113	21
2012 Round 2.1	198	86
2012 Round 2.2	135	25
2013 Round 2.1	268	105
2013 Round 2.2	193	137

<sup>1</sup> Offered

Notes:

1. There are two recruitment rounds for ST4 per year. Due to the systems the data collection has to be shown in two individual rounds. The systems do not allow the identification of new vacancies therefore it is not possible to add the two rounds together as this would lead to double counting of vacancies.

2. National recruitment opens in November each year with interviews taking place from January into the summer. Posts will be taken up in August, i.e. for recruitment year 2010 national recruitment starts in November 2009, interviews take place from January 2010 through to the summer 2010 and posts will be taken up in August 2010.

Source:

Health Education England

The entry point into emergency medicine changed in 2008 from ST1 to ST4. This explains the increase in the number of ST4 posts available in 2011.

**Barbara Keeley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many locums were used to fill vacant consultant posts in the NHS emergency departments in England in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12 and (c) 2012-13. [175528]

**Dr Poulter:** The number of locums used to fill vacant consultant posts in NHS emergency departments in England is not collected centrally.

**Barbara Keeley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many whole time equivalent consultants, excluding locums, were working in NHS emergency departments in England in (a) 2010-11, (b) 2011-12 (c) 2012-13. [175595]

**Dr Poulter:** The annual NHS work force census, published by the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC), shows the number of consultants, excluding locums, working in NHS accident and emergency (A&E) departments in England as at 30 September each year. The September 2013 data will be published in March 2014.

The numbers of full-time equivalent consultants, excluding locums, working in NHS A&E departments in England in 2010, 2011 and 2012 are shown in the following table:

Hospital and Community Health Services: Consultants within A&E speciality

As at 30 September each year	Full-time equivalents		
	2010	2011	2012
A&E	1,013	1,100	1,230

Source:

HSCIC Medical and Dental Workforce Census

### Beef: Horse Meat

**Dr McCrea:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the location is of each meat firm (a) prosecuted and (b) closed for selling horsemeat as beef. [176892]

**Jane Ellison:** This issue relates to an ongoing complex criminal investigation by the police and as such we are unable to provide further information until the investigations conclude.

**Dr McCrea:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cases of people mis-selling horsemeat as beef are outstanding. [176893]

**Jane Ellison:** This issue relates to an ongoing complex criminal investigation by the police and as such we are unable to provide further information until the investigations conclude.

In connection with the testing of beef products for horse DNA carried out by industry and local authorities in the wake of this incident, we can confirm that there are no cases outstanding. All positive results for horse DNA are published on the Food Standards Agency's website. The latest set of industry test results was published on 7 October. Of the 9,588 new results no horse meat/DNA at or above the 1% reporting threshold was detected.

### Breast Cancer

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of recent research reported to indicate that multivitamins can improve the chances of older women surviving breast cancer. [176963]

**Jane Ellison:** The Department has made no specific assessment of recent research reported to indicate that multivitamins could improve the chances of older women surviving breast cancer.

### Cancer: Drugs

**Mr Mike Hancock:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in Portsmouth received funding through the cancer drugs fund in each of the last three years. [176831]

**Norman Lamb:** Information on the number of patients who have had cancer drugs funded by South Central strategic health authority (SHA) for the period October 2010 to end March 2013 is shown in the table.

SHA	Number of patients funded in:			Total number of patients funded October 2010 to end March 2013 <sup>1</sup>
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	
South Central	290	1,170	2,288	3,748

<sup>1</sup> Some individual patients may be double-counted where a patient has received more than one drug treatment through the Cancer Drugs Fund.

Source:

Information provided to the Department by SHAs

Information on patients funded through the Cancer Drugs Fund is not collected at city level.

NHS England took responsibility for the fund from April 2013 and is collecting data on the use of the fund from four regional teams. We are advised that between 1 April and end of September 2013, 2,089 patients in the South of England area were funded.

### Dementia

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people have been diagnosed with dementia in (a) England and (b) Wales by age group in each of the last three years. [176959]

**Norman Lamb:** The number of people recorded on practice disease registers with dementia in England is shown in the following table. The data are not available by age groups.

