

Friday
29 November 2013

Volume 571
No. 85



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Friday 29 November 2013

House of Commons

Friday 29 November 2013

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BILL PRESENTED

UNITED KINGDOM PARLIAMENT (SOVEREIGNTY) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Mr William Cash, supported by Mr Bernard Jenkin, Mr John Redwood, Sir Edward Leigh, Sir Gerald Howarth, Mr John Baron, Mr Peter Bone, Jacob Rees-Mogg, Henry Smith, Chris Heaton-Harris, Mr James Clappison and Sir Richard Shepherd, presented a Bill to make provision for the supremacy of the sovereignty of the United Kingdom Parliament in relation to the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 17 January 2014, and to be printed (Bill 136).

European Union (Referendum) Bill

Further consideration of Bill, not amended in the Public Bill Committee

Clause 1

REFERENDUM ON THE UNITED KINGDOM'S
MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Amendment proposed: 35, page 1, leave out lines 8 and 9 and insert

'Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union?'.—(Mike Gapes.)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House proceeded to a Division.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Serjeant at Arms to investigate the delay in both the Aye and No Lobbies.

The House having divided: Ayes 3, Noes 244.

Division No. 141]

[9.35 am

AYES

Bailey, Mr Adrian
Gapes, Mike
Horwood, Martin

Tellers for the Ayes:
Susan Elan Jones and
Nic Dakin

NOES

Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Amess, Mr David
Andrew, Stuart
Arbuthnot, rh Mr James
Baker, Steve
Baldry, Sir Tony
Baldwin, Harriett
Barker, rh Gregory
Baron, Mr John
Bebb, Guto
Bellingham, Mr Henry
Benyon, Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Bingham, Andrew
Binley, Mr Brian
Blackman, Bob
Boles, Nick
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, Karen
Brady, Mr Graham
Bray, Angie
Brazier, Mr Julian
Brine, Steve
Brokenshire, James
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Mr Robert
Burley, Mr Aidan
Burns, rh Mr Simon
Burrowes, Mr David
Burt, rh Alistair
Byles, Dan
Cairns, Alun
Carmichael, Neil
Carswell, Mr Douglas
Cash, Mr William
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Mr Christopher
Clark, rh Greg

Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Colvile, Oliver
Crabb, Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, David T. C.
(*Monmouth*)
Davies, Glyn
de Bois, Nick
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Dorries, Nadine
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duncan, rh Mr Alan
Dunne, Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellison, Jane
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Graham
Evans, Jonathan
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, Mr David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Michael
Field, Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fullbrook, Lorraine
Fuller, Richard
Gale, Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, Mr David
Gibb, Mr Nick
Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
Glen, John

Goodwill, Mr Robert
 Graham, Richard
 Gray, Mr James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hague, rh Mr William
 Halfon, Robert
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, Matthew
 Hands, Greg
 Harper, Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, Oliver
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hendry, Charles
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Hopkins, Kris
 Howarth, Sir Gerald
 Howell, John
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kelly, Chris
 Kirby, Simon
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lancaster, Mark
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Latham, Pauline
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Jessica
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Luff, Peter
 Macleod, Mary
 Main, Mrs Anne
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Maria
 Mills, Nigel

Milton, Anne
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Murray, Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Nuttall, Mr David
 O'Brien, rh Mr Stephen
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Ottaway, rh Richard
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, Claire
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Sir John
 Reckless, Mark
 Redwood, rh Mr John
 Reeve, Simon
 Robertson, rh Hugh
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandys, Laura
 Scott, Mr Lee
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shepherd, Sir Richard
 Simmonds, Mark
 Simpson, Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Soubry, Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Stride, Mel
 Stuart, Mr Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Timpson, Mr Edward
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tredinnick, David
 Truss, Elizabeth
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Uppal, Paul

Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Weatherley, Mike
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 White, Chris
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John

Williamson, Chris
 Williamson, Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wright, Jeremy
 Yeo, Mr Tim
 Young, rh Sir George
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:

Gavin Barwell and
 Mr Sam Gyimah

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment proposed: 71, page 1, line 12, leave out subsection (6) and insert—

‘(6) An order under this section shall be made by statutory instrument.

(7) An order under subsection (3) may not be made unless each House of Parliament has passed a resolution that the referendum shall take place on a day specified in the resolution and the day specified in the resolution is the same as in the order.

(8) An order under subsection (5) may not be made unless a draft of the order has been laid before, and approved by, a resolution of each House of Parliament.’—(*Chris Williamson.*)

Question put. That the amendment be made.

The House proceeded to a Division.

Mr Speaker: Will the Serjeant at Arms investigate the delay in the No Lobby, in case, perchance, there is just a single occupant of it?

Will the Serjeant at Arms investigate the delay in the Aye Lobby, please?

The House having divided: Ayes 8, Noes 241.

Division No. 142]

[9.52 am

AYES

Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Gapes, Mike
 Horwood, Martin
 Lazarowicz, Mark

Mudie, Mr George
 Williamson, Chris

Tellers for the Ayes:

Susan Elan Jones and
 Nic Dakin

NOES

Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Amess, Mr David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Arbuthnot, rh Mr James
 Baker, Steve
 Baldry, Sir Tony
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barker, rh Gregory
 Baron, Mr John
 Bebb, Guto
 Bellingham, Mr Henry
 Benyon, Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Bingham, Andrew
 Binley, Mr Brian
 Blackman, Bob
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bradley, Karen
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Bray, Angie

Brazier, Mr Julian
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Mr Robert
 Burley, Mr Aidan
 Burns, rh Mr Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Byles, Dan
 Cairns, Alun
 Carmichael, Neil
 Carswell, Mr Douglas
 Cash, Mr William
 Chishti, Rehman
 Hope, Mr Christopher
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colville, Oliver
 Crabb, Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey

Davies, David T. C.
(*Monmouth*)
Davies, Glyn
de Bois, Nick
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Dorries, Nadine
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duncan, rh Mr Alan
Dunne, Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellison, Jane
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Graham
Evans, Jonathan
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, Mr David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Michael
Field, Mark
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fullbrook, Lorraine
Fuller, Richard
Gale, Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, Mr David
Gibb, Mr Nick
Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
Glen, John
Goodwill, Mr Robert
Graham, Richard
Gray, Mr James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, rh Damian
Greening, rh Justine
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffiths, Andrew
Hague, rh Mr William
Halfon, Robert
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, Matthew
Hands, Greg
Harper, Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Hart, Simon
Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
Hayes, rh Mr John
Heald, Oliver
Henderson, Gordon
Hendry, Charles
Herbert, rh Nick
Hinds, Damian
Hollingbery, George
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Hopkins, Kris
Howarth, Sir Gerald
Howell, John
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, Mr Nick
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Kevan
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kelly, Chris
Kirby, Simon

Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lancaster, Mark
Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
Latham, Pauline
Leadsom, Andrea
Lee, Jessica
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, Sir Edward
Leslie, Charlotte
Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
Lewis, Brandon
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Lilley, rh Mr Peter
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Luff, Peter
Macleod, Mary
Main, Mrs Anne
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McIntosh, Miss Anne
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, Esther
Menzies, Mark
Metcalf, Stephen
Miller, rh Maria
Mills, Nigel
Milton, Anne
Mordaunt, Penny
Morgan, Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Mosley, Stephen
Mowat, David
Murray, Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, Caroline
Norman, Jesse
Nuttall, Mr David
O'Brien, rh Mr Stephen
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Osborne, rh Mr George
Ottaway, rh Richard
Parish, Neil
Patel, Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Perry, Claire
Pickles, rh Mr Eric
Poulter, Dr Daniel
Prisk, Mr Mark
Raab, Mr Dominic
Randall, rh Sir John
Reckless, Mark
Redwood, rh Mr John
Reevell, Simon
Robertson, rh Hugh
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Rosindell, Andrew
Rudd, Amber

Rutley, David
Sandys, Laura
Scott, Mr Lee
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, Alok
Shepherd, Sir Richard
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Henry
Smith, Julian
Soubry, Anna
Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
Spencer, Mr Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Iain
Stewart, Rory
Stride, Mel
Stuart, Mr Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
Syms, Mr Robert
Timpson, Mr Edward
Tomlinson, Justin

Tredinnick, David
Truss, Elizabeth
Turner, Mr Andrew
Tyrie, Mr Andrew
Uppal, Paul
Vaizey, Mr Edward
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Walker, Mr Robin
Watkinson, Dame Angela
Weatherley, Mike
Wharton, James
Wheeler, Heather
White, Chris
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Williamson, Gavin
Wilson, Mr Rob
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Wright, Jeremy
Yeo, Mr Tim
Young, rh Sir George
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Gavin Barwell and
Mr Sam Gyimah

Question accordingly negated.

Clause 2

ENTITLEMENT TO VOTE IN THE REFERENDUM

Amendment made: 42, page 1, line 18, leave out 'and'.—(*James Wharton.*)

Amendment proposed: 44, page 1, line 20, at end insert—

'(2) Persons aged 16 or 17 on the date of the referendum shall be entitled to vote if they would, save for their age, be otherwise entitled to vote under any of the categories set out in subsection (1) above.'—(*Mike Gapes.*)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House proceeded to a Division.

Mr Speaker: I ask the Serjeant at Arms to investigate the delay in the Aye Lobby.

The House having divided: Ayes 29, Noes 235.

Division No. 143]

[10.08 am

AYES

Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
Alexander, Heidi
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Brown, Lyn
Campbell, Mr Alan
David, Wayne
Efford, Clive
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Gapes, Mike
Greatrex, Tom
Green, Kate
Hamilton, Mr David
Hilling, Julie
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Horwood, Martin
Jamieson, Cathy
Jones, Mr Kevan

Lazarowicz, Mark
McCarthy, Kerry
Mudie, Mr George
Onwurah, Chi
Perkins, Toby
Pound, Stephen
Reed, Mr Jamie
Smith, Nick
Spellar, rh Mr John
Thomas, Mr Gareth
Williamson, Chris
Winterton, rh Ms Rosie

Tellers for the Ayes:
Susan Elan Jones and
Nic Dakin

NOES

Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Amess, Mr David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Arbuthnot, rh Mr James
 Baker, Steve
 Baldry, Sir Tony
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barker, rh Gregory
 Baron, Mr John
 Barwell, Gavin
 Bebb, Guto
 Benyon, Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Bingham, Andrew
 Binley, Mr Brian
 Blackman, Bob
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bradley, Karen
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Bray, Angie
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Mr Robert
 Burley, Mr Aidan
 Burns, rh Mr Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Byles, Dan
 Cairns, Alun
 Carmichael, Neil
 Cash, Mr William
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Mr Christopher
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colvile, Oliver
 Crabb, Stephen
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, David T. C.
 (Monmouth)
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Philip
 de Bois, Nick
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Dorries, Nadine
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duncan, rh Mr Alan
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellison, Jane
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Jonathan
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, Mr David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Field, Mark
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fullbrook, Lorraine
 Fuller, Richard
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Glen, John
 Goodwill, Mr Robert
 Graham, Richard
 Gray, Mr James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Hague, rh Mr William
 Halfon, Robert
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, Matthew
 Hands, Greg
 Harper, Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, Oliver
 Hendry, Charles
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Hopkins, Kris
 Howarth, Sir Gerald
 Howell, John
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kelly, Chris
 Kirby, Simon
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lancaster, Mark
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Latham, Pauline
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Jessica
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Luff, Peter
 Macleod, Mary
 Main, Mrs Anne
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McPartland, Stephen

McVey, Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, Anne
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Murray, Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 Nuttall, Mr David
 O'Brien, rh Mr Stephen
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Ottaway, rh Richard
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Sir John
 Reckless, Mark
 Reeve, Simon
 Robertson, rh Hugh
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, Amber
 Ruffley, Mr David
 Rutley, David
 Sandys, Laura
 Scott, Mr Lee
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant

Sharma, Alok
 Shepherd, Sir Richard
 Simmonds, Mark
 Simpson, Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Soubry, Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Stride, Mel
 Stuart, Mr Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Timpson, Mr Edward
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tredinnick, David
 Truss, Elizabeth
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Weatherley, Mike
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 White, Chris
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wright, Jeremy
 Young, rh Sir George
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Claire Perry and
Mr Sam Gyimah

Question accordingly negated.

Mr Speaker: Before I call the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes) to move formally amendment 51, may I say that I hope he will be successful in persuading his colleagues to vote and come out of the Lobby in a timely manner? If his efforts are unsuccessful, that might prejudice the judgment of the Chair in relation to future votes.

Amendment proposed: 51, page 1, line 20, at end insert—

‘(c) residents of all British Overseas Territories.’.—(Mike Gapes.)

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 5, Noes 233.

Division No. 144]

[10.24 am

AYES

Bailey, Mr Adrian

Fitzpatrick, Jim

Gapes, Mike
Mudie, Mr George
Williamson, Chris

Tellers for the Ayes:
Susan Elan Jones and
Julie Hilling

NOES

Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Amess, Mr David
Andrew, Stuart
Arbuthnot, rh Mr James
Baker, Steve
Baldry, Sir Tony
Baldwin, Harriett
Barker, rh Gregory
Bebb, Guto
Benyon, Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Bingham, Andrew
Binley, Mr Brian
Blackman, Bob
Boles, Nick
Bone, Mr Peter
Bradley, Karen
Brady, Mr Graham
Bray, Angie
Brazier, Mr Julian
Brine, Steve
Brokenshire, James
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Mr Robert
Burley, Mr Aidan
Burns, rh Mr Simon
Burrowes, Mr David
Burt, rh Alistair
Byles, Dan
Cairns, Alun
Carmichael, Neil
Cash, Mr William
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Mr Christopher
Clark, rh Greg
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Colvile, Oliver
Crabb, Stephen
Davies, David T. C.
(*Monmouth*)
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Philip
de Bois, Nick
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Dorries, Nadine
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duncan, rh Mr Alan
Ellis, Michael
Ellison, Jane
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Graham
Evans, Jonathan
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, Mr David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Michael
Field, Mark
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fullbrook, Lorraine

Fuller, Richard
Gale, Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, Mr David
Gibb, Mr Nick
Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
Glen, John
Goodwill, Mr Robert
Graham, Richard
Gray, Mr James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, rh Damian
Greening, rh Justine
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffiths, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Hague, rh Mr William
Halfon, Robert
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, Matthew
Hands, Greg
Harper, Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Hart, Simon
Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
Hayes, rh Mr John
Heald, Oliver
Henderson, Gordon
Hendry, Charles
Herbert, rh Nick
Hinds, Damian
Hollingbery, George
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Hopkins, Kris
Howarth, Sir Gerald
Howell, John
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, Mr Nick
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kelly, Chris
Kirby, Simon
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lancaster, Mark
Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
Latham, Pauline
Leadsom, Andrea
Lee, Jessica
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, Sir Edward
Leslie, Charlotte
Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
Lewis, Brandon
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Lilley, rh Mr Peter
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Luff, Peter
Lumley, Karen

Macleod, Mary
Main, Mrs Anne
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McIntosh, Miss Anne
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, Esther
Menzies, Mark
Metcalf, Stephen
Miller, rh Maria
Mills, Nigel
Mordaunt, Penny
Morgan, Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Mosley, Stephen
Mowat, David
Murray, Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, Caroline
Norman, Jesse
Nuttall, Mr David
O'Brien, rh Mr Stephen
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Ottaway, rh Richard
Parish, Neil
Patel, Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Perry, Claire
Poulter, Dr Daniel
Prisk, Mr Mark
Raab, Mr Dominic
Randall, rh Sir John
Reckless, Mark
Rees-Mogg, Jacob
Reevell, Simon
Robertson, rh Hugh
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Rosindell, Andrew
Rudd, Amber
Ruffley, Mr David
Rutley, David
Sandys, Laura

Scott, Mr Lee
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, Alok
Shepherd, Sir Richard
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Henry
Smith, Julian
Soubry, Anna
Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
Spencer, Mr Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Iain
Stewart, Rory
Stride, Mel
Stuart, Mr Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
Syms, Mr Robert
Timpson, Mr Edward
Tomlinson, Justin
Tredinnick, David
Truss, Elizabeth
Turner, Mr Andrew
Tyrie, Mr Andrew
Uppal, Paul
Vaizey, Mr Edward
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Walker, Mr Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Watkinson, Dame Angela
Weatherley, Mike
Wharton, James
Wheeler, Heather
White, Chris
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Williamson, Gavin
Wilson, Mr Rob
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Wright, Jeremy
Young, rh Sir George
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Gavin Barwell and
Anne Milton

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment made: 80, page 1, line 20, at end insert

‘and

‘() Commonwealth citizens who, on the date of the referendum, would be entitled to vote in Gibraltar as electors at a European Parliamentary election in the combined electoral region in which Gibraltar is comprised.’—(*James Wharton.*)

Tom Greatrex (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. You may be aware that there was extensive media coverage last night and this morning of the fact that the Government, after claiming for several weeks that an energy price freeze was not possible, are asking companies to freeze their prices. [*Interruption.*]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. I must hear whether this is a point of order.

Tom Greatrex: Have you, Madam Deputy Speaker, been given any indication of whether an Energy Minister—I note that the Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change, the right hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Gregory Barker), has just taken part in Divisions—intends to make a statement to the House this morning to confirm, deny, clarify, or muddle this latest shambles of an energy policy?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that that is not a point of order. He has made his point. If he had wished to put an urgent question before the House, that could have been considered. Perhaps he will think of that next time he wishes to raise a matter in the Chamber.

Clause 3

CONDUCT OF THE REFERENDUM AND FURTHER PROVISIONS

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move amendment 52, page 2, line 2, after ‘report’, insert ‘by 1 March 2015’.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Amendment 53, page 2, line 2, after ‘report’, insert ‘by 1 March 2016’.

Amendment 54, page 2, line 2, after ‘report’, insert ‘by 1 March 2017’.

Amendment 55, page 2, line 2, after ‘report’, insert ‘six months before the date or dates appointed for the referendum’.

Amendment 17, page 2, line 5, at end insert—

‘(1A) The rules recommended by the Electoral Commission shall provide that if—

- (a) fewer than 60 per cent of registered voters take part in the referendum, or
- (b) the majority in favour of not remaining in the European Union comprises fewer than 40 per cent of registered voters, or
- (c) the result is not the same in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, or
- (d) the result is not the same in each of the European Parliament constituencies in the United Kingdom,

the Chief Counting Officer shall declare that the referendum has not produced a valid outcome.’

Amendment 5, page 2, line 11, at end insert—

‘(3A) The Secretary of State shall make available a sum of not more than £10 million to organisations campaigning—

- (a) for a Yes vote in the referendum, and
- (b) for a No vote in the referendum, for provision of public information and literature, to be divided equally between those campaigning for each answer to the referendum question.’

Amendment 6, page 2, line 11, at end insert—

‘(3A) The Secretary of State shall ensure that the proponents and opponents of the question in the referendum shall be allotted no fewer than six nor more than 10 broadcasts of a total time of at least 60 minutes on all television channels broadcasting to the United Kingdom, at such times as are determined by the Electoral Commission so as to ensure that so

far as possible they are broadcast simultaneously, and with Welsh language and Gaelic versions as directed by the Secretary of State in relation to particular channels.’

Amendment 7, page 2, line 11, at end insert—

‘(3A) The Secretary of State shall ensure that the proponents and opponents of the question in the referendum are able to publish a two full page advertisement spread immediately after the front page in all national editions of newspapers published in any part of the United Kingdom, as specified by the Electoral Commission, on four dates to be specified by the Commission, with Welsh language and Gaelic versions where specified by the Commission.’

Amendment 16, page 2, line 11, at end insert—

‘(3A) Polling stations are to be open from 6 am to midnight on each designated day or days for the referendum.’

Amendment 61, page 2, line 11, at end insert—

‘(3A) The Secretary of State shall consult with and seek to secure agreement from the devolved administrations on the conduct of the referendum within the relevant part of the United Kingdom.’

Amendment 64, page 2, line 11, at end add—

‘(3A) Results for the referendum will be published for European parliamentary constituencies, except that Gibraltar’s shall be published separately from the rest of the South West return.’

Amendment 65, page 2, line 11, at end insert—

‘(3A) Persons who are resident in part of the United Kingdom that has voted to leave the United Kingdom or that has formed an independent country, or that is in the process of negotiating such independence or holding a referendum on independence will have their votes counted separately and be subject to a separate declaration.’

Amendment 85, page 2, line 11, at end insert—

‘(3A) Those entitled to vote in the referendum who do not without reasonable excuse cast their vote shall pay a penalty of £50.’

Amendment 84, page 2, line 14, at end insert—

‘(5) The Electoral Commission shall undertake a review of the conduct of the referendum and shall publish a report setting out the conclusions of the review no more than 12 months after the day or days on which the referendum is held.’

Mike Gapes: Let me begin by wishing all my Jewish constituents, and Jewish people all over the world, a happy Chanukah.

It is a great pleasure to introduce this series of amendments. A number of them are in my name, but some have been tabled by other Members. The amendments in my name are 52, 53, 54, 55, 17, 5, 6, 7, 16 and 61. In the first part of my speech I shall concentrate on amendments 52, 53, 54 and 55, which relate to the provision in clause 3(1) that

“The Electoral Commission shall publish a report setting out its recommendations for the rules in accordance with which the referendum is to be conducted “.

Jim Fitzpatrick (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mike Gapes: I will in a moment. I should like to make a little progress first.

If the referendum is to be conducted properly, we cannot allow the Electoral Commission’s report to be published so close to the date on which it takes place that the commission’s proposals cannot be properly considered by the Government and then implemented. We must specify a date in order to provide a clear

deadline for the commission, which does not always act in a timely manner. The amendments propose various alternative dates because at the time when they were tabled there was another group of amendments to be considered and I did not know when they would be debated, but all those dates precede the proposed date of the referendum, namely before the end of 2017.

Jim Fitzpatrick: I am glad that my hon. Friend cautioned me against intervening too early, because he has now started to explain. What I wanted to know was why he had specified three different dates. Was it because he was not sure which would be the best of the three, was it because of the pace at which the Electoral Commission could move, was it because we were not sure when the referendum would take place, or was it because he was not sure whether any or all the amendments would be selected?