Diagnosis for dementia in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for the devolved Administrations.

Prevalence of dementia in England in 2010-11 to 2012-13	
	Number of patients on dementia register
2010-11	266,697
2011-12	293,738
2012-13	318,669

Source:

Health and Social Care Information Centre

### Electronic Cigarettes

**David T. C. Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate he has made of the number of people who have stopped smoking tobacco cigarettes in favour of electronic cigarettes in the last year for which figures are available; [176523]

(2) what assessment he has made of demand for electronic cigarettes and nicotine replacement therapy; and if he will make a statement. [176524]

**Jane Ellison:** The Smoking Toolkit Study is a national study of smoking and smoking cessation in England. The most recent data from the survey suggest that electronic cigarette use by tobacco smokers for any purpose has increased from around 2% in 2011 to around 14% in August 2013. If this trend was reflected across the United Kingdom it would translate to around 1.4 million smokers who have used electronic cigarettes. The data does not distinguish between use for quitting or partial substitution, nor does it allow for estimates of duration of use. It is not possible to differentiate the proportion of those who have stopped smoking tobacco cigarettes. What data is available on use of electronic cigarettes in quitting suggests that these are about as effective as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) in

supporting quit attempts. Electronic cigarettes are being used in approximately 20% of quit attempts, which is similar to the use of NRT.

### Food

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent assessment his Department has made of research into the long-term effects of low carbohydrate, high protein diets on cardiovascular disease. [176734]

**Jane Ellison:** Public Health England (PHE) has not made any recent assessment of research on low carbohydrate, high protein diets and cardiovascular disease. The Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) is currently reviewing the evidence on carbohydrates and health, including cardiovascular disease. A draft report is expected to go out to public consultation in mid-2014. Following this, SACN will consider the responses and finalise their report. Once PHE has received SACN's advice and final report, we will consider whether our advice on carbohydrate intake requires updating.

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 7 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 320W, on food, what assessment he has made of the average number of calories burnt each day by (a) males and (b) females in each year for which data are available. [176784]

**Jane Ellison:** No national data are available on average daily calories burnt (energy expenditure).

Energy expenditure includes energy used by the body to stay alive (e.g. in breathing) and in physical activity. Physical activity is the most variable part of energy expenditure, and obtaining quantitative estimates of population activity levels over time is subject to considerable inaccuracy and bias because measures are largely based on self-reported data, observational studies or indirect measures (e.g. heart rate monitoring).

The National Diet and Nutrition Survey assesses energy expenditure using doubly labelled water in a small sub-sample of participants in order to assess the quality of the dietary assessment method. This is the most accurate way to estimate energy expenditure by free-living people, but the number of participants in this study is not sufficient to estimate energy expenditure by the population as a whole.

### General Practitioners

**Kate Green:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what continuing professional development and training GPs are required to undertake in relation to new techniques for cancer diagnosis. [176512]

**Dr Poulter:** Medical revalidation, which commenced in December 2012, requires all doctors with a licence to practice medicine in the United Kingdom, to provide evidence, through their annual appraisals, of how they have kept their knowledge and skills up to date, including the latest techniques, technologies and research. These would naturally include those related to cancer diagnosis and treatment.

General practitioners (GPs) have to demonstrate that they are actively maintaining their skills through continual professional development and are aware of new clinical

guidelines which are regularly published by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence and disseminated to GPs.

**Rehman Chishti:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the number and cost of missed GP appointments to the NHS. [177075]

**Dr Poulter:** The Department does not collect data centrally on numbers of general practitioner appointments, nor on those missed or rescheduled.

The NHS constitution emphasises patients' responsibilities, stating that patients "should keep appointments or cancel within reasonable time".