Mike Gapes: The answer to those questions is yes, yes, yes and yes. The proposed date of the referendum was not made clear to us initially, and there was a possibility of amendments allowing it to be held, for example, before the general election, one year after the election, or later. It was therefore important for there to be amendments in this group which were related to, but not dependent on, those in the other group.

Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): I have an open mind about which date we should opt for, but does my hon. Friend agree that it is vital for the Electoral Commission to be encouraged to focus its mind? One of the key issues that it will have to consider is how we can best avoid a repetition of what happened at the time of the Welsh referendum campaign in March 2011. There was not a no campaign because no organisation had registered, and thus there could not be a proper yes campaign. The whole campaign was hamstrung from the start.

Mike Gapes: I accept my hon. Friend's wise words. I agree that we need to learn from experience. We need to learn the lessons of not just the Welsh referendum, but the 1975 referendum on British membership of the European Community. I shall say more about that in the next part of my speech.

Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): May I correct what was said by the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Wayne David)? There was absolutely nothing wrong with the Welsh referendum campaign. It was executed beautifully, and allowed the people of Wales to make up their own minds and decide.

Mike Gapes: I assume that I would not be in order if I began to discuss the Welsh referendum in response to those two interventions, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Let me say for the avoidance of doubt that the hon. Gentleman would indeed not be in order. I know that he will stick closely to the subject of the amendments.

10.45 am

Mike Gapes: As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I always take your advice, having listened to it very carefully.

Amendment 52 is probably the most important amendment in the group. We have now voted for the referendum, if there is one, to take place by the end of 2017. Other proposed amendments to clause 3 have not been agreed to. Specifying the date of 1 March 2015 would oblige the Electoral Commission to present its proposals and recommendations about the conduct of the referendum not just well before the general election—which might be pertinent, because any incoming Government could bear in mind any difficulties that the Electoral Commission had highlighted—but at a time that would allow proper consideration and preparation, including legislation or any other measures that the Government might wish to take, to begin up to two and a half years before the referendum, given that, although we do not know the exact date of the referendum, we have been told that it must take place by the end of 2017.

Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab): I wonder whether my hon. Friend was as surprised as I was that his proposals were not already included in the Bill.

Mike Gapes: I tabled these amendments for many reasons, but the most important reason is that the Bill is inadequate. It has many flaws, and if it leaves the House of Commons unamended, the other place will have to give it proper consideration and try to remedy the failure of this place to improve it.

Jim Fitzpatrick: I saw the promoter of the Bill, the hon. Member for Stockton South (James Wharton), shaking his head during my hon. Friend's comments. This morning the hon. Gentleman moved an amendment to his own Bill, so it is clear that it has already been improved. Has my hon. Friend had a chance to discuss these amendments with the hon. Gentleman, and can he tell us whether the hon. Gentleman is inclined to accept them?

Mike Gapes: I have had no direct discussions with the hon. Member for Stockton South (James Wharton), but he is present, and is perfectly at liberty to speak about the amendments or even to intervene now. I should welcome an intervention from him if he wishes to explain why he does not like certain of my amendments. However, as we have observed on previous Fridays, although he is the Bill's promoter, he makes hardly any contributions to our debates.

Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): Many people might think that the reason the Government are being so unclear is that they do not have any of the answers, and it is simply a political manoeuvre. If Government Members have genuine concerns, is it not surprising that so few of them are here to discuss my hon. Friend's amendments?

Mike Gapes: Apart from the Minister, only two Conservative Members are present, namely the promoter of the Bill and his hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Simon Kirby), along with one Liberal Democrat. Oh, I am sorry: I forgot the Whip. Whips are almost anonymous, so I never notice them.

Lyn Brown: What?

Mike Gapes: Says my former Whip! But she is no longer my Whip, so I think—I hope—that I am okay.

Amendment 52 states that the Electoral Commission's report must be published by 1 March 2015. Amendment 53 would give the commission another year, but that would allow the Government less time in which to consider its recommendations and make any changes to take account of them.

Amendment 54 would do the same thing, but with 1 March 2017 as the date. I am not so keen on that amendment. It was put forward, as I have explained to colleagues, in case a referendum is held after the end of 2017. I think that 1 March 2017 would be far too late for that obligation, because it would not give enough time for the House to make the appropriate changes or for the Government to put forward properly considered proposals.

Amendment 55 would ensure that the Electoral Commission published its report at least six months before the date or dates appointed for the referendum. Let us imagine that the Government, having listened to our deliberations, decided not to hold the referendum during Britain's presidency of the European Union's Council of Ministers—from 1 July to 31 December 2017—and, given their commitment to hold it before the end of December and the fact that they would not wish it to clash with religious festivals at the end of 2017, particularly Christmas and Chanukah, opted instead to hold it in early 2017. The Electoral Commission would therefore have to produce its report by the end of 2016.

Wayne David: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is important that the Electoral Commission considers not only the arguments for and against, but the fact that the electorate need much more basic information? I refer him to the commission's report on the issue, which makes the salient point that in order to have a reasonable debate the electorate need more basic information. The report must address that fact.

Mike Gapes: Absolutely. We are talking about a monumental decision on the future of our country, our international relations and the status of the 1.4 million British people living in other European Union countries, who, as things stand, will be excluded from making a democratic decision in the referendum. It is therefore important that the Electoral Commission does the job that the Government and the Bill's promoter have not done, because those issues are not addressed in the Bill, even though they should be. We have to find a way for the Electoral Commission to put right what was not done by the Government, or at least the part of the Government who support the Bill—this is so complicated, because I have to keep remembering that it is a private Member's Bill, even though the Minister is here to support it.

Chris Williamson (Derby North) (Lab): My hon. Friend referred to British nationals living on the continent. Clearly the referendum could have profound implications for them. In view of his interest in the matter, which is evident in the amendments he has laid before the House, I would be keen to know whether he has heard from British people living on the continent and, if so, what their take is on the implications of what is happening and on their inability to participate in the referendum.

Mike Gapes: I have received several e-mails and letters from British people living in other European Union countries—indeed, there are websites for them—and they are outraged by the idea that they will have no say. Some have been living in France or Italy for more than 15 years but will be unable to register as overseas voters. As I pointed out on a previous Friday, of the millions of British citizens living abroad, only 20,000 are registered as overseas voters. It is a serious flaw in the Bill that British citizens in other parts of the European Union will not be able to participate, but we will consider that under another set of amendments.

I will make some progress. Amendment 17 is fundamentally important. As Members will recall, this House introduced a threshold for the Scottish referendum in the 1970s, which was defeated. As a result, the support for separatism did not secure the necessary figure. The Scottish people did not vote for separatism, but in any case the threshold was there as a safeguard to ensure that a small, vocal and impassioned minority was not able to drive through a fundamental change without the wholehearted consent of the Scottish people at the time.

I believe that a similar threshold should be included for this referendum to ensure that if there is a low turnout the result will not be binding. Amendment 17 proposes that the Electoral Commission should set down rules specifying that if

“fewer than 60 per cent of registered voters take part in the referendum, or the majority in favour of not remaining in the European Union comprises fewer than 40% of registered voters”, the referendum would not be binding.

Lyn Brown: I am delighted that we are considering amendment 17, as the last time we had a politically generated referendum in this country—when we had the elections for police and crime commissioners—only 15% of the electorate voted. Has my hon. Friend heard any noises from the Government Benches on whether they accept his amendment?

Mike Gapes: The only noises I have heard from the Government Benches have not been complimentary about any of my amendments—and some of them were not made in the Chamber.

There is also a major danger that different nations or regions will vote in markedly different ways in a low-turnout referendum, with divisive consequences for our United Kingdom. Let us imagine, for the sake of argument, that next September the Scottish people vote against separatism and in favour of staying in the UK but in a referendum in 2017 a majority of the electorate votes to leave the European Union, based on votes in parts of England and with the vast majority of Scots voting to remain in the European Union. We would think that the referendum next September will settle the question of Scottish independence and separatism, but in fact the same issue could be reopened only two or so years later, even though the Scottish people voted to stay in the UK. They might say, “Hold on. We didn't want to leave the European Union, which is part of our association with the two Unions we are part of: the United Kingdom and the European Union.” We could then have a real problem. The same argument could apply in Wales, Northern Ireland and significant parts of England.

Therefore, if we want to keep the unity and cohesion of our country, we need safeguards to avoid an extreme minority in certain parts of the country driving through, on a low turnout, a referendum result that would lead to the withdrawal of parts of the country that did not wish to leave the European Union and were not inspired by fanatics to take part in a referendum that they did not feel was particularly important.

Wayne David: I am not entirely convinced by my hon. Friend's argument. Is he saying that Wales, which has a population of less than 3 million, could have an effective veto over the rest of the United Kingdom?

Mike Gapes: I believe that those issues would then need to come back to be considered by Parliament. I do not wish to have a binding referendum. A binding referendum is dangerous if we cannot allow for sophisticated consideration of the implications of the result, for example if there is a low turnout or there are very diverse results in different parts of our country. The final decision would therefore have to rest with this House in legislation that we would pass afterwards. I tabled amendment 17 for that reason, and I believe that the Electoral Commission would need to take account of those factors in its report. If the Electoral Commission did not accept such points, it would say so in its recommendations to Parliament, and Parliament and the Government would then consider those recommendations in making arrangements before the referendum that might be held by the end of 2017.

11 am

Jim Fitzpatrick: I am sorry to say that I am somewhat disappointed by amendment 17. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Wayne David), who said that it will give a veto to the devolved Assemblies, which is not in the ethos of a United Kingdom. More importantly, paragraph (d) states that there is a veto in relation to European Parliament constituencies. Notwithstanding the explanation of my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes) about the referendum result not being binding, the amendment refers to a decision that

"the referendum has not produced a valid outcome."

To me, that means that the referendum would be discarded. Does the amendment mean that the Electoral Commission will raise such a matter, because the amendment does not indicate what will happen if vetoes for different geographical areas are allowed and one actually takes place?

Mike Gapes: I agree that amendment 17 is not perfect. I originally put forward a series of amendments, but they were tabled together as one amendment. I would have preferred to have a vote on each paragraph separately, but that is not how the process worked, so they are all together in one. I interpret the amendment as giving advice to the Electoral Commission, which would then make recommendations to the Government, at least six months and probably two years in advance of any referendum. At that point, provisions could be considered to take account of the needs of the whole of the United Kingdom, as well as the requirement for a threshold to ensure that the result of any referendum cannot be based on a small minority, as has happened in police

and crime commissioner or other elections, when the decision will have profound long-term implications for the future of the whole United Kingdom.

Amendments 5 to 7, which are linked, make proposals relating to the conduct of the referendum to make sure that there is a level playing field in the provision of public information and campaigning on both the yes and the no sides. From our experience of other referendums, not least the one on the alternative vote, we know that the different sides can put in different levels of resources. We know that well-funded American citizens of Australian origin who have daily newspapers and people from other countries who have connections with lobbying companies and organisations, whether tobacco lobbyists or others, will be able to generate large amounts of publicity for one side in any referendum campaign.

It is important to have balance. We already have rules with regard to party political broadcasts on television. Amendment 6 would make provision for television referendum broadcasts for both sides, so that there are "no fewer than six nor more than 10 broadcasts of a total time of at least 60 minutes on all television channels...at such times as are determined by the Electoral Commission".

Given that this country has minority languages that are recognised by the devolved institutions, we need provision for broadcasts in Welsh or Gaelic in certain parts of the United Kingdom.

Chris Williamson: Is the thinking behind my hon. Friend's amendment on the funding of campaigns that there should be a ceiling, with no additional funding available? Back in 1975, there was a very unequal contest between the two sides of the then referendum debate. Is he seeking to ensure fairness, with the £10 million figure specified in amendment 5 being the absolute maximum that can be spent on the campaign by either side?

Mike Gapes: The amendment is about state funding to ensure that both sides have a minimum level of resources for campaigning, but it does not cap the total that can be spent. It is entirely up to the Electoral Commission to propose rules of that kind. None of my amendments would introduce a cap, but I take my hon. Friend's point. There will undoubtedly be a disparity, with well-funded—perhaps foreign—interests that want the UK to leave the European Union, because they see that as a way to help their companies have lower standards of social protection, parental rights or whatever, so there are dangers.

Jim Fitzpatrick: I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly and I will agree about amendment 5, as we did on the wording of amendment 17. Does my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South intend to introduce a private Member's Bill to make voting compulsory in this country? My impression is that what he wants broadcasters and print media to produce would completely turn off the British people by forcing politics down their throats. If anything is guaranteed to ensure that people do not vote in the referendum, it is this amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. The hon. Gentleman's intervention introduces an interesting question that is not absolutely pertinent to the amendments, but I am sure that Mr Gapes will stick carefully to his amendments.

Mike Gapes: Of course, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would simply say that I am in favour of compulsory voting, as in Australia, but it is not in the Bill.

Wayne David: On amendment 7—

Mike Gapes: I am about to introduce amendment 7, but I thank my hon. Friend for pre-empting me. It deals with what we could call the Rupert Murdoch question: making sure that when 70% or more, by circulation, of this country's print media is in the hands of people who do not want Britain to remain in the European Union—they will no doubt campaign vigorously, as many of them have for many months or years, with a relentless daily drip, drip, drip—their readers should have some information from both sides of the campaign.

Amendment 7 states that

“proponents and opponents of the question in the referendum are able to publish a two full page advertisement spread immediately after the front page in all national editions of newspapers published in any part of the United Kingdom, as specified by the Electoral Commission, on four dates to be specified by the Commission”.

That would ensure that the debate is conducted with some degree of fairness, and it would also save costs. There could be a higher figure for both sides of the campaign to enable them to put out more material, but we require balance in our broadcast media—the BBC and other broadcasters are supposed to show balance during election campaigns—and the amendment is about having such balance in our print media.

Jim Fitzpatrick: I took notice of your previous admonishment, Madam Deputy Speaker, when I mentioned alternative legislation. However, I want to do so again on the basis that we considered recently the complex issue of press freedom and the royal charter. Surely what is missing from amendment 7 is the word “paid”. It states that the Secretary of State will make publishers “publish a two full page advertisement”

on these issues. Surely the word “paid” should be in there, because we would not be taking editorial control of the newspapers. The adverts would surely have to be paid for by the taxpayer.

Mike Gapes: It would be for the Electoral Commission to consider how best the adverts could be paid for. The payment could come out of the £10 million that is mentioned in amendment 5 or a special fund could be established for the purpose. Perhaps, out of the goodness of their hearts and acting patriotically in the national interest, the newspapers might allow both sides in the debate to be heard, rather than putting only one side of the argument, as is often the case with some publications in this country.

Mr Adrian Bailey (West Bromwich West) (Lab/Co-op): I am listening to my hon. Friend's argument with great interest, but I am little concerned that the newspapers to which he is referring might take the taxpayer's money with great enthusiasm and publish the pages, but use the money to publish another couple of pages that counter the arguments that are put forward in the advertisement. Does he agree that a lot more work needs to be done on that?

Mike Gapes: Absolutely; that is why amendment 7 says that the Electoral Commission should consider the matter in detail. We cannot go through all the minutiae

of the Bill. The Electoral Commission would be responsible for looking at all the arguments, including those made by my hon. Friends the Members for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) and for West Bromwich West (Mr Bailey).

Wayne David: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mike Gapes: No, I want to make a bit of progress because I have other amendments that I want to introduce.

Wayne David: It is a very important issue.

Mike Gapes: All right, I will give way very briefly.

Wayne David: I thank my hon. Friend for his generosity. I would like clarification. Amendment 7 uses the term “national”. Is he talking about the Welsh nation, the Scottish nation or the United Kingdom? What does he mean by “national”? My understanding is that in the amendment, “national” refers to the United Kingdom. Many English voters would therefore have the Welsh language in their newspapers. Does he think that that might be slightly strange for them?

Mike Gapes: As I have said, the Electoral Commission needs to consider all of these aspects carefully. Publications such as the *Western Mail* would be regarded as national in Wales, but not in England. We have to consider such difficulties and nuances. That would be done by the Electoral Commission.

I will move on to the final two amendments that appear in my name. Amendment 16 would provide for polling stations to be open for longer. In parliamentary elections, polling stations are open from 7 in the morning until 10 at night. There were difficulties during the last general election. Some people queued outside polling stations and could not get in. The doors of some polling stations were locked and there were arguments about people not being allowed to vote. Other people were inside polling stations and were allowed to put their votes into the ballot boxes after 10 o'clock.

We must avoid such difficulties. I tabled a series of amendments on holding the referendum on more than one day. Polling stations must be open for cleaners who come back home in the early hours of the morning. They could vote at 6 am. People who work late could vote just before midnight. If, contrary to what I expect, there will be great enthusiasm for the referendum and a massive turnout, we must extend the voting period to ensure that as many people as possible can cast their votes.

Wayne David: I hear what my hon. Friend is saying, but the Government did eventually, under pressure, accept an amendment to the Electoral Registration and Administration Bill to solve the problem of long queues at polling stations before 10 o'clock. I think that that will be effective. That puts a question mark over the importance of amendment 16.

11.15 am

Mike Gapes: I do not expect the House to vote on all my amendments. There are some amendments that I will not press to a vote and amendment 16 is one of them. I will therefore conclude my remarks on that amendment.

Finally, amendment 61 is important. It touches on the issues of publicity, newspapers, media and different languages that we have already debated. We live in a United Kingdom that has devolved Administrations in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. It is important that there is consultation with all parts of the UK and agreement over the conduct of the referendum. I therefore hope that amendment 61 is not controversial and will not be opposed by the Government.

Mr Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend has not commented on the amendments that have been tabled by those on his Front Bench, which recommend an audit of the arrangements for the referendum by the Electoral Commission once it has taken place and, crucially, that the people of Gibraltar should have their votes declared separately and, as a result, clearly so that we can see how Gibraltarians have voted. I would welcome his assurance that he is sympathetic to the merit of those two amendments.

Mike Gapes: Of course I am sympathetic to those amendments. I have not commented on them because they have not been introduced by the Member who tabled them. I thought that it would be better to listen and to intervene at a later stage, if necessary.

I am happy to conclude by commending all my amendments to the House. I look forward to the consideration of the amendments that have been tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow West (Mr Thomas) and by other hon. Members.

The Minister for Europe (Mr David Lidington): This group of amendments deals with various matters pertaining to the detailed conduct of the proposed referendum.

Amendments 52 to 55 would impose deadlines on the Electoral Commission. Existing legislation gives the commission appropriate powers and responsibilities. Particularly as we do not yet know the exact date on which the referendum will take place, it would be wrong to impose undue inflexibility on the commission, as these amendments would do.

Amendment 17 would impose thresholds. The Government believe that the referendum result should be determined, as has been the case in other referendums, by a simple majority of those who vote. Thresholds should not be required in respect of turnout or anything else.

Lyn Brown: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Lidington: No, I am going to make progress.

Amendments 5 to 7 and 84 propose arrangements for the referendum that would either duplicate or complicate arrangements that are set out clearly in existing primary legislation, namely the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

Amendments 16, 64 and 65—

Mr Thomas: Will the Minister give way?

Mr Lidington: No.

Amendments 16, 64 and 65 propose detailed rules on the conduct of the referendum.

Mr Thomas: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Surely it is a tradition of the House that when one Front Bencher seeks to intervene on another Front Bencher, the intervention is accepted.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): The hon. Gentleman has made his point. He knows that it is not a point on which I should rule from the Chair. The Minister has been speaking for only a minute or two. He is in the opening stages of his speech and I am sure that he will take interventions when it becomes appropriate.

Mr Lidington: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Amendments 16, 64 and 65 propose detailed rules for the conduct of the referendum, but these kinds of detailed arrangements will be dealt with in secondary legislation, provision for which is already included in the Bill. Amendment 61 would require the Government to consult the devolved Administrations. Clearly, any Government would take careful account of the situation in the three devolved areas, but we are talking about the electorate of the entire United Kingdom on a subject that is explicitly and unquestionably a reserved, non-devolved matter, so I believe it would be inappropriate to put such a requirement in the Bill. Amendment 85 would make voting compulsory. I disagree with the amendment. Voting should be a matter of civic responsibility and pride, not something enforced under threat of penalty.

If I dig deep into my reserves of good will, I might just, even now, be persuaded that these amendments were tabled with good intentions, but I think they are, for the most part, otiose. I disagree with them and hope that their proposers will, on reflection, not press them.

Chris Williamson: I start by congratulating you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on your elevation to the Chair. This is the first opportunity I have had to say that. I was delighted when you were successfully installed in your place.

I want to speak in support of amendments 5, 6, 7, 16, 17, 52, 53 and 55, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes), amendment 84, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow West (Mr Thomas), who sits on the Front Bench, and obviously my own amendment 85.

Wayne David: Before my hon. Friend starts to develop his arguments, I must say that the significance of what the Minister has just said is beginning to sink in. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is quite outrageous for a Minister to question the integrity of another hon. Member in asking legitimate questions, many of which are probing questions in the interests of our having a good debate? Was it not thoroughly shameful?

Chris Williamson: I could not have put it better myself. Indeed, I was going to use the word “shameful” to describe what can only be called the Minister’s calumnies against the honourable motives of my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South. I absolutely agree that they were shameful. I hope that when the Minister has had time to reflect, he might, from the Dispatch Box, withdraw his comments and apologise to my hon. Friend, who has entirely honourable motives for asking reasonable questions and tabling legitimate amendments. On a

[Chris Williamson]

previous occasion, I think another Minister was chided by Mr Speaker for questioning my hon. Friend's amendments, as if in some way they were disorderly. I could not see how that could possibly have been the case, because the Chair had ruled them in order and they were before the House to be debated. I have not long been in this place, but in my time I think it is unprecedented for such a challenge to be made.

Mike Gapes: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Wayne David) for their kind remarks. I want to place it on the record that my amendments, which were selected, were ruled by Mr Speaker to be perfectly in order and specifically not "frivolous", but I must correct my hon. Friend: it was not a Minister who said they were frivolous, but a Liberal Democrat.

Chris Williamson: Yes, I recall; I was in the Chamber at the time. I withdraw any inadvertent slight against those on the Government Front Bench on that particular point, but obviously my remarks just now about the Minister's shameful comments still stand.

Despite my youthful appearance, I actually participated in the referendum in 1975. I know it is probably difficult for people to believe, but I was eligible to vote. Indeed, it was my second opportunity to vote in a national poll.

Jim Fitzpatrick: I can reassure my hon. Friend; he need not think that some of us do not believe he voted in that referendum.

Chris Williamson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who I think is also a vegetarian. I was just about to say that my youthful appearance was down to my vegan diet, but I digress.

As we know, in the 1975 referendum the country voted overwhelmingly in favour of remaining in the EEC. I have to say I voted no, but I have since recognised that I was wrong to do so. Were I to have my time again, I would certainly vote differently, because the EU has developed in a very positive way. My hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South referred to some of the benefits of our membership. Certain powerful media moguls in this country want us to withdraw from the EU because it would make it easier to take away workers' rights and consumer protections and to adopt exploitative working practices, which would become much more commonplace. It is only thanks to the EU that many of those rights are enshrined in law and workers receive the rights they now do, through things such as the working time directive and so on. Obviously, the single market is an extremely important benefit to the UK and the British work force, millions of whose livelihoods rely on companies whose main market is the EU, but that would be jeopardised if the referendum was held and the country voted to withdraw from the EU.

Given the importance of the referendum to the UK's future, my amendment 85 is essential. It would make a significant turnout at a referendum much more likely. It proposes that unless people have good reason, they should be subject to a penalty if they do not participate in the referendum. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South, I favour compulsory voting, but I am not

necessarily suggesting that we introduce it for general and local elections. I think this referendum is different, however, because the consequences of a vote, whatever the outcome, would be profound and potentially irreversible. As I have mentioned, people's livelihoods, consumers' rights and the single market would all be affected by a decision to withdraw from the EU. It would be appropriate, therefore, on this occasion, if not on any other, to impose a penalty in order to maximise turnout. We want to ensure that the British people's voice is heard and that the overwhelming majority of the British people express their view.

Wayne David: Many hon. Members might think this a significant departure from current practice, and in many ways it is, but is my hon. Friend aware that, as things stand now, if a householder does not return their electoral registration form or co-operate with their electoral registration officer, a fine can be imposed for non-co-operation and therefore non-registration? Also, under the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013, which introduced individual electoral registration, individuals can be fined for non-co-operation and therefore non-registration. We do not know how much it will be, but nevertheless that important principle has been established, and his amendment merely takes it a stage further. Does he agree?

Chris Williamson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who sets out the case very effectively. This is not such a huge leap, although I accept that, on the face of it, people might baulk at the notion that a penalty should be imposed on those who fail to cast a vote without good reason. As my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly has pointed out, however, this is not necessarily such a big leap as people might first think it to be.

11.30 am

To return to my previous point, this is such a fundamentally important issue for the future of the United Kingdom that I would hope even those who are opposed to compulsory voting would understand the reasons behind the amendment—and, indeed, hopefully, support it and acknowledge how important it is, if a referendum takes place, to have an overwhelming turnout. I would hope that Government Members who want to see the UK withdraw from the EU would not want to do so on the basis of a tiny minority of the vote. I do not think they would want to do that on the basis of the abysmal turnout for the elections of police and crime commissioners, which my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South mentioned. Given how much is at stake here, surely it is important to all who believe in democracy that citizens of these islands actually participate in this great democratic opportunity to determine the fate of Britain in or out of the EU.

If we look around the world, we find that a number of countries have compulsory voting on their statute books. Before coming to the debate this morning, I had a look and found some examples of the nations that have a compulsory voting requirement. Australia is the probably the one with which most of us will be familiar, but there are others, as well: for example, Brazil is another one, as is Argentina, and then there is Ecuador. I think there are 10 countries around the globe that have enforced compulsory voting with a penalty.

There are others for which compulsory voting is on the statute book, but without any penalties in place for people who do not participate. According to my research, there are around 20 countries falling into that category—including places like Belgium and Greece. Perhaps we need to learn a lesson from these other nations, where it seems to have worked reasonably well and to have resulted in a bigger turnout in their elections.

Wayne David: In the countries that my hon. Friend has cited, does he agree that there is no obligation for individuals to cast their vote for any particular candidate? They are able to go to a ballot box and spoil their ballot paper. Does my hon. Friend assume that the same thing would happen here if his amendment were passed?

Chris Williamson: Absolutely. It would clearly be completely wrong—and, indeed, anti-democratic—to impose any obligation restriction on how individuals cast their votes or for whom they cast them. That would be a matter for each individual to come to a view on. People would no doubt listen to the various campaigns for and against and come to a view. I would personally prefer it if, when elections come about, people actually took the opportunity to vote rather than stopping at home. If they do not support any particular candidate, they should go along and spoil their ballot paper. Our democracy confers a very precious right. We know that our forefathers and mothers fought and gave their lives for democracy, and we see this around the world when people continue to this day to strive, struggle and fight to get the right to exercise their vote. Democracy is a very precious thing, and that is why it is essential to maximise participation in it. I think my amendment would have the effect of achieving precisely that.

Mike Gapes: My hon. Friend is making a very important point about the importance of people voting in elections, but is he as concerned as I am that there appears to be a decline in voter turnout across large parts of the prosperous world, certainly in other European countries? Interestingly, this relates not just to the elections for the European Parliament, because turnout has declined even more in many countries in their national elections.

Chris Williamson: Yes, that is a very regrettable fact of life. My hon. Friend's intervention reinforces the notion behind my amendment that imposing a penalty would almost certainly increase the turnout. We have seen that this is what happens in Australia, for example. Because of the importance of this particular issue, any incentive we can provide to encourage people to participate would, I think, be all to the good. I hope that, as I have said, Government Members will consider the intentions behind my amendment and support it.

Lyn Brown: I find myself in the unique position of disagreeing with my hon. Friend on his amendment. I jib at the idea of forcing people to vote. Has he thought of any other mechanisms that might increase the vote, without being so prescriptive—electronic voting, for instance? Would that not achieve what he intends, which is to increase the number of people participating in this election?

Chris Williamson: That is certainly a valid point. As I was saying in my opening remarks, I understand that some people may feel a little uncomfortable about the

notion of compelling people to vote. I think electronic voting is a worthy innovation that should be considered, and other options need to be considered in order to increase awareness and participation. It is really a matter for political parties to look at how their message is being communicated and how they can engage effectively with the electorate to encourage people to participate.

Let me come back to my central point. The proposition for a referendum could have fundamental implications for the United Kingdom. In these circumstances, even people such as my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown), who is a little uneasy about the notion of compulsory voting, need to consider it carefully, along with some of the other issues that she has identified.

Let us look at the Australian example, where I believe compulsory voting was introduced in 1924. Turnout in federal elections is never less than 90%. In the 2013 election, turnout was 93%. I would certainly hope that, if this referendum went ahead, we got a turnout of that order. If we were to achieve a turnout of 90%, or even 80%, we would certainly know that the British people had spoken. Whatever the British people decided, we would know that it had the confidence of the majority of the electorate in our country.

Lyn Brown: I hear what my hon. Friend says, and I have some sympathy with it. Does he not believe, however, as with the PCC elections that the British people spoke volubly when they did not turn out to vote? The amendment tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes), which specified a threshold to be reached in terms of turnout, would suffice to reach the position sought by my hon. Friend the Member for Derby North (Chris Williamson) in his amendment.

Chris Williamson: I hear what my hon. Friend says. I shall come on in a few moments to comment briefly on the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South, particularly the one identified by my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham. What she suggests would certainly be a safeguard, but I am not sure that it would be strong enough safeguard. I generally support the amendments of my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South, and I am going to speak about them in a few moments.

The difference between the PCC election, in which as my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham pointed out the British people spoke volubly by their lack of participation, and the referendum on Britain's membership of the EU is that the latter is absolutely fundamental and potentially irreversible. If on a turnout of, say, 15%, it was decided that the UK withdraw from the EU, the impact on the remaining 85%—actually, it would be more than 85% because I would assume that the 15% who participated would not have all voted the same way, making it potentially 90%—could be devastating. All those people could have their lives literally turned upside down by a tiny rump, a tiny proportion, of the British people—10%, say, if the turnout were that low. That is why I come back to the point that making it compulsory for people to vote would overcome the scenario that I have just outlined.

Jim Fitzpatrick: Forgive me if I missed this in my hon. Friend's opening remarks, but did he explain how he arrived at £50? That is a significant amount. It is

[*Jim Fitzpatrick*]

about the same amount as my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes) and I will pay to see West Ham beat Fulham tomorrow—[*Interruption.*] Sorry, I mean West Ham United and not the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Lyn Brown).

Chris Williamson: I accept that £50 is a fairly arbitrary figure. I did not want to make it so high that it was unreasonable, but it needed to be sufficiently high. I think £50 is around about the level—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is well aware that he must stick specifically to the question in hand. The question proposed by the hon. Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) was one that requires only a short answer, and the hon. Gentleman may then resume his consideration of the amendments.

Mr Thomas *rose*—

Chris Williamson: I give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr Thomas: My hon. Friend has said that he will reference the amendments of my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes), but may I ask him to comment briefly on the two amendments that I have tabled from the Front Bench? One stipulates that the results of any referendum in Gibraltar should be declared separately so that we can see how Gibraltarians voted and the second talks of the crucial need for an audit of the arrangements for the referendum, which the Electoral Commission might set out.

Chris Williamson: Indeed I was going to refer to those amendments. Suffice it to say that they are sensible. We need to learn lessons from a referendum, and it would be helpful to have that report.

On the earlier point, briefly, £50 is sufficiently high enough to create an incentive and to concentrate people's minds. If it were any less than that, they might not bother to vote. If it were higher than that, it would be unreasonable. I must say I did pluck the figure out of the sky, but I thought that £50 was reasonable.

Wayne David: The figure is very important. There was a not dissimilar debate a little while ago about the level of a fine for an individual who fails to co-operate with the individual electoral registration system. The Government took as their yardstick the average level of a parking fine—I think that phrase was used. Has my hon. Friend considered whether there should be a parking fine figure, because it would be considerably more than £50 on average?

Chris Williamson: I am not too familiar with the levels of parking fines. I never transgress parking restrictions when I park my vehicle, so I have never been subject to such a fine. Anecdotally, I understand that the average figure is about £50, so the fine I propose is in the order of a £50 parking fine. Without stretching Madam Deputy Speaker's patience too far, I think we have probably dealt with the point about the £50 and perhaps need to move on, but I give way to my hon. Friend.

Lyn Brown: I was going to take my hon. Friend back to the original premise of his amendment and ask whether he thought that, given how difficult it is for some of our press to deal with this issue in an even-handed way, if we did introduce compulsory voting, those of us who are on the vote no side might get blamed for that. The whole thing might backfire against those of us who wish to keep Britain firmly in the European Union.

Chris Williamson: I hope it does not. I believe that the force of our argument is so strong that it will convince a majority of the British people. I want to ensure that we get a strong turnout at the referendum and a very clear mandate from the British people. I am absolutely convinced that that mandate will be overwhelmingly to remain inside the European Union, because it is in the United Kingdom's best interests to do so. We do not want a situation in which workers have their rights thrown on the bonfire. We do not want to see consumers losing their protection or millions of workers losing their jobs as a result of not having access to the single market.

Lyn Brown: May I just press my hon. Friend? Can he not see the headline in one of our nationals that says, "Europe forces you to vote now or lose £500." We know how such things get inflated.

11.45 am

Chris Williamson: Indeed. I was just about to correct my hon. Friend's figure.

Lyn Brown: Exactly.

Chris Williamson: I was thinking, "Hold on, did I put another zero in my amendment?" I clearly did not. There is a danger of the figure being inflated, so I accept what my hon. Friend says, but none the less I feel that it is important to give this incentive to the British people. Having heard all the arguments, I think that most people would want to participate in any event. The penalty would not be imposed on people who have a valid reason not to participate.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. While I appreciate that the hon. Gentleman would like to consider this penalty issue at some length, I must point out to him that he is covering a large range of amendments in his speech. He has addressed most of them. He has now had the floor for 26 minutes, and I am sure that he, being an hon. Gentleman, will appreciate that there are others who wish to participate in today's debate. Twenty six minutes is quite sufficient time to cover all of the amendments, and I am quite sure that he will conclude his speech in the very near future.

Chris Williamson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker; I will certainly do that. There was a lot more that I wanted to say, but I will try to draw my remarks to a close as quickly as I can. There were many other amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South that I support and on which I wanted to comment, but I will only comment on amendment 17, which related to the threshold that would need to be reached to declare any referendum outcome valid.

Validity is essential, and I have touched on that. We have referred to the PCC elections. We do not want a situation in which a small percentage of the population participating in the referendum determine the future of

our country. It is sensible to have a threshold figure that would make the referendum valid, properly democratic and orderly. Another important issue is the different outcomes in the different nations of the United Kingdom. If we are to take such a fundamental decision to leave the European Union, it is important that the decision is reflected in each of the constituent nations of the United Kingdom to ensure the democratic validity of it. If we were not to do that, there would be significant ramifications for the validity of the outcome, and that would not be helpful to the future of the United Kingdom. With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will conclude my remarks and thank you for giving me the time to contribute.

Martin Horwood (Cheltenham) (LD): It is a pleasure to speak in this debate at last. I thought for a minute that it was never going to happen. Like you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I hope that we can now make rapid progress. Having failed sensibly to amend the Bill so far, it will now fall to our noble friends up the corridor to try to improve it. The sooner we press on to Third Reading the better.

I would quite like to attend the European congress of Liberals and Democrats, which I am proud to say is happening in London this week, where 1,000 Liberals are gathering from 30 or 40 countries, 12 of them countries in which we are in government, to plot a positive, constructive and collaborative future for Europe. I realise that might sound like a vision from hell to some Conservative Back Benchers, but I find it rather inspiring and would quite like to drop in. I apologise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to the House for not being present for the whole of today's debate as a result.

Moving swiftly on to the amendments, I will not address all of those tabled by the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes). He is right that they are not frivolous, and they would not have been in order if they had been, but some are a little superfluous, if that is not an unkind remark. The amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Derby North (Chris Williamson) would impose compulsory voting on us, which is not a principle that Liberals generally support. Voters reveal a lot when they abstain from a democratic election or a referendum and it is important that we understand what they are telling us when they abstain or do not turn out to vote.

Chris Williamson: Will the hon. Gentleman comment on the scenario I touched on, in which the percentage turnout is very low—say, at the police and crime commissioner level? Would he be content if we withdrew from the EU on that basis, because we had not accepted my amendment?

Martin Horwood: The principle of turnout in British elections has always been that whatever the quantum of votes, we accept the result one way or the other. I would not be happy in that situation, but it would be down to those of us who are putting the pro-European case to ensure that people turned out in sufficient numbers to defend British jobs, to defend our ability to fight cross-border crime and to defend the protection of the environment across European borders. That would be our responsibility and we will not solve it by forcing people who do not want to vote to turn out. We do not

have to share Russell Brand's variety of celebrity nihilism to believe that voters reveal important information about the health of our democracy and the levels of detachment and disenchantment when they do not turn out to vote.

Mike Gapes *rose*—

Martin Horwood: I will give way once to the hon. Gentleman.

Mike Gapes: I do not intend to intervene again. I just want to point out that in the 1970s this House introduced a threshold for the Scottish referendum, so thresholds are not an unprecedented proposal. There might be a strong argument for it in a case of this kind.

Martin Horwood: That brings me neatly on to amendment 17, which seeks to impose a threshold of 60%. The suggestion that a turnout of less than 60% means that the result is not legitimate is intriguing, because if we applied that to Westminster constituencies we would have some interesting results. Let me pick one at random: Ilford South had a turnout of 58% at the last general election, and I would find it surprising if the hon. Gentleman was arguing that that meant that the result was invalid in some way. We have not applied that principle, certainly not at such a level, to previous referendums and we certainly do not apply it to Westminster votes. When the referendum comes, I hope that those in favour of remaining in the European Union for the benefit of jobs, fighting cross-border crime and protecting the environment will win it on a simple majority.

Chris Williamson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Martin Horwood: No, I will not, I am afraid. We need to make progress on this Bill today.

Mr Thomas *rose*—

Martin Horwood: I will give way once to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr Thomas: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and understand his appetite to move on. I hope that when he reaches the other amendments he might be willing to comment on the two that I have tabled. The first suggests that there should be a separate but linked declaration of the result in Gibraltar, and I hope he might be tempted to support that. I would also welcome his views on amendment 84, which suggests a post-referendum audit.

Martin Horwood: I am certainly more sympathetic to those amendments. The idea of an audit is, I think, a little superfluous. I am not sure that it is a bad idea, but I am also not sure that we need it in the Bill. We could leave it to the Electoral Commission's good judgment.

Amendment 64 is more serious. We debated the subject at some length when we discussed the Conservative amendments on our first day on Report. There is a question about Gibraltar that has not been resolved by enabling Gibraltarians to vote in the referendum, which has now been incorporated into the Bill, because we still have the problem that Gibraltar is only a member of the European Union by virtue of its status as a British territory. If the UK and Gibraltar vote yes, we will have no problem. If the UK and Gibraltar vote no, it would

[*Martin Horwood*]

be a catastrophe for jobs, the fighting of crime, the environment and so on, but it would not be a problem for Gibraltar's constitutional position.

We have problems, however—I have not yet heard Ministers respond to them satisfactorily to defend the Bill—with what will happen if Gibraltar and the UK vote in different ways. If the UK votes to remain in the EU but Gibraltar votes no, I would assume that that would be taken as an indication of Gibraltar's desire to leave the EU. Would we then accommodate that desire? Would we, for instance, pursue the Greenland option, where one territory from within a realm leaves the European Union? It would be interesting to hear what Ministers have to say in reply to that. If the reverse happens, and Gibraltar votes yes and the UK votes no, would we really proceed in effect to expel Gibraltar from the European Union against the clearly expressed wishes of the Gibraltarian people? What message would that send to Spain about our desire to respect the will of the people of Gibraltar in determining their own future? It would be good to hear the Minister's replies on those two scenarios.

Let me conclude by talking about my amendment 65, which suggests the separate declaration that I think would be appropriate for any country that has voted to leave the UK, has formed an independent country or is in the process of negotiating such independence or holding a referendum on it. It is pretty clear which country I am talking about and I have obtained from the Library a copy of a document called "Scotland's Future", which was published in the past few days and contains some interesting aspirations, including for Scotland to remain a member of the European Union and to achieve independence, if it is voted for in autumn 2014, by 24 March 2016.

I am no expert on the Scottish independence debate and I do not know whether either of those aspirations is guaranteed—I suspect that neither of them is—but it raises the important question of what will happen if the Scottish people vote yes to independence and no to Europe. Will the Scottish Government pursue membership of the European Union even though their people have voted the other way? It will be equally bizarre if England votes no or yes by a narrow margin but Scotland tips the balance the other way despite having already voted to leave the United Kingdom. What would be the constitutional situation for England, Wales and Northern Ireland then? If Scotland votes yes to independence and to EU membership but the UK as a whole votes to leave the European Union, we will then have the bizarre situation of Scotland negotiating entry while the Government of the UK simultaneously negotiates exit. That is one of those timetabling issues that shows what an arbitrary and ill thought out notion it is to have a fixed deadline that cannot take account of changing political and constitutional realities, whether on the European scale, in relation to Scotland or in the United Kingdom.

Mr Thomas *rose*—

Martin Horwood: I will not give way, because I have given way to the hon. Gentleman already and I think the Bill needs to make progress.

I will not press the amendment to a vote and I will not move it, but it raises important issues and I would like to hear the Minister's response to them.

Jim Fitzpatrick: I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me to contribute briefly to the debate. I should say at the outset that I support the Bill but I also support the European project and the European Union. I do not think that we have anything to fear from a referendum, whenever it happens.

Let me run through the amendments. I have already told my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes) that I do not support everything that he has proposed. I support amendment 52, oppose amendments 53, 55 and 17, support amendment 5, and say no to amendments 6, 7 and 16, and yes to amendment 61. I would be interested to hear the explanation from my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow West (Mr Thomas), who is on the Front Bench, for amendments 64 and 84, which we have not heard yet. I am not entirely convinced by the proposed wording. I oppose amendment 85. As for amendment 65, tabled by the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Martin Horwood), which he has said that he will not press to a vote, I think its tone was defeatist about Scottish independence and the referendum so I was going to vote against it in principle, as I think we will win the referendum for Scotland to remain part of the United Kingdom.

12 noon

As I have said, I will not detain the House in speaking to this group of amendments. I oppose amendments 53 and 54 because they would apply after the general election. I support amendment 52 on the basis that it commits the Electoral Commission to a specific date before the general election and creates an opportunity for an informed debate as part of the general election. Parties will therefore approach the matter and stimulate interest in participation, which my hon. Friend the Member for Derby North (Chris Williamson) is keen to see—he wants a financial penalty for people who do not vote. In addition, amendment 52 gives clarity to the Lords in advance of its opportunity to examine the Bill—it would say clearly that this House would like the report to be published before the general election, and that would help deliberations in the Lords.

We have discussed amendment 17. My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Wayne David) and I probably straightforwardly agree that proposed new paragraphs 3(1A)(c) and (d) give a veto to each European parliamentary constituency rather than a majority of constituencies. There might be an anomaly in the voting pattern between people within European constituencies—they might vote one way by a majority of constituencies and vote another way by a majority vote. Giving each European constituency a veto over the outcome of the referendum, let alone giving the devolved territories an opportunity, is wholly inappropriate.

I covered my views on amendment 5 in an intervention—Madam Deputy Speaker admonished me for straying into that territory. The position looks straightforward and a limit would be sensible.

I have commented on amendment 6. People would be bored to death if we forced them to watch adverts on TV, or if they had to change channels too often to avoid them, or if they had to avoid adverts in their newspapers.

It would turn people off politics and discussion, not stimulate greater participation in politics, which all hon. Members want. On amendment 7, I have said that we need to ensure that, if we are to require adverts in the written media, the publishers should be paid, just as TV, radio and cable broadcasters would have to be paid to carry adverts.