**Lilian Greenwood:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the number of full-time equivalent GPs per 1,000 patients in (a) 2010, (b) 2011, (c) 2012 and (d) 2013. [177209]

**Dr Poulter:** The Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) General and Personal Medical Services Statistics show the number of general practitioners (GPs) per 1,000 registered patients at 30 September each year. The latest available statistics are as at 30 September 2012. The HSCIC will publish headcount numbers of GPs per 1,000 patients as at 30 September 2013 in the NHS annual workforce census in March 2014 and full-time equivalent figures will be available on request after that date.

The number of full-time equivalent GPs per 1,000 registered patients in 2010 to 2012 is shown in the following table.

	<i>General Practitioners (excluding retainers and registrars) FTE per 1,000 registered patients: England 2010-12</i>		
	<i>Full-time equivalent</i>		
	<i>As at 30 September</i>		
	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>
GPs (excluding retainers and registrars) per 1,000 registered patients	0.570	0.568	0.567
Number of GPs in England	35,243	35,319	35,871

*Source:*

The Health and Social Care Information Centre General and Personal Medical Services Statistics

### General Practitioners: Northamptonshire

**Chris Heaton-Harris:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department spent per capita in each general practice in Northamptonshire in the last year for which data is available. [176508]

**Dr Poulter:** Information is not available in the format requested.

General practitioner (GP) practices hold contracts with NHS England to undertake work for the national health service. Funding for payments to GP practices is included in the general allocation made to NHS England by the Department.

Information supplied by NHS England on per capita expenditure for general practices in Northamptonshire for 2012-13 is shown in the following table:

<i>Per capita expenditure for general practices in Northamptonshire for 2012-13</i>			
<i>Practice name</i>	<i>2012-13 costs</i>	<i>List size</i>	<i>£/Capita</i>
Forest Gt Medical Centre <sup>1</sup>	10,132	46,096	0.22
The Lakeside Surgery	5,453,092	46,096	118.30
Queensview Medical Centre	1,010,271	8,584	117.69
CCG—Brackley HC	466,914	4,512	103.48
Queensway Medical Centre	1,470,182	11,835	124.22
Headlands Surgery	1,241,015	10,127	122.55
Harborough Field Surgery	1,494,030	11,270	132.57
The Pines Surgery	1,008,301	8,287	121.67
Moulton Surgery	1,202,372	9,572	125.61
Delapre Medical Centre	1,761,766	17,066	103.23
Redwell Medical Centre	1,505,776	12,309	122.33
King Edward Road Surgery	1,132,188	10,959	103.31
Eskdail Medical Centre	1,305,754	11,941	109.35
Leicester Terrace HC	1,604,067	13,006	123.33
Danetre Medical Practice	1,486,208	12,682	117.19
Wansford Surgery	1,108,408	6,646	166.78
Springfield Surgery	1,166,930	8,977	129.99
Long Buckley Practice	812,274	5,754	141.17
Rillwood Medical Centre	415,264	3,445	120.54
Desborough Rothwell Pracs	2,752,600	20,023	137.47
Towcester Medical Centre	1,063,350	8,054	132.03
Oundle Surgery	1,763,043	10,799	163.26
Rushden Medical Centre	1,582,880	10,885	145.42
The Mounts Medical Centre	1,821,252	14,950	121.82
CCG—Albany House MC	1,830,931	16,180	113.16
Langham Place Surgery	1,081,409	9,098	118.86
Spinney Brook Medical Centre	1,378,925	10,685	129.05
Abington Park Surgery	1,218,540	12,086	100.82
The Cottons	1,157,157	9,403	123.06
CCG—Byfield MC	1,060,328	7,843	135.19
CCG—Abbey House Surgery	2,392,152	19,233	124.38
Molla—WFHC	468,245	3,669	127.62
Kingsthorpe Medical Centre	677,073	5,588	121.17
Linden Medical Centre	1,873,749	13,862	135.17
CCG—Burton Latimer HC	1,468,877	12,164	120.76
Dryland Surgery	1,629,070	12,686	128.41
Woodview Medical Centre	1,167,642	9,840	118.66
Harlestone Road Surgery	2,415,572	20,668	116.87
Park Avenue Surgery	1,157,434	10,153	114.00
CCG—Abington Park	1,830,969	13,816	132.53
Parklands Medical Centre	1,470,198	11,906	123.48