Supporting amendment 61 is straightforward. It states that we should

“consult and seek agreement from the devolved administrations”, which is a sensible way to proceed. It does not say that they have a veto that means that the referendum will not go ahead if they fail to agree with us. Instead, it says that we should enlist their support and ensure they are in touch with us.

As I mentioned when I outlined my perspective on the amendments in the group, I do not have a view on the amendments tabled by the shadow Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow West, because I have not heard the argument on the Gibraltarians or the audits. I look forward to him making those arguments.

I agree with the Minister on amendment 85 and compulsory voting. Voting should be a matter of civic responsibility, notwithstanding giving up £50, the equivalent of a West Ham game—at the moment, giving up a West Ham game would not be too difficult given how badly they are playing. I am not totally convinced about introducing financial penalties and making voting compulsory in that regard.

As I said, I support the Bill. I should say by the way that I was the private Member's Bill Whip on Fridays from 2001 to 2005 during the Labour Government. The Minister's comments on the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South were quite strong. I sat in the Chamber on many Fridays over a number of years listening to the right hon. Eric Forth challenge private Members' Bills time and again. He irritated the life out of me, but he had the constitutional right to ensure that the bar for private Members' Bills was set as high as possible. Passing laws for our country should not be an easy measure. I wholly respect the right of the hon. Member for Stockton South (James Wharton) to introduce his Bill and I support the principle of a referendum, but it is such a constitutional amendment that it should have been a Government Bill rather than a private Member's Bill.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): I remember with fondness the time when my hon. Friend was the Friday Whip—he was a very good one. Would the debate not be better if the hon. Member for Stockton South (James Wharton) at least made an intervention or speech in it?

Jim Fitzpatrick: It is not for me to respond on behalf of right hon. or hon. Members. When I was a private Member's Bill Whip, I used to advise colleagues on a Friday. I would say, “Stay in your seat and don't be provoked by anything Opposition Members say.” The hon. Member for Stockton South is showing admirable restraint. Some of the things that have been said during the debates on these Fridays will have irritated the life out of him, but he is keen to get to the conclusion of the debate. He has made a tactical and strategic decision, but I understand Opposition Members who would rather have engaged in a fuller debate with Government Members.

In conclusion, I support the EU. We have nothing to fear from a referendum. I support the Bill in principle and will vote for it on Third Reading. I look forward to my hon. Friend the shadow Minister explaining why I should support the two amendments he has tabled, which I suspect he will do shortly.

Wayne David: I shall keep my comments brief, because hon. Members want to make progress and I want the process to be expedited as much as possible.

I begin by picking up one of the last points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick), who referred to the comments made a little while ago by the Minister. I take exception to the Minister's comments. He said that a number of the amendments in the group are otiose. That might be his opinion, but we should put on record our thanks to hon. Members, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes), for tabling amendments, which have allowed for a proper discussion and debate on this enormously important Bill. Regardless of whether we agree with the amendments he has tabled, had he not done so we would not have got into a detailed debate today and on other days about the Bill's ramifications and implications. Rather than saying simply that the amendments are otiose, we should be thanking my hon. Friend.

My hon. Friend spoke eloquently to amendments 52 to 55. In essence, they are about insisting that the Electoral Commission comes forward with a proper series of recommendations for the conduct of the referendum. That is important, because all of us recognise, no matter which side of the argument we are on, that there needs to be a proper and fair discussion and debate in the country. I echo a point made by the Electoral Commission when I say that it is simply not enough to have stipulations about how the debate is conducted; information must be provided by the Government that objectively sets out the parameters of the debate to be held. The Electoral Commission says that all the research it has conducted shows clearly that the majority of the population feel that they do not have sufficient information to reach an objective decision, either for or against. It is therefore important that the Government set out objective information about the European Union. Of course, the last thing we want is the Government subjectively setting out information, in a biased and partisan way. That is why it is very important that the Electoral Commission not only sets out rules—

Mike Gapes: My hon. Friend will be aware that the Government—at least the Conservative party—have already behaved in a biased and partisan way with regard to the wording of the question, which is contrary to what the Electoral Commission recommended. What guarantees do we have that the Electoral Commission's recommendations will be implemented by this Government's Ministers?

Wayne David: My hon. Friend makes a good point. We touched on that issue in our debate last Friday, and the point holds firm. We would hope that if the Bill proceeds from this House to the other place, the Government might well table an amendment, as they have done with previous legislation, to modify the question that is set, in line with the Electoral Commission's

[Wayne David]

recommendation. It is also important to stress, however, that the Electoral Commission is a neutral, impartial body respected by all sections of the political spectrum. Those in the Electoral Commission are the custodians of electoral processes, objectively and clearly defined. To go back to the point I was making about its report about the conduct about the campaign, that is why it is important that the Government take on board the Electoral Commission's recommendations, and that it is given plenty of time to do the work and is told precisely when its reports are expected. We have had an important debate on that matter, and I am minded to favour the idea of a stipulated time for such a report from the Electoral Commission.

Amendment 7, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South, refers to the need for advertisements in national newspapers, across the United Kingdom and in the nations that make up the United Kingdom. As a Welshman, I think that that is particularly important. Although I do not speak the language of heaven—I have tried but failed—I recognise its importance, and the Welsh language must be respected. In addition, a distinct population in Wales speak the Welsh language as their first language. It is important that we do not place Welsh language advertisements in newspapers just in what is known as “BBC Welsh”, as the Welsh language varies in different parts of Wales. The Electoral Commission has done quite a bit of work on how the debate should be conducted through the medium of the Welsh language. Interestingly, GfK, the organisation contracted by the Electoral Commission to conduct the research, has said that we must be careful with the Welsh language in what we put on the ballot paper and, by implication, in the advertisements. For example, it makes the point that the phrase “Undeb Ewropeaidd”, which of course means the European Union, is not widely understood by Welsh speakers. GfK's survey found that many Welsh speakers thought it referred to the United Nations.

Mr Bailey: I have listened to my hon. Friend's argument and I think that there is a lot in it. What he perhaps has not brought out so far, although he seems to be touching on it now, is that this is not only an issue about BBC English or BBC Welsh; Euro-speak is likely to become embedded in this debate. That underlines the need to involve organisations dealing with plain English and the Welsh equivalent to ensure that the terminology current in Europe and in those organisations in this country connected to Europe—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): Order. I have allowed a great many interventions during this debate. Everyone who has indicated that they wish to speak on this group of amendments has made many interventions, and everyone has now had the opportunity to hold the Floor. I am sure that the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Wayne David), who has already rehearsed many of his arguments in interventions on the speeches of other hon. Members, will soon be drawing his remarks to a conclusion.

Wayne David: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would simply say that I agree with my hon. Friend's intervention absolutely.

Amendment 67, tabled by the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Martin Horwood), refers to the Scottish situation. That is an important point, because yesterday the Prime Minister of Spain made comments to the effect that if Scotland left the United Kingdom it would leave the European Union as well, and that has profound implications for the timing of this referendum and whether it appears before or after the general election. I would simply say that we need to be mindful of the Scottish situation in this debate; there could well be unforeseen implications of anything we decide to do.

12.15 pm

Mr Thomas: It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friends the Members for Ilford South (Mike Gapes), for Derby North (Chris Williamson), for Poplar and Limehouse (Jim Fitzpatrick) and for Caerphilly (Wayne David). It was a pleasure to listen to the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Martin Horwood). It was somewhat surprising that the Minister was short in his comments; he certainly was not sweet in his comments. One noticeable feature of his contributions on Report has been the increasing fear he seems to be displaying of taking interventions, particularly from those on the Front Bench but also from Back Benchers.

Jim Fitzpatrick: Does my hon. Friend agree that that is doubly disappointing, given how much respect and high regard the Minister is held in?

Mr Thomas: My hon. Friend has made his point, and he is accurate.

I wish to speak to amendments 84 and 64 in my name. I may want to press amendment 64 to a Division.

First, let me address speedily the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South. Although referendums are—in this country, at least—unusual, there have been several in recent years, and a noticeably higher number under Labour Governments. Not for us the dismissive attitude to some of the British people of Conservatives like Boris Johnson—we instinctively trust the British people. Under Labour we had the 1975 European Communities membership referendum. We have had the various Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish devolution referendums, and the referendum that proposed a devolution of powers to London—the Greater London authority referendum in 2000. We have also seen a number of referendums on directly elected mayors. There is a considerable amount of experience to draw on in getting any future referendums right.

Referendums are substantial undertakings. Their administration is a sizeable cost to the state. There is also substantial inconvenience to the public; schools get closed for the day. Rightly, therefore, great emphasis is placed on getting the conduct of the referendum right. We do not want to waste precious resources or the time of those involved. We need to ensure that the result is legitimate, valid and fair. With that in mind, a proper plan for the arrangement of the referendum is sensible. Clause 3(1) is helpful in that regard, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South pointed out, the absence of a timetable or deadline for the publication of the Electoral Commission's report is problematic.

Mr Kevan Jones: Does my hon. Friend agree that the single piece of legislation on Europe that centred powers in Brussels and led to the open market and the flood of

immigrants that we have today was the Single European Act, which Mrs Thatcher signed and did not put to a referendum in this country?

Mr Thomas: My hon. Friend is right. The Conservative party has taken through this House and the other place a number of major pieces of legislation on Europe on which it has not wanted a referendum. One can only conclude that Conservative leaders in the past were more willing to stand up to their Back Benchers than the current Prime Minister is.

Let me discuss the amendments tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South. Amendments 52 to 55 relate to the report that the Electoral Commission would publish under clause 3. As other hon. Members have said, the Electoral Commission's recent report on the Bill, published last month, provided us with invaluable advice on the potential wording of a referendum question, and the consequential difficulties that the poorly worded question that the hon. Member for Stockton South (James Wharton) is proposing could cause. I do not want to dwell on that particular Electoral Commission report, but it is clear that further advice in the form of a report from the commission would be invaluable should a referendum go ahead.

The important reference back to the previous Electoral Commission report is that it had only almost four months to complete its work on what the question should be. It made it clear then that it was not long enough for it to offer the House of Commons a definitive view on the wording of the question, so the clear lesson that we need to draw in the context of this grouping of amendments is that it must be given longer to do its work. Amendment 55, implying a minimum six months being needed for the Electoral Commission to do its work, is clearly sensible. It would have been useful to hear a little more of the Minister's thoughts on that particular amendment.

There is also the obvious point that such a report needs to be delivered in time for the advice in it to be given due consideration by the Secretary of State, and crucially by Members on both sides of the House. Therefore, I can see the case that my hon. Friend makes, in particular for amendment 55. We know that the Conservative party is divided on the timetable for this legislation. We had the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Windsor (Adam Afriyie). Some want the referendum next year, others want—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Kevan Jones: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Fridays are for private Members' business, and that is what we are dealing with today. Is it in order for the Government deputy Chief Whip to be orchestrating the hon. Member for Stockton South (James Wharton) in what he should be doing?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Mrs Eleanor Laing): The hon. Gentleman appreciates that the Chair has power over many things and many people, but the Government deputy Chief Whip is not one of them.

Mr Thomas: As I was saying, following the amendment tabled by the hon. Member for Windsor, we know that the Conservative party is deeply divided on the timetable for any referendum. Some want it next year, others want 2017, and Foreign Office Ministers are not sure when

they want it. Therefore, I understand why my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South suggests different dates by which the Electoral Commission should report on the rules.

Amendment 6, tabled by my hon. Friend, refers to the broadcasting rights of the proponents and opponents during the election campaign. There is a clear British tradition of party political and referendum campaign broadcasts, and I understand that that is relatively unusual in comparative terms. This is in part because political advertising in broadcast media is prohibited in the UK. Indeed, the ban was the subject of a recent European Court of Human Rights case, which upheld the UK position. I understand that Ofcom is tasked with drawing up the rules regarding the allocation, length and frequency of referendum campaign broadcasts for commercial broadcasters with public service obligations. I acknowledge that the amendment takes particular care to highlight the importance of Welsh language broadcasts.

The amendment seeks to place on the face of the Bill clear provisions for a minimum of six broadcasts, with the possibility of 10 broadcasts, of 60 minutes in length. I am not sure why my hon. Friend has settled on 10. If he gets the chance to wind up the debate, perhaps he will say why. Is it, perhaps, because of who he thinks might want to appear in the 10 broadcasts? After all, no one is quite sure where the Foreign Secretary stands on Europe. This is the man who famously, while wearing a baseball cap, said that there were only 12 days to save the pound. He was wrong, but notwithstanding that flurry of Euroscepticism, some Conservative Members believe that he is part of the problem on Europe. Clearly, if the Foreign Secretary appeared in one of the broadcasts for either side, a less divisive figure would be needed to appear in the next broadcast. Perhaps the difficulties that the anti-EU campaign might face if there were not enough broadcasts are a further reason why my hon. Friend has suggested 10 of them. Imagine if it put up one of UKIP's MEPs—it might provoke scrutiny of their low work-rate in Brussels.

I think that at least one of any broadcasts during the campaign ought to focus on how the ordinary, hard-working people of this country would be affected. We know from CBI research that every UK household stands to take a £3,000 hit to their living standards if the Prime Minister's reckless gamble to keep his party together results in a British exit from the European Union.

Why else might we need 10 broadcasts? Is it possible that the Prime Minister might want to feature in one? Perhaps he might want to dwell on the powers and competences he has repatriated back to the UK due to the treaty change he thinks is coming. As we do not know what powers and competencies he wants to repatriate, it is hard to judge how successful he might be and therefore whether such a broadcast, and resulting opposition broadcast, would be necessary. We have tried at length, as has the hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh), to elicit from the Minister for Europe what powers and competencies the Prime Minister wants to repatriate as a result of the treaty change he thinks is coming, but there has been absolutely no clarity from the Minister at all.

Perhaps a further reason for my hon. Friend's advocating 10 broadcasts is to give the last Conservative Prime Minister to win a majority, John Major, the chance to

[Mr Thomas]

speak in a referendum campaign broadcast. Yesterday he said that Britain will pay a “severe price” if it votes to leave the European Union, and that an exit could cost billions and leave the UK isolated internationally yet still required to implement EU regulations it had no part in framing. I could see him being an excellent choice for one of the 10 broadcasts that my hon. Friend suggests. One wonders why the current Prime Minister wants to take such a risk for Britain if this is anything other than a desperate effort to keep his party united.

One could imagine that a further reason a limit of 10 broadcasts is needed is that UKIP would want one of the no campaign broadcasts to dwell on the unnecessary expense—some £100 million to £150 million a year—of the Strasbourg Parliament, that expensive and unnecessary extra European parliamentary body that the French like so much and that they bullied John Major’s Conservative Government into accepting as the price for staying out of the social chapter.

Perhaps we need so many broadcasts in order to focus on the issues, such as the economic case for staying in Europe and the folly of the idea that we should try to be like Switzerland or Norway. We would certainly need a broadcast to focus on the benefits that EU membership delivers for co-operation on crime and justice matters across Europe. If we want to tackle the mafia-like gangs that control illegal immigration, we need cross-border co-operation.

I can see the case, then, for some broadcasts, but I am not sure, if I am honest, that we need to be quite as specific as my hon. Friend proposes. I think we can trust the broadcasters and the Electoral Commission to get this right. However, he has raised an important issue, which, along with many other important elements of this Bill, has so far been ignored by the Conservatives as the red mist of Euroscepticism has descended.

Let me raise a few points about my amendment 64, which I may want to press to a Division. We have already discussed on Report and in Committee many of the unique aspects of Gibraltar’s position with regard to EU matters and the proposed referendum—thankfully so, as Conservative Members had singularly failed to consider the Gibraltarian people in this matter before the Bill emerged from Lynton Crosby’s office. In fact, Labour Members are becoming increasingly concerned that the Minister for Europe is being insufficiently robust with his Spanish counterparts over Gibraltar, but that debate is rightly for another time.

As the House will know, in ordinary European parliamentary elections the results of voting in Gibraltar are included in the south-west region of the UK. My amendment suggests a provision to allow a change from this norm whereby for referendums only the results are published separately, allowing it to be clear and beyond doubt how the Gibraltarian people have voted should such a referendum go ahead. I cannot, in all honesty, foresee a great added expense in such an arrangement. I gently suggest to Conservative Members that adding such a provision to the Bill might go some way towards making up to the Gibraltarian people for the rather—dare I say?—rude way in which they were treated in this proposed legislation at the outset. I would have welcomed the Minister’s comments on the amendment, but I do not think he touched on it at all.

Amendment 84 suggests a proper audit of the arrangements and conduct of any in/out referendum. The hon. Member for Cheltenham has said that we can always learn from what has gone before, and he is right. I gently suggest that the amendment is a sensible provision for the Minister to reflect on.

12.30 pm

On amendment 17, my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South makes a number of interesting suggestions, which appear to be designed to ensure that the proposed ballot produces a definitive answer. I understand that minimum thresholds are frequently put in place in referendums elsewhere in the world, particularly with regard to constitutional change.

My hon. Friend raises an interesting point about minimum thresholds. Conservative Members may recall with some unease the mess the Home Secretary made in organising last year’s elections for police and crime commissioner, the turnout for which was a very disappointing and very low 15%. Put another way, 85% of eligible voters decided to abstain from voting on that cold day last November. Had the elections for PCCs—a new set of elections, without precedent, and a constitutional change—been subject to a minimum turnout similar to that suggested by my hon. Friend, hon. Members can work out for themselves just how many commissioners we would now have.

On a matter as important as changing the UK’s relationship with the European Union, I understand why my hon. Friend wants to prevent a repeat of the Home Secretary’s PCC election shambles. Nevertheless, I am not sure we need this particular threshold amendment. In these closing moments, it is probably worth drawing the House’s attention to the work of the independent commission on the conduct of referendums back in 1996. It was chaired by Sir Patrick Nairne, who said:

“Requiring a proportion of the total registered population to vote ‘Yes’ creates further problems because the register can be so inaccurate.”

Moreover, while the ill-fated referendum on the alternative vote two and a half years ago delivered a disappointing turnout of 42%, I am not sure whether anyone would argue that it failed to deliver a decisive result. I cannot, therefore, support my hon. Friend’s amendment.

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 5, Noes 247.

Division No. 145]

[12.32 pm

AYES

Bailey, Mr Adrian
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Gapes, Mike
Mudie, Mr George

Williamson, Chris

Tellers for the Ayes:
Nic Dakin and
Heidi Alexander

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Andrew, Stuart
Arbuthnot, Mr James
Baker, Steve
Baldry, Sir Tony
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, Stephen
Barker, Mr Gregory
Baron, Mr John

Bebb, Guto
Bellingham, Mr Henry
Benyon, Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Bingham, Andrew
Binley, Mr Brian
Blackman, Bob
Boles, Nick
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter

Bradley, Karen
 Brady, Mr Graham
 Bray, Angie
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Mr Robert
 Burley, Mr Aidan
 Burns, Conor
 Burns, rh Mr Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Byles, Dan
 Cairns, Alun
 Carmichael, Neil
 Carswell, Mr Douglas
 Cash, Mr William
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Mr Christopher
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colville, Oliver
 Crouch, Tracey
 Davies, David T. C.
(Monmouth)
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Philip
 de Bois, Nick
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Dorries, Nadine
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duncan, rh Mr Alan
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellison, Jane
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Jonathan
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, Mr David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Michael
 Field, Mark
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fullbrook, Lorraine
 Fuller, Richard
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, Mr Robert
 Graham, Richard
 Gray, Mr James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hague, rh Mr William
 Halfon, Robert
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, Matthew
 Hands, Greg
 Harper, Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hart, Simon
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, Oliver
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Hendry, Charles
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Mr Adam
 Hopkins, Kris
 Howarth, Sir Gerald
 Howell, John
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kelly, Chris
 Kirby, Simon
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lancaster, Mark
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Latham, Pauline
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Jessica
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Luff, Peter
 Lumley, Karen
 Macleod, Mary
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Maude, rh Mr Francis
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, Anne
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen

Mowat, David
 Murray, Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Nuttall, Mr David
 O'Brien, rh Mr Stephen
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Ottaway, rh Richard
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Sir John
 Reckless, Mark
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob
 Reeve, Simon
 Robertson, rh Hugh
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, Amber
 Ruffley, Mr David
 Rutley, David
 Sandys, Laura
 Scott, Mr Lee
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shepherd, Sir Richard
 Simmonds, Mark
 Simpson, Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian

Soubry, Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Stride, Mel
 Stuart, Mr Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Timpson, Mr Edward
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tredinnick, David
 Truss, Elizabeth
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Weatherley, Mike
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 White, Chris
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wright, Jeremy
 Young, rh Sir George
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Claire Perry and
Gavin Barwell

Question accordingly negated.

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am afraid that I must report an error in the number reported as having voted in the Aye Lobby in the Division on amendment 71, which took place at 9.52 this morning. The Ayes were seven, not eight as reported. *(Laughter.)*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo): Order. I can tell by the reaction that we are all eternally grateful for the correction of the record. I will ensure that the Journal and *Hansard* record the correct number of votes in that Division.

Amendment proposed: 64, page 2, line 11, at end add—

‘(3A) Results for the referendum will be published for European parliamentary constituencies, except that Gibraltar’s shall be published separately from the rest of the South West return.’.—*(Mr Thomas.)*

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 25, Noes 247.