<i>Per capita expenditure for general practices in Northamptonshire for 2012-13</i>			
<i>Practice name</i>	<i>2012-13 costs</i>	<i>List size</i>	<i>£/Capita</i>
CCG—Abbey Medical Practice	2,813,154	15,639	179.88
CCG—Brook MC—Ecton	756,932	6,632	114.13
Washington House Surgery	1,145,439	8,782	130.43
The Crescent Medical Centre	471,910	3,631	129.97
Weavers Medical Centre	1,665,757	16,177	102.97
CCG—The Parks Medical <sup>1</sup>	104,039	19,318	5.39
Crick Surgery	698,068	4,466	156.31
Wootton Medical Centre	685,536	5,585	122.75
County Surgery	467,476	3,919	119.28
Clarence Avenue Surgery	525,310	4,594	114.35
Woodsend Medical Centre	1,344,578	9,089	147.93
The Saxon Spires Practice	2,110,271	14,593	144.61
Nene Valley Surgery	867,951	5,655	153.48
Denton Village Surgery	916,484	5,981	153.23
Marshall Road Surgery	264,814	2,333	113.51
CCG—Bugbrooke Medical	1,394,263	9,646	144.54
Greenview Surgery	897,191	7,029	127.64
Wollaston/Bozeat Practice	580,829	4,853	119.68
Higham Ferrers Surgery	761,077	5,360	141.99
Summerlee Medical Centre	169,197	1,126	150.26
Earls Barton Medical Centre	618,575	4,992	123.91
Studfall Medical Centre	334,677	1,761	190.05
Danes Camp Surgery	855,785	8,339	102.62
Studfall Ptnrship Sanyal	544,480	4,534	120.09
CCG—The Meadows Surgery <sup>1</sup>	41,493	5,285	7.85
Lakha—WFHC	600,627	5,973	100.56
Penvale Park Medical Centre	443,501	4,141	107.10
The Brook Health Centre	1,225,060	8,316	147.31
Maple Access Partnership	1,040,895	5,656	184.03
Great Oakley Medical Centre	986,623	9,188	107.38
Mawsley Village Surgery	848,974	4,621	183.72
Kings Heath HC	851,277	4,248	200.39
Irchester Health Centre	466,202	4,272	109.13
CCG—Dogra + Hassan WFHC <sup>1</sup>	27,399	3,636	7.54
CCG—Harlestone Road <sup>1</sup>	102,564	20,668	4.96
Christchurch Medical Centre <sup>2, 3</sup>	126,188	10,959	11.51
Christchurch Medical Centre <sup>2, 3</sup>	136,704	12,086	11.31
Lakeside Plus <sup>1</sup>	578,627	46,096	12.55
Lower Street PC Centre <sup>2, 3</sup>	415,857	11,941	34.83

<i>Per capita expenditure for general practices in Northamptonshire for 2012-13</i>			
<i>Practice name</i>	<i>2012-13 costs</i>	<i>List size</i>	<i>£/Capita</i>
Lower Street PC Centre <sup>2, 3</sup>	503,406	16,177	31.12
Midland Road Surgery	646,729	5,285	122.37
Roade/Blisworth/Hanslope	2,872,777	19,318	148.71
Upper Nene Village Practice	1,890,528	12,157	155.51
Whitefields Surgery <sup>1</sup>	102,883	17,066	6.03
<b>Total</b>	<b>93,818,444</b>	<b>923,878</b>	<b>101.55</b>

<sup>1</sup> The per capita figures are lower for these practices as they have either closed down or merged with other practices. These figures are therefore not comparable to other practices on the list.

<sup>2</sup> These centres appear twice on the list as two practices share premises. In 2012-13, these practices received payment under their collective name.

<sup>3</sup> NHS England does not have access to records of payments made directly by former primary care trusts to limited companies set up by some practices to manage their business. NHS England has advised that this is likely to be the reason that the per capita expenditure appears to be relatively low for these practices.

Source:  
NHS England.

### Health Services: Prisons

**Sadiq Khan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) for the 12 prisons contractually managed by the private sector in England and Wales, who is providing health services; when were the contracts signed; for how long they run; how much they cost; and how they are performing against the contract provision; [177199]

(2) who commissions health services for each of the 12 prisons contractually managed by the private sector in England and Wales. [177210]

**Norman Lamb:** As of November 2013, there are 12 privately managed prisons in England, with health care commissioned and provided under private finance initiative (PFI) contracts in seven prisons. NHS England has commissioned prison health care since 1 April 2013 and commissions health care in the five other privately managed prisons. Health care commissioning at HMP Parc is also provided under a PFI contract and is the responsibility of the Welsh Government.

Many current health care contracts across the prison estate were established prior to NHS England acquiring commissioning responsibility. NHS England is retendering contracts as they come up for renewal. Providers are therefore subject to change from April 2014.

We are advised by the National Offender Management Service that the current cost of health care within PFI contracts is not identifiable, since it is included in the contracted prison place daily price for each PFI contract. However, information is available about total health care spending in each of the privately managed prisons in the most recently completed financial year and this is shown in the table.

Information about contract performance in PFI-contracted prisons or privately managed prisons where NHS England commissions health care is not collected centrally by the Department or by NHS England.

The available information about health care in each of the privately managed prisons in England is shown in the following table.

*Contracted out prisons*

<i>Privately managed prison</i>	<i>Main contractor</i>	<i>Prison sub-contractor (operator)</i>	<i>Healthcare commissioner and start date of healthcare contract</i>	<i>Healthcare provider</i>	<i>End date of healthcare contract</i>	<i>Cost of healthcare provision for 2012-13 (£000)</i>
HMP Altcourse	Fazakerley Prison Services Ltd	G4S	Healthcare is provided under main PFI contract from 20 December 1995	G4S	30 May 2023	361
HMP Ashfield	Pucklechurch Custodial Services Ltd	Serco	NHS England from 1 April 2013	Serco Health	<sup>1</sup> —	376
HMP Birmingham	G4S Care and Justice Services (UK) Ltd	G4S	NHS England from 1 April 2013	1. Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Trust 2. Birmingham Community NHS Trust	<sup>1</sup> —	4,721
HMP Bronzefield	Ashford Prison Services Ltd	Sodexo	Healthcare is provided under main PR contract from 20 December 2002	Serco	16 June 2029	515
HMP Doncaster	Serco Ltd	Serco	NHS England from 1 April 2013	Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Trust	<sup>1</sup> —	3,962
HMP Dovegate	Moreton Prison Services Ltd	Serco	Healthcare is provided under main PFI contract from 27 September 1999	Serco	<sup>2</sup> —	844
HMP Forest Bank	Agecroft Prison Management Ltd	Sodexo	Healthcare is provided under main PFI contract from 6 July 1998	Sodexo	19 January 2025	669
HMP Lowdham Grange	Lowdham Grange Prison Services Ltd	Serco	Healthcare is provided under main PFI contract from 7 November 1996	Serco	<sup>2</sup> —	249
HMP Oakwood (formerly Featherstone II)	G4S Care and Justice Services (UK) Ltd	G4S	NHS England from 1 April 2013	Worcestershire Healthcare NHS Trust	<sup>1</sup> —	3,250
HMP Peterborough	Peterborough Prison Management Ltd	Sodexo	Healthcare is provided under main PFI contract from 14 February 2003	Serco	27 March 2030	322
HMP Rye Hill	Onley Prison Services Ltd	G4S	Healthcare is provided under main PFI contract from 23 July 1999	G4S	20 January 2026	95
HMP Thameside (formally Belmarsh West)	BWP Project Services Limited	Serco	NHS England from 1 April 2013	Harmoni	<sup>1</sup> —	3,918

<sup>1</sup> Current health care provider contract was established prior to NHS England acquiring its commissioning role from 1 April 2013. NHS England is retendering contracts as they expire and current providers are subject to change after April 2014.