Division No. 146]

[12.48 pm

AYES

Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
 Ali, Rushanara

Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Brown, Lyn

Campbell, Mr Alan
David, Wayne
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Gapes, Mike
Greatrex, Tom
Green, Kate
Hamilton, Mr David
Hilling, Julie
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Jamieson, Cathy
Jones, Mr Kevan
Jones, Susan Elan

McCarthy, Kerry
Mudie, Mr George
Onwurah, Chi
Pound, Stephen
Smith, Nick
Spellar, rh Mr John
Thomas, Mr Gareth
Williamson, Chris
Winterton, rh Ms Rosie

Tellers for the Ayes:
Nic Dakin and
Heidi Alexander

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afrayie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Andrew, Stuart
Arbuthnot, rh Mr James
Baker, Steve
Baldry, Sir Tony
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, Stephen
Barker, rh Gregory
Baron, Mr John
Bebb, Guto
Bellingham, Mr Henry
Benyon, Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Bingham, Andrew
Binley, Mr Brian
Blackman, Bob
Boles, Nick
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, Karen
Brady, Mr Graham
Bray, Angie
Brazier, Mr Julian
Brine, Steve
Brokenshire, James
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Mr Robert
Burley, Mr Aidan
Burns, Conor
Burns, rh Mr Simon
Burrowes, Mr David
Byles, Dan
Cairns, Alun
Carmichael, Neil
Carswell, Mr Douglas
Cash, Mr William
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Mr Christopher
Clark, rh Greg
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Colvile, Oliver
Crabb, Stephen
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, David T. C.
(*Monmouth*)
Davies, Glyn
Davies, Philip
de Bois, Nick
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Dorries, Nadine
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard

Duddridge, James
Duncan, rh Mr Alan
Dunne, Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellison, Jane
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Graham
Evans, Jonathan
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, Mr David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Michael
Field, Mark
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fullbrook, Lorraine
Fuller, Richard
Gale, Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, Mr David
Gibb, Mr Nick
Gillan, rh Mrs Cheryl
Glen, John
Goldsmith, Zac
Goodwill, Mr Robert
Graham, Richard
Gray, Mr James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, rh Damian
Greening, rh Justine
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffiths, Andrew
Hague, rh Mr William
Halfon, Robert
Hammond, rh Mr Philip
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, Matthew
Hands, Greg
Harper, Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Hart, Simon
Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
Hayes, rh Mr John
Heald, Oliver
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Hendry, Charles
Herbert, rh Nick
Hinds, Damian
Hollingbery, George
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Mr Adam
Hopkins, Kris

Howarth, Sir Gerald
Howell, John
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, Mr Nick
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kelly, Chris
Kirby, Simon
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lancaster, Mark
Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
Latham, Pauline
Leadsom, Andrea
Lee, Jessica
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, Sir Edward
Leslie, Charlotte
Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
Lewis, Brandon
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Lilley, rh Mr Peter
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Luff, Peter
Lumley, Karen
Macleod, Mary
Main, Mrs Anne
Maude, rh Mr Francis
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McIntosh, Miss Anne
McPartland, Stephen
McVey, Esther
Menzies, Mark
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Maria
Milton, Anne
Mordaunt, Penny
Morgan, Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Mosley, Stephen
Mowat, David
Murray, Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, Caroline
Nuttall, Mr David
O'Brien, rh Mr Stephen
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Ottaway, rh Richard
Parish, Neil
Patel, Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew

Perry, Claire
Poulter, Dr Daniel
Prisk, Mr Mark
Raab, Mr Dominic
Randall, rh Sir John
Reckless, Mark
Rees-Mogg, Jacob
Reevell, Simon
Robertson, rh Hugh
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Rosindell, Andrew
Rudd, Amber
Ruffley, Mr David
Rutley, David
Sandys, Laura
Scott, Mr Lee
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, Alok
Shepherd, Sir Richard
Simmonds, Mark
Simpson, Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Henry
Smith, Julian
Soubry, Anna
Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
Spencer, Mr Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Bob
Stewart, Iain
Stewart, Rory
Stride, Mel
Stuart, Mr Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
Syms, Mr Robert
Timpson, Mr Edward
Tomlinson, Justin
Tredinnick, David
Truss, Elizabeth
Turner, Mr Andrew
Tyrie, Mr Andrew
Uppal, Paul
Vaizey, Mr Edward
Vara, Mr Shailesh
Vickers, Martin
Walker, Mr Charles
Walker, Mr Robin
Watkinson, Dame Angela
Weatherley, Mike
Wharton, James
Wheeler, Heather
White, Chris
Whittaker, Craig
Whittingdale, Mr John
Wiggin, Bill
Williamson, Gavin
Wilson, Mr Rob
Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Wright, Jeremy
Young, rh Sir George
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Gavin Barwell and
Mr Sam Gyimah

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 5

SHORT TITLE

Amendment made: 81, page 2, line 21, at beginning insert—

() This Act extends to—

- (a) England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; and
- (b) Gibraltar.

TITLE

Amendment made: 82, in line 1, after ‘Kingdom’, insert ‘and Gibraltar’.—(*James Wharton.*)

Third Reading

1.2 pm

James Wharton (Stockton South) (Con): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

We have had extensive debate, discussion and scrutiny of what is a short Bill with but a handful of clauses. However, its significance should not be underestimated. It is a commitment from the Conservative Benches to give the British people a say on that most important of matters: our membership of the European Union.

I do not intend to detain the House for long, because we have discussed in great detail each clause and each possible amendment. The House has gone through each change that could be made and has made its views clear. We have considered the franchise and extended it to give the people of Gibraltar a say. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Romford (Andrew Rosindell) on his work to bring that proposal forward. We have considered the wording of the question. It is clear that it is fair, that it is clear and that it is the right question to put to the British people. We have considered the timing. It is clear that the House believes that it is right to go back to Europe to get the best possible deal and, whatever that deal looks like, to put it to the British people in an in/out vote. This morning, we have discussed the conduct of the referendum.

I am grateful to all colleagues who have provided support and to my Conservative colleagues who have shown discipline and resolution to get this important Bill through. I am also grateful to Opposition Members and colleagues on the Liberal Democrat Benches who have contributed, albeit sometimes in a rather long-winded way.

We have had a good and thorough debate. It is time that we let Britain decide. I commend the Bill to the House.

1.4 pm

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): It is a pleasure to be here today discussing the weaknesses and divisions within the Conservative party. Instead of dealing with the record-breaking cost of living crisis from which our constituents are suffering, we are here, on private Members’ business, discussing how best to create four years of uncertainty for British jobs and investment. For families in Newcastle and across the country, the daily worry is how to make ends meet after 40 months of prices rising faster than wages. That is what should be occupying the Conservative party and the hon. Member for Stockton South (James Wharton). It is to be hoped that after the next election the constituents

of Stockton South will have a Member who represents their economic interests and understands the crises they are facing.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it will not have escaped your attention that the House has not been especially overwhelmed with business lately. This Government Bill, masquerading as a private Member’s Bill, is being pushed through like this to try and support a weak Prime Minister. It is therefore not surprising that the Minister without Portfolio, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), is not in his place to do that.

Democracy is about more than just voting and a referendum every 30 years or so; it is about debate and engagement too. Members will recall the most recent referendum we had—Liberal Democrats might wish to forget it—which was on the electoral system of the UK. I suspect that many people used that referendum to give the Liberal Democrats a good kicking—a noble enough reason perhaps, but it certainly did not create much of a debate around our complex constitutional arrangements, especially among those who had taken no previous interest. My fear, therefore, is that any debate preceding a referendum, at a time when European economies are in so much trouble, will not be based on a sober reading and reporting of the facts.

The north-east, in particular, cannot afford to put yet another obstacle in the way of this spluttering recovery. The north-east benefits hugely from our membership of the EU. It is the only net exporting region in the UK, so it needs to know for certain that we will have access to this market, but the Bill jeopardises that certainty. The North East chamber of commerce recently forecast that in our region 1,800 firms would close and 40,000 jobs be destroyed as a result of an EU exit. We cannot afford that.

The Chancellor has given up on his supposed export-led, manufacturing-driven recovery, and instead has gone for a housing bubble. We cannot afford to lose any more markets for our exports. Nissan has made it clear that its significant investment and presence in the north-east was built upon the assumption that it would serve as a platform for entry into European markets. Great manufacturing companies such as Nissan are working to long-term time scales. It takes time to build a manufacturing line, and even more time to recoup the investments. These companies will be making decisions now about 2017 and 2020, and if they see a huge policy uncertainty on the horizon, that will put off investment and put jobs at risk. The CBI reported last week:

“No alternative to EU membership offers a better balance of advantages and disadvantages or greater influence for the UK”.

I do not say that the EU is perfect; far from it. It needs to be more democratic and accountable, and like many hon. Members, I would like to see a reformed EU that works in the interests of all its citizens, but the UK needs to be at its heart, leading those reforms: a strong voice at the heart of a strong union. The Bill does nothing to bring that about, however, and I will be voting against it.

1.9 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr William Hague): It is a pleasure to speak briefly on the Third Reading of this important Bill.

[Mr William Hague]

I particularly commend my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South (James Wharton) for introducing the Bill and steering it so skilfully through this House. I am doubly pleased as he is my constituency neighbour, and I can tell the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah) that my hon. Friend should yield to no one as a champion of his constituency, including its economic interests. I have seen that he does that very well. He has shown great ability in handling this Bill, which is appreciated across the House. We now know that our youngest colleague is one of our brightest stars.

This Bill is about democracy and Britain's future in Europe. It will set down in law the British people's right to decide at the right time on the right question. Under the lamentable record of the Labour party, the EU was for 13 years taken in a direction that the British people did not agree with, but Labour never had the courage to consult the British people in a referendum and never once gave the British people their say.

We have shown in three and a half years—[*Interruption.*] Labour Members do not like being reminded of this, but the shadow Foreign Secretary was the Minister for Europe when he gave up £7 billion of the British rebate. Labour cut the rebate, so perhaps the right hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire South (Mr Alexander) would like to apologise for that.

Mr John Spellar (Warley) (Lab): The Foreign Secretary is going back in history a little, so will he remind us when the Conservative party last held a referendum on the EU and, indeed, which party did hold a referendum on EU membership?

Mr Hague: The right hon. Gentleman has to go right back to the 1970s, so he cannot accuse me of going back into history. Going back to 2005, when Labour gave up the rebate, is not going back very far. If he is so proud of Labour's record on a referendum, he should be in favour of one now and in favour of establishing it in law. Labour Members do not have the courage to do so. Where they cut the rebate, we have cut the EU budget; and where they got us into eurozone bail-outs, we have got Britain out of them. We have achieved real reform of Europe's most disastrous policy—the common fisheries policy.

Mike Gapes: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Hague: I will not give way to the hon. Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes), whose views have been delivered at great length over many hours. He has dragged himself reluctantly and slowly through the Division Lobbies, so I do not think we need to hear from him during my speech.

We have pushed forward free trade.

Wayne David: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr Hague: No, I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman falls into the same category as the hon. Member for Ilford South.

We have every reason to be confident that we can negotiate a new deal in Europe. Above all, the final decision to stay or leave must lie with the British people. This Bill enacts precisely that democratic choice. It requires a referendum by the end of 2017, allowing time for the British Government to negotiate a new settlement.

Mr Bailey *rose*—

Mr Hague: I am not giving way.

The question in the referendum is clear.

Mr Thomas *rose*—

Mr Hague: I will give way to the Front-Bench Member.

Mr Thomas: I am grateful.

We repeatedly tried, as did Conservative Back Benchers, to ask the Minister for Europe what powers and competences the Prime Minister wants to bring back as a result of the treaty change that he says is coming. We got no clarity from the Minister for Europe; will the Foreign Secretary provide it now?

Mr Hague: The Prime Minister's programme was set out clearly in his speech of 23 January, and his agenda is getting increasing support across Europe. It is time that the Opposition adjusted to the reality of the future and started to support it, instead of saying that uncertainty is being created in the British economy. They have neglected to notice that UN figures show that in the first half of this year, the UK attracted more inward investment not only than any other European country but than any other country in the world. That is the situation over which we are presiding. Labour's is the policy of uncertainty. Labour Members are not even certain when they can resolve the uncertainty about their own policy! They have been unable to tell us about their own position on a referendum. After the shadow Foreign Secretary spoke on Second Reading, no one was any the wiser about whether Labour was in favour of the Bill, against it or indifferent to it. We hope that the Opposition will catch up in the future, as they did with the European Union Act 2011, which they treated with the utmost apathy, but have since come to support as part of our constitutional framework.

It is right for the people to be given their say. It is right for a British Government to seek a new settlement in Europe. It is right for us to put that on the statute book now. My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South has been outstanding in putting the Bill before us. It deserves our support on its Third Reading today.

1.15 pm

Mr Douglas Alexander (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (Lab): I thank the former shadow Europe Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton North East (Emma Reynolds), and the current shadow Europe Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow West (Mr Thomas), for providing the Bill with what we judge to be an appropriate and necessary level of scrutiny both in Committee stage and on Report. I thank the other Committee members and the contributors to those debates. Indeed, the Bill's promoter, the hon. Member for Stockton South (James Wharton), who spoke today—that was a particular pleasure—has at least been present when the Bill has been debated and discussed over recent weeks.

Let me briefly address the points raised in Committee and on Report. Alas, the Bill comes to Third Reading with all the fundamental issues and concerns that were raised still unresolved, with the exception of the issue of Gibraltar, where, I am glad to say, we were able to make some progress from the Labour side.

In truth this is a Bill not about the Conservatives trusting the public but about Conservative Back Benchers not trusting a Conservative Prime Minister.

Mr William Cash (Stone) (Con) rose—

Mr Alexander: I will make a little progress, and then I will be happy to take some interventions. Let us be clear about what has happened over the course of recent weeks. The Bill started with a breakfast at Downing street for Conservative Back Benchers. Last week the Prime Minister again offered Conservative Back Benchers breakfast at Downing street. It is not clear whether it was a continental breakfast, but it was certainly breakfast at Downing street. The Prime Minister seems to be seeking unity through a strategy of obesity. He is clearly worried that if he is not doing the cooking, then all too shortly he will be on the menu. Any judgment about an in/out referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union has to be based on what is in the UK's national interest. We do not believe that the Bill's proposal for an in/out referendum in 2017 is in the national interest, which is why we are not supporting it.

The Bill anticipates an arbitrary timetable for an in/out referendum in 2017 in the United Kingdom divorced from any serious assessment of the likely timetable for treaty change across Europe. When the Prime Minister first announced his new policy back in January, he argued that treaty change was inevitable, necessary and indeed desirable. He said in April:

"I am sure there will be treaty change."

He went on to say:

"I'm absolutely convinced that there will be the need to reopen at some stage these treaties".

Yet the prospect of treaty change seems less likely today than it was when the Prime Minister made those remarks about which the Foreign Secretary spoke only a moment ago. Indeed it is significant that the German Government now seem less inclined to push for immediate treaty change, instead favouring intergovernmental agreements under article 114 of the EU treaty. Indeed in May this year, the German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble, said explicitly:

"Banking union is a central project, we need institutional changes but we cannot wait for a treaty change."

Only this week, the grand coalition document, which will form the basis of the German Administration's governing agenda, was agreed, and it made not a single reference to the prospect of treaty change. The truth is that the date of 2017 had more to do with Tory party management than EU-wide treaty change.

Mr Cash: Given the fact that the former Prime Minister Tony Blair promised a referendum on the constitution, will the right hon. Gentleman tell us, in the context of this incredibly important Bill, whether or not the Labour party has ruled out having a referendum on the European Union?

Mr Alexander: I could not have asked for a kinder intervention given that I am keen to talk about the views of former Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom. Why do we not start with the former Member for Huntingdon? The truth is that this Bill, although presented as a Bill about Britain's relationship with Europe, is more to do with the Prime Minister's relationship with his party. Only last night, the former Member for Huntingdon—a man who knows a bit about dealing with querulous Back Benchers—talked about Britain voting to leave the EU. He said:

"In a world of seven billion people, our island would be moving further apart from our closest and largest trading partners, at the very time when they, themselves, are drawing closer together. This makes no sense at all."

Those are not my words but the words of the last Conservative Prime Minister who actually secured a majority.

The former Prime Minister is not simply opposed to exit; he is also opposed to the Bill. He said:

"I'm not in favour of Mr Wharton's Bill."

He went on to say that

"I think the Wharton Bill is a negative, not a positive".

Why does he believe that it is a bad Bill? He thinks that the Conservatives should be spending their time focusing—again, let me quote him directly—on issues such as

"taxes, jobs, education, health and"—

wait for it—

"living standards."

He is not wrong, of course, but when we hear those words coming from a Conservative we have a sense that irony has left the building.

Although the private rationale for the Bill is to bind the Prime Minister's hands by committing him to a referendum, the public rationale is to strengthen his hand in negotiations. The only problem is that as of today, even after the Foreign Secretary's speech, we are no clearer about what exactly that negotiating position is. The Prime Minister has chosen to try to achieve the veneer of unity through the device of obscurity. That is why when he delivered his speech last January, in which the Foreign Secretary sought to seek refuge only a few moments ago—I am sure that Conservative Members do not need to be reminded of this fact—the word "repatriation" did not appear five times, or 10 times. It did not appear once. The Prime Minister did not utter the term "opt-out" and the words "employment law" were never even mentioned.

Indeed, on Second Reading the Minister for Europe, who I am glad to see back in his place, was asked by the shadow Minister for Europe whether he would enlighten the House about which powers and competences the Prime Minister wants to repatriate to the UK. Alas, he missed that opportunity and if he would like to intervene and explain now which powers he is seeking to repatriate, I will more than happily give way. Suddenly, he seems to have found his briefing papers incredibly interesting.

The shadow Minister for Europe and the hon. Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) asked the same question last week—these are not questions that are just being asked by Labour Members—but alas, no answer was forthcoming. All we were greeted with was the sound of silence. The reason for this is that despite the Prime Minister's speech, despite agreeing a date,

[Mr Douglas Alexander]

and despite the Bill, this truth still endures: the gap between what the Conservative Back Benchers demand and what the Conservative Prime Minister can deliver remains achingly unbridgeable.

On the day the Bill reached its Report stage, the chief executive of Nissan issued a stark warning to the Government about the prospects of the UK leaving the EU, highlighting that jobs, investment and growth would be put at risk. As we have just heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah), there are real and deep concerns in a number of regions of this country about the consequences of exit. The chief executive of Nissan said:

“Obviously it’s going to be a major factor happening and we are going to need to consider what does it mean for us for the future. I’m not worried about Sunderland. Sunderland is a very competitive plant, it’s a very productive plant and it’s a European plant based in the UK. If anything has to change, we need to reconsider our strategy and our investments for the future.”

Those remarks echoed those made by the Government of Japan. The Japanese embassy has even contributed to the Foreign Secretary’s balance of competences review. Let me share with the House the paragraph the embassy contributed on inward investment:

“More than 1,300 Japanese companies have invested in the UK, as part of the Single Market of the EU, and have created 130,000 jobs, more than anywhere else in Europe. This fact demonstrates that the advantage of the UK as a gateway to the European market has attracted Japanese investment. The Government of Japan expects the UK to maintain this favourable role.”

The EU gives us influence collectively that when we act alone we lack, and it does so at a time in our history when that has arguably never been more important, not least because today we are living in the early years of what many regard as an Asian century. As Asia rises, Europe must find new ways to amplify its voice and extend its influence.

Defending the UK’s place in the EU is not a matter of outdated sentiment but a matter of simple arithmetic. In an age of countries the size of continents, our membership of the EU gives us access to and influence in the world’s biggest global trading bloc and the prize of opening up new markets.

Heidi Alexander (Lewisham East) (Lab): My right hon. Friend will know that the CBI estimates that up to 5% of the UK’s total economic output could be lost if Britain withdraws from the EU. Will he share his thoughts on why he believes the Conservative party and the Government are so willing to put those jobs and that investment at risk?

Mr Alexander: The answer, I fear, is that the dynamic and driver of the Bill, as evidenced by the conduct of the debates, is the management of the Conservative party, not the interests of the country. Sir Roger Carr’s remarks and the CBI’s report are a devastating critique. Hon. Members need not take my word for it; they can look at the remarks I have quoted from the former Member for Huntingdon, the former Conservative Prime Minister, who recognises that this time of economic challenge is far too serious for the risks that the Conservative party seems willing to run to protect Conservative

Members’ jobs—at the same time, they are putting the jobs of tens or hundreds of thousands of British workers at risk.

The tragedy is that, because the Prime Minister is unable to address properly the need for reform in Europe in a sensible and effective way, he has been driven to the position he is in. The Bill is being taken forward by a party divided in all reality between those who are seeking consent and those who are seeking exit. They are united only in their mistrust of the Prime Minister. The Bill is not about trusting the people; it is about Tory Back Benchers not trusting a Tory Prime Minister.

In these tough economic times, Britain deserves better. Reform in Europe, not exit from Europe, is the right course for our country.

1.26 pm

Mr Bailey: I cannot support the Bill because, first and foremost, it is a politically driven Bill, adopted by the Government not in the national interest, but to try to reconcile the mutually hostile and intractable positions of members of the major Conservative part of the coalition.

Mike Gapes: My hon. Friend mentioned the Government. There are no Liberal Democrats in the Chamber—that is not unusual—and he would be right to say that of the Government Members present, only the Conservatives are here. However, the Bill is not a Government Bill. It is important to emphasise again that the Bill is a private Member’s Bill that is not supported by the Government.

Mr Bailey: I was coming to that point. In all my years in the House, I have never known a private Member’s Bill to be adopted so enthusiastically, which it has been by at least one section of the Government—the Conservative party and the Prime Minister. I have never known the devices that have been used to rally support for the Bill to be used before. We are told that Back Benchers have had breakfast in Downing street. The Prime Minister is trying to convince his Back Benchers either to stay in or to come out of the EU using the device of stuffing them with French croissants or, I have heard, bacon baps. Was it Danish or British bacon? I hope that those Conservative Back Benchers who are so hostile to the EU ensured that the Prime Minister stuffed their baps with British bacon to get their vote for the Bill.

On a more serious note, I want to concentrate my few remarks on a vital issue not only for the country, but for the west midlands and my constituency in particular. A lot has been said—my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah) emphasised this—about the potential impact on foreign direct investment in this country arising from the uncertainty that will be created by a decision to hold a referendum in 2017. If we ask investors what the most crucial thing to ensure that they invest in a place is, they will answer, “Certainty.” If people are to invest money, they want to know on what basis that money will be used and what returns can reasonably be generated. If there is uncertainty about the scale of the market for British manufacturers, the prospect of encouraging foreign direct investment will be very much more limited.

Outside investors are not daft. When they see the Government—or the Conservative party—backing a Back-Bench Bill such as this one, they can see the way the wind is blowing and they are bound to question whether they should be investing in this country again. As my hon. Friend said, major manufacturers in this country are already questioning their long-term commitment to it as a result of the uncertainty being created by this Bill.

The Bill conflicts with the Government's asserted priorities, too. We are told that they are reducing corporation tax to encourage foreign direct investment, but what is the point of doing that if they are at the same time reducing the potential market for the products that would be generated by that investment from 500 million people to 60 million? The two policies are totally contradictory, as outsiders with money to invest in Britain will notice.

The situation has particular importance for my west midlands constituency. It is fair to say that the recession has not had nearly as bad an overall impact as it might have had, largely because of the rejuvenation and renaissance of the motor industry, which has been centred in particular around the expansion of Jaguar Land Rover. My constituency has more foundries than any other, and they are often third, fourth or fifth-tier suppliers to the motor industry. The prospect of a reduction in investment in the key manufacturers in the motor industry is bound to have an impact on the economic prospects of my constituents.

Wayne David: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. One thing that is evident from the debate is that there is not an appreciation of the importance of the single market to the European Union. Does he agree that if anything is central to the whole European project, it is the single market?

Mr Bailey: I totally agree. British car manufacturing is a success story; 80% of what we make is exported, with 50% of it going to Europe—Jaguar Land Rover's major market is the United States. If the Bill goes ahead and there were to be a referendum whereby Britain came out of the EU, we would lose out not only on our major car market, but on the investment, marketing and manufacturing that would go to other countries.

I wish to discuss one other aspect that has perhaps not had the consideration it deserves. We are engaged in an EU-US free trade negotiating process, which, again, will have profound consequences for the British car industry and, in particular, Jaguar Land Rover. The uncertainty created by a decision to pass this Bill and the prospect of our coming out of the EU is bound to affect the final settlement of those negotiations. It is not possible to believe that the US would be prepared to have one settlement with the EU and another with this country. Only by our membership of the EU are we able to have a united position that will give a potential market for cars for both the US and the EU, with enormous benefit. The potential of such an agreement has been estimated at £4 billion to £10 billion in this country.

I could go on, but I recognise that many other hon. Members wish to speak. The crucial point is that the Bill injects an element of uncertainty into much needed foreign direct investment in key strategic industries in

this country, particularly affecting the west midlands and my constituency. That is why I am not prepared to back the Bill, and I urge others hon. Members to take the same approach.

1.34 pm

Wayne David: I think it is fair to say that we have had an interesting few days. One reason is that the hon. Member for Stockton South (James Wharton) has not been present very often. It is a good parliamentary skill to have a light touch, but it is possible to take things too far.

Mike Gapes: My hon. Friend ought to be fair to the hon. Member for Stockton South (James Wharton)—he has been present, but he has not been participating.

Wayne David: The hon. Gentleman has obviously been a very discreet presence; I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention.

It has also been an interesting few days because the hon. Member for Windsor (Adam Afriyie) tabled an important amendment—a very brave one, given the criticism from his colleagues. Unfortunately, he is not present either; I have not caught sight of him since his amendment was unsuccessful.

We should give collective thanks and praise to my hon. Friend the Member for Ilford South (Mike Gapes) for the large number of amendments he has tabled. Many were probing amendments, which allowed us to have an effective debate and probe the central themes underlying the Bill. Above all, his amendments showed that the Bill has many profound weaknesses; I shall focus on three of those.

First, a fundamental weakness is that the Bill as it stands is an essentially unconstitutional attempt to bind a future Parliament to a decision made in this Parliament. We are well aware of the erudite comments of the constitutional expert Dicey, who said that such a thing was fundamentally contrary to the principle of parliamentary democracy. Attempts have been made to bind subsequent Parliaments to decisions, and they have all come unstuck; all have been unfortunate experiences. I very much regret that although the Government, or the Conservative element of the Government, might declare that that is not the case, there is a profound constitutional question mark over the Bill.

Secondly, as several hon. Members said, the Bill intrinsically creates uncertainty—uncertainty about our membership of the European Union. As Britain is above all else a trading nation, clarity is required about our future trading relations, and our most important trading partner is the European Union. That is a fact. It is not a subjective statement; it is an entirely objective one. Therefore, the question mark that the Bill places over our future membership is extremely damaging and debilitating to Britain's national interests.

There is another profound weakness in the Bill: the nature of the question that would appear on the ballot paper. It is:

“Do you think that the United Kingdom should be a member of the European Union?”

There are many serious weaknesses in that question. Weaknesses have been pointed out by Members of this

[Wayne David]

House, but perhaps more important weaknesses in that question have been pointed out by the Electoral Commission.

The Electoral Commission, as others have said, and which I will repeat because it is so important, is the impartial body that is charged with ensuring that elections of all sorts in this country are conducted fairly. It is profoundly concerned about the wording in the Bill. It has said that the opening phrase, “Do you think that” should be replaced with “Should”. That is a very fair comment. It also says that it would be far better that the question was more open-ended. The question currently says,

“should be a member of the European Union”.

It would be far better if it were less ambiguous and did not imply that Britain at present was not a member of the European Union. The Electoral Commission has gone a stage further and said that perhaps there is scope for Parliament to consider whether, rather than a yes or no question, two alternative statements should be put forward and Members should be able to select which statement they prefer. Sadly, there has not been an opportunity in this House to have that kind of important debate, which the Electoral Commission has suggested.

It is important to recognise that this issue exercises the minds of many in the country, but what has come through clearly from the debate during the last few days above all else is that, yes, people are interested in whether we should continue to be a member of the European Union, but they are also concerned about the lack of information in the public domain to enable them reasonably to come to a conclusion. I hope that the Government will say that there is a need to end the partisan point-scoring on this fundamentally important issue to Britain’s future, and embark upon a bipartisan, cross-party public information campaign, so that people are aware of the important issues at stake. That point is clearly made by the Electoral Commission, and I hope to goodness that in the interests of democracy the Government recognise the need for that to take place.

I very much hope that the Bill will go from this House today to the other place, where I have every confidence that there will be a sensible and rational debate and that amendments will be tabled and agreed to, and that the Government will be positive in their engagement with the other place and will respect the enormous knowledge and expertise there, particularly on European issues. If that is the case, there will be a productive period of consideration in the other place, and when the Bill finally returns to this House, it will be a better Bill as a consequence.

1.42 pm

Mike Gapes: I begin by thanking the hon. Member for Stockton South (James Wharton) for giving us the opportunity to have this extensive three days of discussion of the European Union and issues relating to it. I hope that we will have opportunities later this year and next year to continue such discussions so that we can at last begin to get through the fog of distortion that unfortunately is too prevalent in our newspapers.

I am pleased that the Foreign Secretary is in his place, and I will be quite happy to take interventions from him, even though he was too frit to take one from me. I

want to remind the Foreign Secretary about referendums and the Conservative party. He was a Minister in John Major’s Government, who did not give a referendum on the Maastricht treaty. Just a few days ago, John Major was quoted as saying that the Bill was not worthy of his support, and that leaving the European Union would be “folly beyond belief”. Will the Foreign Secretary now intervene and tell me whether he agrees that leaving the European Union would be “folly beyond belief”? If he does not want to respond on that issue, he might wish to comment on Lord Heseltine’s statement that the whole process, which has been instigated by the Conservative party, is “an unnecessary gamble” with Britain’s future. [Interruption.] If the hon. Member for Dover (Charlie Elphicke) wishes to intervene rather than shouting at me, I will be happy to take an intervention. If anyone on the Government Benches wishes to intervene rather than muttering and shouting, I will happily give way. If not, I will carry on.

The hon. Member for Windsor (Adam Afriyie), who unfortunately seems to have been in some kind of retreat since he lost the vote on his amendment, will be aware, as will other Members, that I voted for that amendment. I was the only Labour Member to do so. That has caused some confusion on the UKIP website, where messages are going out praising those brave souls who voted for a referendum in 2014. Of course, that includes me, and that is a bit contradictory given some of the other messages about me on the UKIP website; but they will get their line right eventually.

The hon. Gentleman did something very important in highlighting the fact that if we are to have an in/out referendum we should not create a situation of three or four years of unnecessary uncertainty. It has been said of Nissan, but it could apply to many other companies wishing to invest in the European market, whether from South Korea, China or the United States, that potential investment could be put at risk. Such companies could choose to go to another English-speaking country in the European single market, such as the Irish Republic or other countries where they could create investment with certainty beyond 2017 and into the future.

I do not wish to delay the House for too long, but I want to make some important points about this very bad Bill. The Bill has been amended only very specifically with regard to allowing people who are residents of the British overseas territory of Gibraltar to vote in the referendum. The original proposal presumably resulted from an oversight by the Government, who forgot about Gibraltar being part of the European Union in terms of voting in the European Parliament elections. However, British citizens in other British overseas territories will not be allowed to vote in the referendum, although their relationship with the European Union is central to many aspects of their life and their future, and UK membership has big implications for them as well. A few weeks ago, a Committee considered the relationship of the overseas territories of the UK, France and others to the European Union. Our overseas territories people have been rejected by a Conservative whipped vote against one of my amendments. As a result, this message should go out very clearly to British overseas citizens: “The Conservative party does not have your interests at heart—it doesn’t support you.”

Similarly, 1.4 million British people live elsewhere in the European Union. Many of those people—I have received e-mails from some of them—have been living

in other European countries for more than 15 years and are therefore unable to register to vote in a European election or any other election in this country. They are excluded from the terms of this referendum, and their future could be put in jeopardy. If someone is living in Spain and suddenly their home country is no longer part of the European Union, and their citizenship is then of a non-EU state as opposed to an EU state, there could be huge implications for their future in Spain or in any other EU country. We are denying those people democracy.

Some people are claiming that I am being undemocratic because I am trying to subject—*[Interruption.]* Yes, some of them are over there on the Conservative Benches. These are the same people who voted against the right of British people living elsewhere in the European Union to have a vote in the referendum. That is what is undemocratic. Conservative Members do not believe that British people living elsewhere in Europe should have a say in this referendum. Only 20,000 people are currently registered as overseas voters, and therefore more than 1 million British people would not be able to take part in this process. Frankly, that is a disgrace.

There are other anomalies such as the situation of people who are married to citizens of other EU countries and living in Britain, with their children in schools or universities here. Those people have an intense interest in the relationship between the United Kingdom and the rest of the European Union. Yet, although we allow them to vote in European Parliament elections, we are to take away the right of those new Europeans to vote in a referendum on the relationship between the EU country from which they originally came and that in which they now live. That is another democratic disgrace. It is typical of the Conservative party. Instead of caring, it has decided to follow the little UKIP tail, which is now wagging the dog that is the Conservative party.

My hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Wayne David) has highlighted how the question has been drawn up for party political reasons. The *Daily Mail* revealed a few months ago that the original wording had been changed in order to make it more friendly for the Eurosceptics. Frankly, that is typical of this whole exercise. This Bill is not about democracy or giving the British people a choice; it is about the internal mechanics of the Conservative party and managing its internal divisions.

As has been said, this Parliament cannot commit a Parliament that will be elected in 2015 to doing something. The people behind this Bill and the Ministers involved know perfectly well that it is the decision at the 2015 general election that will make the difference. This is a political ploy to try to assuage the Europhobic wing of the Tory party and to keep them on board. The Foreign Secretary and other Ministers are playing a game with their colleagues.

I will not vote against this Bill today, because I believe that the House of Lords now has to subject it to the scrutiny that we have only been able to touch the surface of. The House of Lords needs to take up the

issues in greater detail than we have been able to, look at the inadequacies of this woeful Bill and expose its contradictions. I do not know how long it will take the House of Lords to do that—this House might get the Bill back at some point—but it needs to do its job properly and not be bounced or have closure motions pushed on it to prevent it from properly scrutinising the provisions.

I am pleased to have played a small part in trying to ensure that this Bill has received proper scrutiny in this House, which is what parliamentary democracy is about. The day we move to plebiscitary democracy will be the day we undermine the rights of Members of Parliament and that would be terrible.

Wayne David: My hon. Friend is making a very important point. Does he agree that it is disgraceful how the Europe Minister has dismissed out of hand, in a shameful way, the excellent points my hon. Friend has made and the excellent amendments he has tabled in order to facilitate this and previous debates?

Mike Gapes: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks.

In conclusion, I want to get to the heart of the issue and consider what the terms would be of any renegotiated settlement relevant to a 2017 referendum. We do not know when that will happen; it might happen during the British presidency, but the situation, like many other things in the Bill, is ambiguous. A few months ago, the Foreign Affairs Committee, which is a cross-party Committee with a wide spectrum of views on the issue of Europe, produced a report on which we agreed unanimously, in which we said that

“we are clear that UK proposals for pan-EU reforms are likely to find a more favourable reception than requests for further ‘special treatment’ for the UK. We are sceptical that other Member States would renegotiate existing EU law so as to allow the UK alone to reduce its degree of integration, particularly where this could be seen as undermining the integrity of the Single Market. The Government must reckon with the fact that the body of existing EU law is a collective product in which 27 countries have invested. Our sense is that other Member States want the UK to remain an EU Member. However, we do not think that a UK Government could successfully demand ‘any price’ from other Member States for promising to try to keep the UK in the Union.”

That is the essence of the point. The Government—at least the Conservative party—are trying to sell us a pig in a poke; they are trying to sell us a blank sheet of paper and they have not defined their terms for renegotiation. Indeed, the Foreign Secretary told the Foreign Affairs Committee that that process would not even start until after the general election.

The Bill is a disgrace; it should not be supported, and I hope that the House of Lords will do justice to it and amend it significantly.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.

Prime Minister (Replacement) Bill

Second Reading

The Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household (Mr Desmond Swayne): I have it on command from Her Majesty the Queen to acquaint the House that Her Majesty, having been informed of the purport of the Prime Minister (Replacement) Bill, has consented to place her prerogative, in so far as it is affected by the Bill, at the disposal of Parliament for the purposes of the Bill.

1.56 pm

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I am grateful to Her Majesty for her consent.

I clarify that we will not be debating the merits of Mrs Bone replacing the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr Cameron) as the name of my Bill might suggest, but rather the lack of clear succession should the Prime Minister become temporarily, or permanently, incapacitated to perform his duties.

I have asked on a number of occasions what procedure is in place should the Prime Minister be unable to perform his duties. Time and again, on each occasion Ministers have failed to give a substantive response, and I have been amazed at the number of different ways Ministers have dodged, ducked and dived around the question. Responses have ranged from the simply unhelpful reply from the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) that

“the Prime Minister is not incapacitated,”—[*Official Report*, 19 July 2007; Vol. 463, c. 446.]

to the Foreign Secretary's positively clandestine explanation that

“we do not consider it appropriate to talk about these plans in public”—[*Official Report*, 17 January 2012; Vol. 538, c. 597.]

Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): Has my hon. Friend inquired what has happened in the past?

Mr Bone: That is a good point, but I am looking to the future rather than the past as I am a very modern Conservative.

I am not in the habit of subscribing to conspiracy theories—although I do think there was somebody on the grassy knoll—but there is something strange about the Government's refusal to state their position on the matter. Could it be that the admission that the right hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr Clegg) is next in line to No. 10 is so scary that it would be a breach of national security should it become public knowledge?

In the terrible event of an airstrike on No. 10, we need to know instantly who would be responsible for commissioning a counter-attack. More to the point, we need the potential perpetrators of such an attack to know that we would instantly have the capability to take such decisions. It is preposterous for us to think that there would be time, or indeed the need, for a Cabinet meeting to be called to decide who is in charge. There simply would not be time because the military would need a decision as soon as possible on what action to

take. It seems common sense that, in such an event, there should be a predetermined line of succession, as there is in the United States of America.

In a majority Government, there would be a clear mandate for the Deputy Prime Minister to take over, as there was when John Prescott was Tony Blair's deputy. The same cannot be said of the right hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam, replacing my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney. Surely it is not fitting for the leader of a party that holds less than 10% of the seats in the House of Commons, and maintains a lower approval rating than the UK Independence party, to be positioned to take over from the Prime Minister in a national emergency.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): Surely it would be up to Her Majesty the Queen to make an instant decision. As she is so brilliant at everything, she would appoint the appropriate person. I can think of many Government Members who could do the job instead of the right hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Mr Clegg).

Mr Bone: That is a fair point, but—I am thinking the unthinkable—if Her Majesty were killed, we would need to know who was in charge. This is not a light-hearted Bill; it is a very serious Bill. I have not yet heard from the Government—I hope that I will in a little while—on why there should not be a clear line.

The United Kingdom has the right to know who would be at the helm in a terrible event of the kind that I have described. According to MI5, the threat level to the United Kingdom from international terrorism is “substantial”, meaning that attack is a strong possibility. By default, the Prime Minister is clearly one of the most vulnerable figures in the United Kingdom. We deserve to know who would replace him, and in what order, if the unthinkable occurred. Be it the Home Secretary, the Foreign Secretary or the Chancellor, the Government must be clear on who would be in charge if a destabilising event occurred.

Sir John Randall (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con): My hon. Friend is making an interesting case, but there is a flaw in his Bill: in the list of those people whom he thinks could be contenders, he seems to have omitted the Chief Whip. In my opinion, the Chief Whip is admirably placed to take command, particularly in times of trouble.

Mr Bone: I am grateful for that intervention from a former deputy Chief Whip, but I took advice from the Clerks of the House, and there were some people whom I could not include on my list. Madam Deputy Speaker, I could not include you, much though I would have liked to, or the Speaker. Some may think that that is the reason why I have excluded the Chief Whip; others may think that there are other reasons.

Stephen Pound (Ealing North) (Lab): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to say that a few of us in the Chamber found his comments about Her Majesty slightly unfortunate. I am sure that he is aware that there is a detailed list of people to succeed Her Majesty that goes as far as the deputy Chief Whip and the Deputy Speaker of the House. There is a great, long list of succession, so that problem would not arise. There

would be somebody wearing the Crown, and they would be in a position to use their traditional judgment to make that decision.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo): Order. All that is absolutely not relevant. I would be grateful if Mr Bone stayed, as I am sure he intended to, on the subject of succession to the Prime Minister, hopefully without mentioning too many cataclysmic events happening to other Members.

Mr Bone: Madam Deputy Speaker, I hope that none of these events take place. My comments, of course, were entirely about the Prime Minister and which elected person should replace him.

At a time when strong leadership would be more important than ever, the last thing we should be doing is having a debate to decide who was in charge. We need a clear line of succession, and we need it now. In the United States, if the President is killed, there is a list of succession of 18 different office holders. It starts with the Vice-President; then comes the Speaker of the House. It goes all the way down to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, so even if there is a mass terrorist attack on the American leadership, it will always be clear who is in charge. That person will immediately take over responsibility for the nuclear deterrent and will be able, if necessary, to order retaliatory action. I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker, but these things have to be said: if a civilian aircraft was deliberately crashed on the White House, killing the President, and other civilian aircraft were heading towards Congress, it would be clear whose decision it would be whether those aircraft should be shot down.

In the United Kingdom, we have no idea who would take over if the Prime Minister were killed. Would it be the Deputy Prime Minister, the Defence Secretary or the Cabinet Secretary? The answer is not clear. It might be an elected person. It might be the Defence Secretary, or it might be the Leader of the House. It might be the Cabinet Secretary. It might be the commander-in-chief of the armed forces. It might be the senior representative of the BBC; after all, the BBC thinks that it runs the country.

Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): My hon. Friend is raising some extremely serious issues, and I think that we may be mixing up a number of the functions of government. I visited RAF Coningsby recently to talk to people who were operating on quick reaction alert, and I know that when it comes to that particularly difficult and painful decision relating to airliners—which is surely one of the most unimaginably difficult decisions that a politician might have to make—there are clear and robust procedures in place, and a politician would be the decision maker at all times. I do not think that there is any question that this country always has a political decision maker in relation to our air defence.

Mr Bone: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's intervention, but I invite him to intervene again, because I am not sure whether he was saying that the ultimate decision was always political, or that the action could be taken without a political decision.

Steve Baker: What I am saying is that a senior politician would always be involved in any such decision in the circumstances that my hon. Friend has described. I am

not sure how much further I can go in terms of engagement, but I am absolutely clear about the fact that there is always a politician in that chain, and everyone involved knows who it is.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo): Order. I must make it clear to the hon. Gentleman and other Members that we are not discussing emergency powers or exceptional circumstances. The purpose of the Bill is to establish the succession that would operate should the Prime Minister be incapacitated. I should like us not to range extensively over events which may be theoretical or real, and which may or may not happen in the United Kingdom to any Member of the House of Commons.

Mr Bone: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. I will of course abide by your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I have to say that my Bill is about exactly that point: it is about what will happen in an emergency when the Prime Minister is killed in a terrorist attack. That is fundamental to the Bill, and it is very difficult for me to discuss it without mentioning events of that kind. Nevertheless, I will move on, because you have given your ruling, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I think that the House has got the drift of what I am saying.

We do not know who would be in charge if something happened to the Prime Minister, and I have therefore come up with an order of precedence. I am happy for the order to be changed in Committee, but this is my first go at it.

The first person on the list is the person bearing the designation of Deputy Prime Minister. The second is the Secretary of State responsible for home affairs. The third is the Secretary of State responsible for defence. The fourth is the Secretary of State responsible for foreign and Commonwealth affairs. The fifth is the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The sixth is the Secretary of State responsible for transport. The seventh is the Secretary of State responsible for health. The eighth is the Secretary of State responsible for business and innovation. The ninth is the Secretary of State responsible for justice. The 10th is the Secretary of State responsible for communities and local Government. The 11th is the Secretary of State responsible for education. The 12th is the Secretary of State responsible for environment, food and rural affairs. The 13th is the Secretary of State responsible for work and pensions. The 14th is the Minister of State responsible for the Cabinet Office. The 15th is the Paymaster General. The 16th is the Secretary of State responsible for culture, media and sport. The 17th is the Attorney-General. The 18th is the Secretary of State responsible for energy and climate change. The 19th is the Secretary of State responsible for international development. The 20th—this is very important—is the Leader of the House of Commons. The 21st is the Leader of the House of Lords. The 22nd is the Secretary of State responsible for Scotland. The 23rd is the Secretary of State responsible for Wales. The 24th is the Secretary of State responsible for Northern Ireland.