<sup>2</sup> In negotiation for retendering from September 2014.

Source:

Department of Health, NHS England and National Offender Management Service

**Health Visitors**

were in (a) 2010, (b) 2011, (c) 2012 and (d) 2013. [177277]

**Mr Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many Sure Start health visitors there

**Dr Poulter:** The total number of health visitors<sup>1</sup> in England in each of these years is shown in the following table:

<i>August each year</i>	<i>Health visitors (full-time equivalent)</i>
2010	7,907
2011	7,677
2012	8,067
2013	29,066

<sup>1</sup> The figures refer to the Health and Social Care Information Centre's collection of numbers of 'qualified health visitors' rather than 'Sure Start health visitors'. For the purposes of reporting health visitor work force expansion, the terms 'health visitor' and 'Sure Start health visitor' are one and the same.

<sup>2</sup> Until December 2012, health visitor work force data were published by the Health and Social Care Information Centre as part of the Hospital and Community Health Services work force publication. It was based on use of the electronic staff record (ESR) and thus did not include health visitors employed in organisations such as local authorities and social enterprises that do not usually use the ESR. A new health visitor minimum data set was published from December 2012, which includes health visitors employed by organisations not using the ESR. This supports the Government's commitment to recruit 4,200 more health visitors by April 2015 and better reflects the true health visiting work force.

### Irritable Bowel Syndrome

**Jim Shannon:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with health boards about the benefits of hypnotherapy to address irritable bowel syndrome. [176958]

**Norman Lamb:** Ministers have had no discussions with health boards about the benefits of hypnotherapy to address irritable bowel syndrome.

### Mental Illness

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 7 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 327W, on stress, what recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions in reducing stress, anxiety and depression in patients with (a) cancer and (b) heart disease. [176785]

**Norman Lamb:** The Department is aware of the impact that stress can have on illnesses such as cancer and heart disease. We know that access to psychological services at the point of diagnosis can support patients by meeting their emotional as well as physical needs.

The Department has not made an assessment of the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions. However, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence has evaluated their effectiveness and recommends the use of mindfulness-based therapies as a psychological intervention for the prevention of relapse in its guideline "Depression: the treatment and management of depression in adults", which is available at the following web address:

[www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/12329/45888/45888.pdf](http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/12329/45888/45888.pdf)

### Muscular Dystrophy: North West

**Sir Tony Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with specialised commissioners in the North West to set up a North West neuromuscular delivery network with neuromuscular co-ordinator support; and if he will make a statement. [176985]

**Norman Lamb:** There have been no ministerial discussions on this matter.

NHS England is responsible for the commissioning of specialised services, improving both the quality and consistency of specialised care. These new national commissioning arrangements will significantly enhance equity of access and outcomes for patients across the country.

### NHS: Drugs

**Philip Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps he is taking to align the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence approval process and the NHS England commissioning development process for medicines and diagnostic technologies to ensure patients have quicker access to new medicines; [176450]

(2) whether there is a time limit for the uptake of National Institute for Health and Care Excellence approved diagnostic technologies. [176490]

**Norman Lamb:** In the great majority of cases, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) publishes draft or final technology appraisal guidance on significant new drugs within a few months of their launch. National health service commissioners are legally required by regulations to fund those treatments recommended by NICE in its technology appraisal guidance.

The report *Innovation Health and Wealth: Accelerating adoption and diffusion in the NHS*, published in December 2011, identified the need to reduce variation and strengthen compliance of uptake of treatments recommended in NICE technology appraisals. As part of its implementation of *Innovation Health and Wealth*, NHS England is working with a wide range of stakeholders through the NICE Implementation Collaborative to promote the uptake of NICE guidance. NHS England and the Health and Social Care Information Centre also publish quarterly updates to the *Innovation Scorecard*, which provides information to the NHS, industry, patients and the public on uptake of NICE-recommended treatments. The latest iteration is at:

[www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB11832](http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB11832)

NHS England also issued commissioning policy guidance to the NHS in April 2013 on the implementation and funding of NICE technology appraisal recommendations which is available at:

[www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/cp-05.pdf](http://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/cp-05.pdf)

There is no statutory funding requirement for diagnostics recommended by NICE in its diagnostics guidance, nor is there any time limit for the uptake of such technologies. NHS organisations are expected to take NICE's guidance into account in making funding decisions for individual medical diagnostic technologies.