There is, however, one caveat: the person taking over from the Prime Minister would have to be a member of the same political party as the Prime Minister. Otherwise, the role would pass to the next person in line.

Before concluding my remarks, I would like to thank two of my researchers who played a big role in putting this speech together, Eliza Richardson and Emma Wade.

[Mr Bone]

There is a real necessity for the Bill. It is not actually a joke Bill. We do not know what would happen in such an event. My best guess is that tucked away somewhere in Whitehall there is an envelope that reads, "Open in the case of something horrible happening to the Prime Minister." I do not think that is good enough. We cannot wait for a terrorist attack before making up our minds about what should happen. We need to know who will replace the Prime Minister if the unimaginable happens.

2.9 pm

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): I will not detain the House for long. I would just like to say that the Opposition find this an interesting Bill that raises some interesting questions. We will not seek to prevent it receiving further scrutiny and debate.

2.10 pm

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): I have enormous respect for my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) and think that he is perfectly entitled to raise these sorts of issues, but I must confess that I have severe doubts about the Bill. If one looks back over history, one must come to the conclusion that it is wrong in our system, in which we do not have a written constitution, to lay down rules. It is much better to rely on people's good judgment. That is what our system is based on.

I can illustrate that argument by referring to the events of May 1940, when Neville Chamberlain ceased to be Prime Minister. Although he resigned voluntarily following a vote in the House of Commons in which his majority was severely reduced, I cannot help noticing that, according to the list set out in the Bill, the next person in line to succeed him in the event of his having become incapacitated, after the Deputy Prime Minister, would have been the Home Secretary.

Just imagine what would have happened in May 1940 if such a Bill had been passed and if Neville Chamberlain had sadly passed away or become incapacitated. It would not have been Winston Churchill, the saviour of the nation, who took over, but the Home Secretary. For the moment, I cannot remember who that was. My hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Jacob Rees-Mogg), who has an encyclopaedic knowledge of these matters, probably remembers. [Interruption.] I think that it was Lord Anderson—it has come back to me—of the Anderson shelter fame. Certainly he was not the charismatic leader who saved the nation. Any student of history knows that it was touch and go whether Winston Churchill would take over. Lord Halifax was the favourite, both of the King and of the outgoing Prime Minister.

Why do I make those points? We do not want a written constitution in which rules are laid down. We want people to use their good sense. That is what the British parliamentary system is all about. I do not think that it is particularly instructive to follow precedents from other countries. My hon. Friend mentioned the American constitution, which is an entirely different state of affairs. The President of the United States is the Head of State and commander-in-chief, elected by all

the people, so there has to be a procedure that lays down exactly what happens if he dies or becomes incapacitated. It is not a parliamentary system.

The same goes for the French system, in which, unlike in the American system, if the President dies—President Pompidou died in office—there is an immediate presidential election. The Americans, in their wisdom, might have determined that the Vice-President should not take over automatically, but that there should be an immediate general election for a new President, but that is a matter for them and their constitution.

Our system is completely different. If the Prime Minister resigns, as Margaret Thatcher did in more recent times, or sadly passes away or becomes incapacitated, the most senior member of the Cabinet would take over as acting Prime Minister. In the present Cabinet—I will hazard a guess—that is probably the Foreign Secretary. Nobody doubts that he could perfectly adequately, and indeed immediately, take over all the reins of government. There would be a rapid election among the majority parliamentary party, and the person best fitted to become Prime Minister would be elected by his colleagues. They would elect him not on the basis of some written constitution or some arbitrary list of the sort my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough has devised, but on the basis of their good sense. That is what our system is about.

Steve Baker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the crucial test is whether such a person can command a majority in this House? That is easily tested by the introduction of a confidence motion, and could be very quickly resolved by the House of Commons.

Sir Edward Leigh: My hon. Friend is of course right to make that point. In our system, which is parliamentary as opposed to presidential, the whole point is that, as in the past, the Head of State—the Queen—appoints as Prime Minister someone who can command a majority in the House, which is what being Prime Minister is all about. There is no mystery about the job: it goes to the person best equipped to command a majority in the House, and the best way to determine who can do that is based not on some arbitrary list laid down, in all his wisdom, by my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough, but on the good sense of those who sit in this Chamber.

Mr Bone: My hon. Friend is making a good and powerful speech, but he is slightly wrong about the Bill. I am only suggesting who should take over as Prime Minister immediately, at the moment an attack happens, not in the long term, and I do not think that he is right to say that he knows who that would be.

Sir Edward Leigh: I entirely accept that the scenario my hon. Friend describes is different from the events of May 1940 or the resignation of Margaret Thatcher. Luckily, not many Prime Ministers have died in office. Spencer Perceval was assassinated in the Lobby, a few feet away. As my hon. Friend may remember, Campbell-Bannerman died in office. He was replaced by Herbert Asquith in a perfectly normal way, and from my reading of the history books, I do not think that anybody at the time suggested that the procedures for appointing him were in any way wanting. He was a man of outstanding

abilities, albeit he was a Liberal—I know that that is a severe disadvantage in my hon. Friend's eyes—but for all that, there does not seem to have been any difficulty about his appointment.

Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): As I recall, Campbell-Bannerman did not die in office, but he did die in Downing street. Asquith allowed him to stay in Downing street after leaving office because he was so seriously ill, but the leadership had changed.

Sir Edward Leigh: It is a severe mistake to refer to any aspect of history when my hon. Friend is in the Chamber. I talked only this week to David Campbell Bannerman, who is an MEP—he was in UKIP but is now, I am glad to say, in the Conservative party—and he told me that story. Campbell-Bannerman was of course a very sick man and could have died at any moment, but he died in Downing street a week, I think, after he resigned as Prime Minister.

I accept that my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough is making a brave thrust at a very unfortunate and very rare situation, but I assure him that such playing around with our constitution is very dangerous. I have to tell him that it is what we would expect from our Liberal friends. I would have thought better of him, and that he would have trusted in the good sense—

Mr Bone: That is the worst insult I have ever heard in the House.

Sir Edward Leigh: I withdraw that remark. It was unparliamentary language, which I should not have used, and I apologise to my hon. Friend. He has made a brave thrust, but dare I say that he is wrong because the Bill is too rigid. Under his list, the Deputy Prime Minister—if he is in the same party as the former Prime Minister—the Home Secretary and then the Secretary of State for Defence would take over, but once people are in those posts, it will be very difficult to shift them. The present system is much better: an acting Prime Minister from among the former Prime Minister's leading colleagues temporarily steps into the fold and, in its wisdom, the parliamentary party then takes a decision and appoints the best man or woman for the job. On that basis, I rest my argument.

2.18 pm

Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) and I agree more often than we disagree, but I certainly oppose him on this occasion. He has introduced a Bill that he says is a serious one, and we must take his comments at face value. I felt moved to speak only when it became clear that the Bill would be reached this afternoon, and I am a little disappointed that he did not look at past experience.

My hon. Friend raised several red herrings, particularly in relation to the Crown and national security. If an urgent matter comes up while the Prime Minister is very temporarily indisposed, I am absolutely confident that our armed forces and the Home Office have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure that any immediate decisions are dealt with properly, and I have already said what some of them are.

Bob Stewart: It is obvious to me that if there were a national crisis, the Defence Council would meet immediately under the Secretary of State for Defence and, if necessary, decisions would be made by that Secretary of State. I think that such procedures are in place.

Steve Baker: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks, but I am conscious of your earlier instruction, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It seems to me that my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough is being quite harsh on the party that usually sits below the Aisle. That party is perfectly capable of producing first-class statesmen. It has done so in the past and I am certain that it could do so again. I would like to see a true liberal at the Dispatch Box, but I am sure that our party could produce a true liberal. However, that is a subject for another day. We should be a bit more generous to our friends below the Aisle.

We should also be more generous to the House. I am sure that if the House was faced with a choice on whether to express confidence in a Member who did not enjoy the support of these Benches, we would simply vote no and other arrangements would be made through the usual channels.

I am disappointed that the Bill has been introduced. It raises some interesting questions, but many of them are red herrings. The truth is that if the Prime Minister is indisposed in the medium to long term, we have perfectly robust arrangements for selecting a successor. I hope that my hon. Friend will not take the Bill much further.

2.21 pm

Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): Is it not nice that Fridays have got back to normal, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that we are able to debate these important constitutional subjects in calm and splendour, rather than with the freneticism that there might have been earlier?

Today reminds me of 14 July 1789. My hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) comes to this House as a revolutionary, intending to upset a part of the constitution that has served us well since the office of Prime Minister was first filled by Sir Robert Walpole. We have had a wonderfully functioning, effective means of selecting our Prime Ministers that has found some of the greatest people our country has ever produced.

Think of the 18th century and who was selected then: Sir Robert Walpole himself and the great pair of Pitts—Pitt the Elder and Pitt the Younger. Think particularly of Pitt the Younger, who was called forth to serve his country by George III when he was little more than a schoolboy—a brave decision that was made possible only because of the existence of the royal prerogative in the selection of Prime Ministers. No crude list then to say who should come next, to decide and determine, to bind down the royal prerogative and prevent somebody of that stature from being celebrated as Prime Minister.

Think through to the following century and the great Prime Ministers we had then: Lord Liverpool, that wonderfully long-serving high Tory figure, great man that he was, who governed us with such aplomb; Canning and Wellington, another pair of the greatest magnitude—Wellington, that great hero of the nation who saved us from being invaded or taken over by the French and

[Jacob Rees-Mogg]

who, as Prime Minister, set his face firmly against reform in a most admirable style that we should all rejoice in. There was even a not-half-bad Liberal Prime Minister in the form of Lord Palmerston. Lord Palmerston would know what to do about Gibraltar at the moment, would he not, Madam Deputy Speaker?

Because we do not necessarily have the advantage of using the royal prerogative in getting the people we want and because, according to my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough, we now have to go through some list, we could not conceivably get figures of the stature of Lord Palmerston or Disraeli, great flatterer of monarchy that he was.

Mr Brooks Newmark (Braintree) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Jacob Rees-Mogg: Of course I will give way.

Mr Newmark: In listening to my hon. Friend's—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo): Order. The hon. Gentleman does not appear to have a tie on. That is a requirement of the House. If he goes outside and comes back dressed appropriately, I am sure that the hon. Member for North East Somerset (Jacob Rees-Mogg) will give way again.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: I am so sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker; I had not noticed that my hon. Friend was in fancy dress today. I am glad that proper sartorial standards are being upheld. What would our sovereign think if her Prime Minister were not properly dressed? Perhaps a debate for another day is whether court dress should be reintroduced for Prime Ministers when they have audiences with Her Majesty. While I am on this subject, it is a great disappointment to me that the Prime Minister, when listing his engagements on Wednesdays, always fails to say that he has an audience with Her Majesty, as his predecessors always used to do. It seems to have dropped out of usage.

Mr Newmark rose—

Jacob Rees-Mogg: The colour, good heavens!

Mr Newmark: The colour of my tie has perhaps given me inspiration for my question. Can my hon. Friend envisage a “Kind Hearts and Coronets” scenario in which we run out of every character on the list of my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone)? Also, might we even consider putting the Speaker himself on it to take full command of the House and the country?

Jacob Rees-Mogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that crucial point, because I was shocked to discover that advice had been given that the Speaker could not be included on the list. Parliament can put anyone on a list.

Mr Bone: For clarification, I wanted to put Mr Speaker immediately after the Deputy Prime Minister, in third place, but I was told that the House could not contemplate such a thing.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: I am very worried, given that this is a major constitutional point, that someone is suggesting that Bills introduced into this House can be limited. As long as the sovereign has consented to our considering matters pertaining to Her Majesty's prerogative, we can put anyone on the list. We could put a lottery winner on it, if we wanted. The House has a right to legislate as it sees fit and not to be held back. There are examples of Speakers going on to be Prime Minister. One thinks of Addington and remembers the little ditty:

“Pitt is to Addington as London is to Paddington”.

It was said rather disparagingly of Paddington, which was thought not to be much of a place in the early 19th century, but which is now a grand place, of course, with a wonderful railway terminus. None the less, Speakers have gone on to be Prime Minister, so I see no reason not to include Mr Speaker on the list.

I have concerns about the list itself, however, partly because it does not refer to people by their proper titles, which I think is an error, and partly because it does not include people in the right order of precedence. The Deputy Prime Minister is in fact the Lord President of the Council, and though he calls himself “Deputy Prime Minister”, there is nothing in the constitution that makes that a proper post. It is just a title given out by Prime Ministers when they face a little political awkwardness and to keep their party on board. I think it was first given to Rab Butler when he needed a sop to cheer him up. It was then given to Lord Heseltine when John Major thought it was a good thing—

Sir Edward Leigh: Geoffrey Howe.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: Oh, I was forgetting about Geoffrey Howe, who was given it when he fell out with the great, almost divine Margaret Thatcher. It didn't work anyway; it didn't cheer him up, and he resigned in a huff not much later. It was then given to the noble Lord Prescott to keep the left of the Labour party on board. It is not really a proper constitutional position, whereas the Lord President of the Council—well, he is the fine fellow who makes us regulate the press and goes along to get royal charters introduced.

I am also very disturbed that the Lord Privy Seal is not referred to correctly. In my view, he should be particularly high up the list, because we have such a fine Lord Privy Seal. It is worth bearing it in mind that the title of “Leader of the House” used to be held by the Prime Minister himself, which is a reminder of why that position is of such fundamental importance. Control of the programme of the House is essential to government, and the man or woman in charge of that is a most senior figure in the Government—as I say, it used to be the Prime Minister—so I should like the Lord Privy Seal to leapfrog all the way up, probably ahead even of the Deputy Prime Minister, in recognition of the reality and seriousness of the role.

Mr Bone: I do apologise. My hon. Friend is right about the proper titles and about the Leader of the House. I forgot him when I did the list, which is why he is 20th, but I invite my hon. Friend to table an amendment in Committee. I would accept it.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

There is another lacuna in the Bill. It refers to “the Secretary of State with responsibility for Business and Innovation”,

but that great man, that right hon. Friend of mine, wonderful figure that he is, is in fact President of the Board of Trade. He is a very important figure is the President of the Board of Trade. That board, on which also sit people like the Archbishop of Canterbury, meets very infrequently; it has met a couple of times in the past couple of hundred years, which is about as often as we need most government as far as I can tell.

Then there is the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Since 1714, of course, the post of Lord High Treasurer has been in commission and the First Lord is customarily the Prime Minister and the Second Lord is the Chancellor. If the Prime Minister were incapacitated, the Treasury would remain in commission; it would not need the Second Lord to take on the role of the First Lord—

2.30 pm

The debate stood adjourned (Standing Order No. 11(2)).

Ordered, That the debate be resumed on Friday 3 January.

Business without Debate

CHARITABLE STATUS FOR RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 3 January.

ROMANIAN AND BULGARIAN ACCESSION (LABOUR RESTRICTION) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 3 January.

ALAN TURING (STATUTORY PARDON) BILL [LORDS]

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 28 February.

EXTENSION OF FRANCHISE (HOUSE OF LORDS) BILL [LORDS]

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 3 January 2014.

MARGARET THATCHER DAY BILL

Resumption of adjourned debate on Question (5 July), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 3 January.

EU MEMBERSHIP (AUDIT OF COSTS AND BENEFITS) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 17 January.

ASYLUM (TIME LIMIT) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 17 January.

FOREIGN NATIONALS (ACCESS TO PUBLIC SERVICES) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 17 January.

HOUSE OF LORDS (MAXIMUM MEMBERSHIP) BILL

Motion made, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 17 January.

Stephen Pound (Ealing North) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. With your generous indulgence, let me clarify that I appear to have stumbled over my words and said 13 January, which is not a Friday, instead of 3 January 2014. I meant to say 3 January and hope that the record will show that.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dawn Primarolo): Thank you. We are grateful for that correction, and I am sure that the record will read accordingly.

Extractive Industries (Developing Nations)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Mark Lancaster.)

2.34 pm

Eric Joyce (Falkirk) (Ind): I want to take this opportunity to say a few things about the extractive industries, particularly those across the world. Many of our constituencies have an interest in such industries, but it is not necessarily the biggest interest across the whole of our country. In Scotland, of course, most Members have some interest in the oil and gas industries, because of assets in the north or the people who work in the industries. The Grangemouth refinery is on my doorstep. It rarely makes the news, but employs many people. My own family have worked in the oil and gas industries for many years, as have many of my constituents and people who live around the area. Such involvement gives us an interest in the broader extractive industries.

Naturally, our primary concern is for our constituents and our local areas in the UK. However, over the years, my interest has increasingly focused on the impact of large—they are often, although not always, large—companies in the extractive sectors on the economic development of countries across the world. Those companies also have a big impact on the UK because they often pay tax here. They might have their headquarters in the UK, and they employ people in the UK. I am thinking not just of oil and gas—that is what we tend to think about in the UK when we talk about domestic issues—or of small operations that have open-cast mining or deal in aggregates, but large operators that might be headquartered in the UK and that operate in parts of the developing world.

It seems to me—I hope that this does not appear tangential—that when we think about the UK industrial and commercial effort and how it impacts on the developing world, it tends to be almost as a secondary line of debate in the discussion of how the Department for International Development and aid impact on the developing world. What I am saying is that when we think about the economies of the developing world it tends to be about the great good that we do with our munificent and generous taxpayer donations that go through various projects involving European institutions or non-governmental organisations.

It is increasingly important, particularly in the current economic context, that we start to tilt the debate. When we think about developing world economies, we should not simply think about DFID, aid and how fantastically generous we are. Of course DFID does great work, and the Government spend a great deal in this area. Our constituents often say that perhaps that money should be spent at home. The Government are committed to a high level of DFID expenditure, as were the Labour Government, who, one might say, kicked off the whole thing. That is the issue and the figure that people are keen to discuss instead of the figure of inward investment that goes into economies from companies that are either based or headquartered in the UK. I appreciate that for some people there is a significant distinction. It is perhaps worth being up front from the start about the fact that for some people there is a difference between companies that are seen to be truly British or truly operating in the UK and that employ people in the

UK—I am talking about companies that operate around major assets, such as refineries in the North sea—and companies that are based, headquartered or listed in London, either on the London stock exchange or the alternative investment markets. People often fail to grasp the scale of economic activity that is created through the potential of the extractive industries sector that is headquartered in the UK. What is or is not a British company is a moot point. In many ways, it is not helpful to reflect on that quite deep theological question.

The fact is that many companies that are attracted to investing in the developing world on an enormous scale have chosen to have their headquarters in London. That has sometimes created issues for the extractive industries sector, most notably mining. There have been problems with the listing of particular companies, and their practices before they listed, their management practices, the assumptions owners might have made about how governance should operate and so on are often very different from those that are the culture in the UK. There is an ongoing negotiation, to put it at its mildest, that lays down rules for companies so that when they list in the UK they have to change their culture to fit the high standards of London listing.

There have been one or two well-publicised issues, and I might refer to one of them in a short while, but the standards are generally very high. For companies that list in London and operate elsewhere in the world, there is a large amount of transparency and accountability. The standards in those industries have traditionally been quite high. When new companies come in from elsewhere in the world with different cultural backgrounds, those standards become even more important.

There are two or three initiatives that I want to mention that augment and bolster the standards that already apply in the City of London. One is the extractive industries transparency initiative, which was created just over 10 years ago by the Labour Government and has been carried on by this Government. Oddly, we never actually signed up to it, although I think I understand why. It is a fairly straightforward worldwide initiative signed up to by 25 countries that aims to lay down a standard by which countries agree that all the companies operating out of those countries, or which are listed in those countries, are required to declare what payments they make to Governments, often and usually in the developing world, and the Governments agree to say what payments they have received, as well as other conditions and criteria. That leads to a standard of accountability and transparency that was not there before. The purpose is to de-risk and to make things more realistic and practical for companies that are nervous about relative insecurity or uncertainty about what happens to cash that is paid to Governments. Historically, we know that a lot of cash has gone missing in the developing world. Instead of paying for infrastructure, education or health, it has paid for mansions in Paris or Brussels, or wherever the taste of the person receiving the cash might have led them.

There are other Members in the Chamber who have as much or probably more experience than me in this, but as we travel across Africa we often end up talking to the people who run young democracies. Companies that are often listed in London come in and try to operate in their countries, and those people are keen to show that the cash is being distributed and used

appropriately for Government works. Transparency helps them. It also helps companies, which are often wrongly accused of spreading cash around to get contracts when that is simply not true. The idea of greater transparency helps everyone.

Many organisations lobbied for the EITI, but one of my favourites is Global Witness, which George Soros had an important role in creating. In the first two or three years of its existence, most of the heavy work involved encouraging people to sign up to a voluntary arrangement. Now the EU accounting transparency directive and other directives are, in effect, essentially embedding that arrangement into EU law. My understanding is—I could be wrong—that it will be embedded in UK law by 2015. That will not supplant the functions of the EITI, but it will augment them and there will still be a strong purpose in signing up to the initiative.

There is a similar piece of legislation in the States. The Dodd-Frank Bill has an amendment called the Cardin-Lugar amendment, which is still being argued about. It was passed, but there were some issues with how the Securities and Exchange Commission implemented it—perhaps not enough resources were put into it. Some people will say that such legislation does not exist in the US, but it does, it has just not been fully implemented. It will be in due course.

The standards of transparency, which in many ways are above the basic EITI standard, are increasingly high. Within a couple of years, they will be embedded everywhere in all the major markets. The EITI has played an important role in all of that.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I presume the hon. Gentleman gives full recognition to the fact that companies from other countries operating in Africa do not operate under the same rules as British companies, which often gives us a competitive disadvantage. Will he comment on that?