### NHS: Redundancy Pay

**Chris Ruane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the answer of 8 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 381W, on NHS: redundancy pay, if he will publish those figures for 2008-09 and 2009-10 which were collected on a different basis. [176783]

**Dr Poulter:** The cost of national health service staff redundancy payments in 2008-09 and 2009-10 are set out in the following table.

<i>Termination benefits redundancy<sup>1</sup></i>	
<i>NHS</i>	<i>£000<sup>2</sup></i>
2009-10	22,233
2008-09	43,903

<sup>1</sup> The figures include primary care trusts, strategic health authorities and NHS trusts but not foundation trusts.

<sup>2</sup> Source—NHS (England) Summarised Accounts 2008-09 and 2009-10.

### Pay Television

**Diana Johnson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether offices of (a) his Department and (b) its executive agencies have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service; and what the cost to the public purse is in each case. [176432]

**Dr Poulter:** Neither the Department nor Public Health England nor the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency have access to Sky Sports or an equivalent premium sports television service.

### School Milk

**Mr Tom Clarke:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions he has had with suppliers for the nursery milk scheme on setting a cap on the price of milk bought for use by that scheme. [176453]

**Dr Poulter:** Setting a cap on the price of milk bought for use in the Nursery Milk Scheme is one of the four options outlined in the Government's consultation 'Next Steps for Nursery Milk' published in June 2012. Stakeholders invited to respond to the consultation included milk suppliers, and many did so before the consultation closed in October 2012. As part of stakeholder engagement departmental officials also met with several suppliers and umbrella organisations representing milk suppliers.

**Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proportion of eligible children received milk through the Nursery Milk Scheme in the 10 (a) most and (b) least deprived local authorities in Great Britain. [177131]

**Dr Poulter:** The specific information requested is not available. However, nationally, it is estimated that about 60% of all under-fives in eligible child care settings are claiming free milk under the Nursery Milk Scheme.

The Government remains committed to maintaining free nursery milk as a universal benefit for all under-fives in nursery and child care settings, as stated within the June 2012 consultation document about modernising the Nursery Milk Scheme.

**Alex Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment his Department has made of the potential effect of changes to his Nursery Milk Scheme on vulnerable children. [177132]

**Dr Poulter:** The Department's consultation on modernisation of the Nursery Milk Scheme, entitled 'Next steps for Nursery milk' was published in June 2012. A copy has already been placed in the Library. This was accompanied by an equalities impact assessment that considered the impact of any change to the scheme upon children with disabilities, and on those providing child care and educational services to these children.

This concluded that

"none of the options for change will impact on disability issues for childcare providers or producers, suppliers, distributors and retailers of milk".

The equalities impact assessment also contains a commitment to ensure that if a direct supply option is chosen then the Department will ensure, through the procurement process, that any third parties contracted to directly supply milk to child care providers fully comply with the equality duty.

A copy of the equalities impact assessment 'Equality Analysis—Next Steps for Nursery Milk' has been placed in the Library. It is also available at:

[www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/182328/Equality\\_Analysis\\_-\\_Next\\_Steps\\_for\\_Nursery\\_Milk.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182328/Equality_Analysis_-_Next_Steps_for_Nursery_Milk.pdf)

### Social Services

**Pat Glass:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the effects of social care budget changes on attendances at accident and emergency departments. [901281]

**Norman Lamb:** Joining up health and social care services is a key priority for this Government. The national health service will provide £900 million this year and £1.1 billion next year to support social care services with a health benefit and promote joint working, and in 2015-16 we will introduce a £3.8 billion pooled budget for health and social care.

The number of bed days lost because of delays attributable to social care was nearly 50,000 lower in 2012-13 than in 2011-12.

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