Eric Joyce: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. We often fail to make a distinction between the developing world of China, Russia and the former Soviet states, and the developing world of impoverished states in Africa and elsewhere. Without wishing to digress—you would pull me up for doing so, Madam Deputy Speaker—it is true that China and Russia have different cultural and transparency assumptions. Most importantly, they have different sovereignty assumptions. They tend to say, “It’s entirely up to a country what it does with its cash. It is not for us to ask.” Chinese companies therefore often operate to a different standard. Many in London are concerned that, if that standard is lower, the small number of people who want to make dodgy deals—they are small in number, but of a significant scale—will do their deals with companies that are not regulated in the UK. That is unquestionably a problem. We must continuously work to have those countries understand that they are major world players and have major responsibilities to ensure that corruption does not once again run amok in Africa. I recognise the hon. Gentleman’s point—he has experience in the field—which is frequently made. I would not want to regulate UK companies in a way that damages them in the context of international competition.

Currently, the EITI voluntary arrangement has worked well, but statutory underpinning in the UK and US within the next two years will bolster standards in Africa, which is my interest, and in developing countries throughout the world. That is what the countries and the companies want.

The UK Government have agreed to sign up to the EITI, which is great. They were concerned in the first instance that the initiative would lay unnecessary costs on small UK operators, which, frankly, one would not expect to be in the ambit of this discussion. The UK must lead the way and sign up if it wants other countries, such as Angola, which wants to sign up, to do so. Other countries would also like to sign up.

It is a two-year process. By good fortune, I am on the multi-stakeholder group in the UK. The process, which is currently happening, is put in place by a multi-stakeholder group of relevant interested companies from the various industrial sectors, including from the oil, gas, minerals and mining extractive industries; civilian organisations with an interest, such as green and transparency organisations; and the Government—it is led by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. It puts the UK in a position to help to lead the world in high standards for the extractive industries.

I want to make one more point. The Government have stressed the importance of beneficial ownership. In the next year or two, legislation will emphasise the importance of beneficial ownership throughout the developing world. That means that we will know where the cash ends up. It is currently possible to construct a series of layers of ownership. We can say that people must declare where the money is going, but they can say, “It goes to company X in the British Virgin Isles,” and we will have no idea who that is. If the Government introduce legislation, which I believe they will, we need to know who beneficial owners are. When companies trade and invest enormous amounts of money in developing countries, the money should go to the appropriate place. From my point of view, that would draw the eye towards the good that enormous and small companies do when they invest in countries that otherwise have very little in the way of revenue.

I shall now conclude, and I do not intend for this to be on a depressing note. The Select Committee on Business, Innovation and Skills is undertaking an excellent inquiry into this whole issue. I have noticed that some people who care passionately about economic development in the developing world seem to set the theoretical principle of the standard so high that they make it almost impossible for companies to invest in the developing world. It seems from the World Development Movement’s submission to the Committee that it does not want any extractive industries to operate in any part of Africa. The reality is that without those industries many countries will simply never develop their economies, and the extractive industries, operating transparently in the way that I have described, are the primary potential driver of economic development. I am talking not about aid, but about proper investment by very large companies that want to carry out extraction that is good for them and their shareholders, and good for the taxpayers of these countries. Such companies are often the biggest taxpayer in these countries and they often represent the only way in which these countries can get good tax revenue and move their economies forward as we want to see them moving forward.

2.50 pm

The Minister for Skills and Enterprise (Matthew Hancock): I congratulate the hon. Member for Falkirk (Eric Joyce) on securing this debate on the extractive industries and their impact on the developing world. During his speech, I was reflecting on the role of trade, alongside aid, in lifting developing countries out of poverty—he made the case for that powerfully. The rise of Africa and Asia is driven, in the first instance, by the free market operating in a strong framework of the rule of law. We are discussing one aspect of that, and how rules on transparency for the operation of extractive industries can strengthen that process and ensure that British companies and companies across the world can contribute to the growth of developing nations. Not only has he prosecuted his argument well over a long period, but it is gaining salience. The proof of that is in the strong growth rates of many of the countries around the world; so I would probably start on a more optimistic note than he finished on.

I also wish to pay tribute to, and put on the record the Government's thanks for, the work that the hon. Gentleman does as the civil society representative on the UK extractive industries transparency initiative multi-stakeholder group. He has had an interest in this area for some time. He referred to issues relating to the Grangemouth refinery, and we know that such issues can be political hot potatoes at times, but I have noticed that he always seems to be on the side of those supporting the growth of the British economy, and I am grateful for that.

Natural resources such as oil, gas and minerals make a major contribution not only to this country's economy, but to those of many developing countries. They can deliver transformational change, if managed well, and can be worth billions to developing countries. For instance, Nigerian oil exports were worth almost \$100 billion in 2012—that is more than the total net aid to the whole of sub-Saharan Africa. Interestingly, the acronym BRIC—Brazil, Russia, India and China—has been used for some years to represent the fast-developing countries, but countries such as Turkey and Nigeria are quickly coming into their own and challenging the BRIC countries as the next phase of fast-growth countries.

In 2007, Botswana became an upper middle-income country. In 1996, when it gained independence, it was one of the world's poorest countries, and its success is largely due to well-managed diamond mining. Such examples show that international mining has the potential dramatically to boost economic growth and provide a route out of poverty for resource-rich countries. Listed and unlisted extractives companies are important partners for us in government. We work together with them to ensure that developing countries make the most of their resources to drive growth and tackle poverty, and do so in an open and transparent way. We work through DFID to help resource-rich developing countries derive the maximum possible benefits from oil, gas and mining projects in the region. We also work directly with companies, Governments and communities across the developing world, including in Africa, to improve the development impact of extractive industries. For instance, we are working with the World Bank in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where we are investing in mining sector reform. Our immediate focus is on conflict minerals in the east, where we are partnering with responsible mining companies.

Work is under way with UK-based and other extractive companies to build skills and capacity in east Africa, too, where we are evaluating whether to contribute to the African Legal Support Facility. That organisation plays an important role in procuring world-class legal expertise for Governments who are negotiating complex oil, gas and mining investments, so that the Governments of developing countries have the same access to high-quality legal advice as large companies.

We are also committed to increasing transparency in the extractives sector. I want to dwell on several points that the hon. Gentleman made. As he is well aware, we are committed to encouraging strong, transparent and accountable institutions, which can regulate extractives and promote open markets and open societies. Helping to create that environment is an important part of attracting responsible investment too.

The UK presidency of the G8 was used by the Government to commit to working towards common global standards of transparency. Transparency was one of the goals of the summit. We want to level the playing field for business internationally and provide information for citizens around the world, so that they can hold their own Governments to account in the same way as we are held to account in this Chamber. We have launched eight partnerships, working with companies, Governments and civil society in resource-rich countries to improve transparency and build accountability. It was very encouraging to hear the leaders of UK-listed extractives companies, including Sam Walsh, the chief executive officer of Rio Tinto, join us in calling for other countries to adopt common global standards of extractives transparency.

As the hon. Gentleman mentioned, in May the Prime Minister announced that the UK would sign up to the extractives industries transparency initiative. As he said, it is a matter of getting the right balance between transparency to support the good use of resources and ensuring that such transparency is not over-burdensome. The EITI is designed to build trust and dialogue and promote public debate by putting information into the public domain. For instance, in countries with very poor governance, the EITI prompted the first time that different stakeholders sat round the same table to discuss the management of the mining sector. The initiative has a direct impact.

Many extractive companies listed or headquartered in the UK are active in supporting the EITI. Shell sits alongside Rio Tinto on the international EITI multi-stakeholder board. By signing up, we want Governments to know that the EITI is not just for developing countries, but should be a truly global standard. The hon. Gentleman put the case very well. It means that we have a stronger argument to encourage emerging and developing countries to adopt similar rules.

The Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my hon. Friend the Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), who is the Minister for employment relations and consumer affairs, is the UK's EITI champion. She has committed to implementing an effective and timely initiative for the UK. Unfortunately she could not be present to respond to the debate today, but across the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills we take an interest in ensuring that the initiative works properly.

While the EITI shines a spotlight on domestic production, chapter 10 of the EU accounting directive requires listed and large extractive companies to report the payments they make to all Governments. We are committed to early implementation and are exploring whether we can put regulations in place in 2014, about a year ahead of the transposition deadline—not least because bribery and corruption are barriers to trade and growth, including in the extractives industry. They hinder development, distort competition and ultimately perpetuate poverty. Those problems can have a profound impact on developing economies, and the evidence is widespread. That is why the UK is a signatory to the UN convention against corruption and the OECD bribery convention. Under the Bribery Act 2010, which came into force in July 2011, a company that carries out business in the UK can be prosecuted for bribery anywhere in the world. Those companies can also trade on the honesty and integrity that the Bribery Act implies. It includes an innovative “failure to prevent” offence, and an “adequate procedures” defence to encourage companies to put in place measures to prevent people associated with them from bribing.

The Bribery Act is an important part of the agenda, but another barrier to growth is weak corporate governance. London is the world’s leading international financial centre, and a wide range of companies choose to list on our markets. That includes many extractive industries companies, whose operations are largely overseas. One of the reasons for that is our strong legal and regulatory framework, which includes corporate law and good corporate governance, giving shareholders clear rights on voting and information, and holding companies to account. That flexibility and confidence helps London as a listing location, and making sure that we keep that strength and confidence is important. We continue to enhance the listing rules to ensure that they are strong and well recognised internationally. The rights of independent shareholders in premium listed companies with controlling shareholders will be strengthened.

There is new guidance on independence requirements for companies with a premium listing in some sectors, including mineral and extractive industries.

Ultimately, those and other measures that we are putting in place are there to ensure that we have a strong and well recognised system that has the right balance of transparency. As with the trust that is built up through the EITI, the trust and transparency within the UK corporate law and governance framework is vital to achieve long-term sustainable economic growth, including in extractives. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree with that.

We consulted on these issues during the summer, following the Prime Minister’s announcement in May that we were joining the EITI. We will publish our official response in early 2014. I am sure that the comments made by the hon. Gentleman today will be taken into account in that. Last month, the Prime Minister announced the outcome of an important part of the trust and transparency agenda. The Government obtained information on the individuals who really own and control UK companies. The hon. Gentleman referred to some of the difficulties that a non-transparent process can lead to. We will implement a central register of this information, which will be maintained by Companies House, and the register will be publicly accessible.

I hope that I have assured the hon. Gentleman that the Government take seriously the role of extractive industries, not least in promoting development in the fast-growing parts of the world, and that we strongly support greater transparency, an agenda on which the Prime Minister has led. It is important to grow economies and empower citizens, to encourage the development of strong and flexible corporate governance and to make sure that UK listed mining companies can lead the way. I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman—

3.4 pm

House adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 9(7)).

Written Statements

Friday 29 November 2013

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

Shared Parental Leave and Pay

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (Jo Swinson): We are introducing a new system of shared parental leave through the Children and Families Bill, which is currently before Parliament, and secondary legislation. It is our intention that the new system be workable and easy to manage for both employers and employees.

Today, I am publishing the Government's response to the consultation on the administration of shared parental leave and pay which sets out the final detail on how the system will work in practice and the processes that will need to be followed.

We intend to:

require employees to provide employers with a non-binding indication at the outset of when they expect to take shared parental leave and at least eight weeks' notice of any leave they will actually be taking;

introduce a fixed limit on the number of notifications an employee can give to take shared parental leave. The number of notifications will be capped at three (the first notification and two further notifications or changes). This will be in addition to the notification of entitlement and the non-binding indication of when they expect to take the leave when parents opt into shared parental leave. We will make provisions for changes that are mutually agreed between the employer and employee to not count towards the cap;

set the cut-off point for taking shared parental leave at 52 weeks following birth (or adoption);

create a new provision for each parent to have up to 20 days to support them in returning to work—parents will be able to use these days to return to work on a part-time basis and will be in addition to the 10 "keeping in touch" (KIT) days available during maternity leave;

maintain the right to return to the same job for employees returning from any period of leave that includes maternity, paternity, adoption and shared parental leave that totals 26 weeks or less in aggregate; even if the leave is taken in discontinuous blocks. Any subsequent leave will attract the right to return to the same job, or if that is not reasonably practicable, a similar job.

We also intend to:

align the notification periods for paternity leave and pay; protect mothers who give binding notice to opt into shared parental leave prior to giving birth, by introducing a right to revoke the notice up to six weeks following birth;

produce guidance to encourage employees who qualify under the new fostering-for-adoption placement process to give employers as much warning as possible.

I have arranged for copies to be put in the House Libraries.

CABINET OFFICE

Cabinet Committees List

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Mr Francis Maude): Today I am publishing an updated Cabinet Committees list. I have placed a copy of the new list in the Libraries of both Houses.

TREASURY

Tax Information Exchange Agreement (UK/Virgin Islands)

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (Mr David Gauke): An arrangement comprising of an exchange of letters amending the 2008 Tax Information Exchange Agreement (TIEA) with the British Virgin Islands was signed on 28 November 2013 to permit automatic and spontaneous exchange of information. At the same time an agreement was also signed to improve international tax compliance which sets out the precise details of the information which will be automatically exchanged. The text of the agreement to improve international tax compliance has been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses and will be made available on HM Revenue and Customs' website. The text amending the Tax Information Exchange Agreement will be scheduled to a draft Order in Council and laid before the House of Commons in due course.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local Government Ombudsman Service

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Brandon Lewis): Earlier this year my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State commissioned an independent governance review of the Local Government Ombudsman Service.

I am today publishing a report of that review with its conclusions and recommendations, and announcing the Government's response.

The review, undertaken by Robert Gordon CB, a former Director-General in the Scottish Government, has examined the institutional structures and accountability of the Local Government Ombudsman Service. These structures consist of two or more local ombudsmen, who are office holders appointed by Her Majesty, and who are responsible for determining cases, and a commission comprising of the local ombudsmen and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman; one of the local ombudsman is chairman of the commission and another is vice-chairman. Currently there are two local ombudsmen.

The review concludes that these current structures and governance arrangements are outdated and insufficient. The review recommends that as soon as practicable these arrangements should be reformed so that there is only one local ombudsman, supported by a board including the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, and strengthened by the addition of one or two non-Executive members.

The Government share these conclusions, and intend, as parliamentary time allows, to seek the necessary legislation to enable there to be a single local ombudsman with a strengthened board, including the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, and with two non-Executive members. We believe such governance arrangements will provide more robust and consistent leadership and help drive performance, delivery and further reform of the service.

The review also highlighted a number of questions about the wider ombudsmen landscape with the reviewer concluding that in the medium-term consideration should be given to the creation of a unified public services ombudsman for England.

On 16 October, my right hon. Friend the Minister for Government Policy announced to the Public Administration Select Committee that he was launching two separate reviews—one to look into the question of how better use can be made of complaints to achieve both redress for the citizen and improvement in service delivery and the other to look at the question of the ombudsmen landscape.

In the context of these reviews and having regard to any conclusions of the relevant Select Committees, we intend to develop and test ideas for a model for creating a single public services ombudsman for England. In exploring the scope for a single ombudsman we must establish if it will deliver a better service for all, and ensure it does not in any way weaken or slow processes by which people, including patients with complaints about health services, can escalate those complaints. The aim must always be to ensure that redress for people who complain about public services, including health, is as straightforward, speedy, and satisfactory as possible.

I have placed a copy of the review in the Library of the House.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Offshore Oil and Gas Licensing Round

The Minister of State, Department of Energy and Climate Change (Michael Fallon): After thorough consideration of the final applications made in the 27th offshore oil and gas licensing round, I am pleased to be able to announce a second tranche of offers of 52 production licences.

This follows a screening assessment of the blocks applied for in the round which concluded that 61 blocks which were close to, or in, certain special areas of conservation (SACs) and special protection areas (SPAs), should be subject to full appropriate assessments as required by the EU habitats and birds directives and the UK implementing regulations. Appropriate assessments are conducted where the screening assessment shows that oil and gas activities could have significant effects on those SACs and SPAs and include a public consultation. These assessments have now been completed and conclude that the proposed oil and gas activities will not cause an adverse effect on the integrity of relevant European sites as defined in the habitats and birds directives.

These series of offers further demonstrate the continuing attractiveness both of the UK continental shelf as an oil and gas producing province and of our approach to offering a range of licences meeting a diverse range of needs.

Details of the offers that have been made can be viewed on the gov.uk website at: <http://www.gov.uk/oil-and-gas-licensing-rounds>.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Water Bill

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Dan Rogerson): Government amendments to the Water Bill on flood insurance have been published today.

An updated impact assessment has also been published and a commentary document which provides further details of the intended effect of the amendments. Copies of these documents will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The Government response to the public consultation on flood insurance undertaken during the summer was published on 18 November.

HEALTH

Savile Investigations

The Secretary of State for Health (Mr Jeremy Hunt): I promised to update the House about the investigations into Jimmy Savile and the NHS in my written statement on 14 October 2013, *Official Report*, column 39WS.

The Metropolitan Police Service has completed its document review and transferred various material concerning Jimmy Savile and the NHS to the Department of Health. The information has been passed on to the relevant hospital trust for further investigation as appropriate. Names of the hospitals are taken from the information received. These include hospitals that may have closed in which case the information has been passed on to the legacy organisation.

Kate Lampard, who was asked to provide independent assurance of the NHS investigations on behalf of the Department of Health, will provide general assurance of the quality of all reports in her final assurance report. We expect the final reports of all the investigations to be completed by June 2014, with publication sooner if that is possible.

Information has been passed on by the Department to the 19 trusts who have responsibility for the relevant hospitals as set out in the table below:

	<i>Hospital</i>	<i>Relevant Trust</i>
1.	Barnet General Hospital	Barnet and Chase Farm NHS Hospitals NHS Trust
2.	Booth Hall Children's Hospital	Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
3.	De La Pole Hospital	Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals Trust
4.	Dryburn Hospital	County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust
5.	Hammersmith Hospital	Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
6.	Leavesden Secure Mental Hospital	Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust

	<i>Hospital</i>	<i>Relevant Trust</i>		<i>Hospital</i>	<i>Relevant Trust</i>
7.	Marsden Hospital	The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust	14.	Royal Free Hospital, London	Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust
8.	Maudsley Hospital	South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust	15.	Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle	The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
9.	North Manchester General Hospital	The Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust	16.	Seacroft Hospital, Leeds	The Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust
10.	Odstock Hospital	Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust	17.	St Mary's Hospital, Carshalton	Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust
11.	Pinderfields Hospital	Mid Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust	18.	Whitby Memorial Hospital	York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
12.	Prestwich Psychiatric Hospital	Greater Manchester West Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust	19.	Wythenshawe Hospital	University Hospital of South Manchester NHS Foundation Trust
13.	Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead	Queen Victoria Hospital NHS Foundation Trust			

Petition

Friday 29 November 2013

OBSERVATIONS

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Elections in Zimbabwe

The Petition of the supporters of Zimbabweans who love peace, resident in the UK,

Declares that the Petitioners believe that elections held in Zimbabwe this summer were not free, peaceful and fair; further that the Mugabe regime has a long history of manipulating the entire process including pre-election, during voting and post-election and in 2008 Mugabe refused to accept the results in which his party was heavily defeated, he intimidated people, battered and killed MDC supporters before claiming victory; further that the 2013 elections have again been marked with massive irregularities and incomplete participation and there are serious questions about the credibility of the elections due to the number of irregularities both in the run-up to the ballot and on polling day.

The Petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons makes the world aware that the 2013 Zimbabwean election results are not credible and are not an expression of the will of the Zimbabwean people; and further requests that the House do all in its power to prevent the country plunging into another era of poverty and human suffering as it did in 2008, we ask for help to see human rights restored and support in the fight for a new Zimbabwe.

And the Petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Fiona Mactaggart, *Official Report*, 15 October 2013; Vol. 568, c. 702.]

[P001223]

Observations from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs:

I commend the people of Zimbabwe on the holding of peaceful elections on 31 July. However, the British Government continue to have serious concerns about the conduct of the elections, particularly the evidence that large numbers of voters were unable to register or were turned away from polling stations. In addition, a number of important reforms necessary for peaceful, credible, free and fair elections, contained in the Global Political Agreement (GPA) and endorsed by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) were not completed ahead of the poll.

On 17-18 August, the SADC Summit in Lilongwe endorsed the election results. Despite having expressed concerns in the initial report itself, the summary of the SADC Election Observation Mission described Zimbabwe's elections as "generally credible". However, I remain concerned about the numerous irregularities in the conduct of the elections, including those noted in the findings of the final Africa Union Election Observer Mission report. We maintain that an independent investigation of any allegations of election irregularities would be required for the election result to be deemed credible.

The British Government remain committed to supporting the aspirations of the Zimbabwean people for a more democratic, stable and prosperous Zimbabwe. We have engaged, both at Ministerial and official level, with counterparts in Zimbabwe and the region, and to raise our concerns over the conduct of the elections. We will continue to talk to, and work with, partners in the region to promote democracy and good governance in Zimbabwe. We expect the new Government to restore internationally accepted human rights standards and to honour their obligations, and ensure the protection and promotion of fundamental freedoms for all Zimbabweans.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 29 November 2013

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

BAE Systems

Emily Thornberry: To ask the Attorney-General (1) what proportion of documents related to the Serious Fraud Office's investigation into BAE sent in error to a warehouse in London's Docklands district (a) have now been recovered and (b) are likely to be recovered; [177870]

(2) to which locations the Serious Fraud Office has erroneously sent evidence related to its investigation into BAE; [177871]

(3) what recent estimate he has made of the number of (a) documents and (b) audio tapes and electronic media related to the Serious Fraud Office's investigation into BAE that have been sent to the wrong destination. [177877]

The Solicitor-General: The SFO has recovered 98% of the data—this includes all audio tapes and electronic media. The SFO continues to pursue the recovery of outstanding material. The material was sent to a single location at the request of the recipient. It is not appropriate to provide further information.

The volume of data incorrectly sent to the third party was calculated to be 32,000 pages of documents; 81 audio tapes and electronic media. This remains unchanged and represents 3% of data obtained during the investigation.

Domestic Violence: Convictions

Helen Jones: To ask the Attorney-General how many people convicted of offences involving domestic violence had been previously convicted of (a) a domestic violence offence, (b) other offences involving assault or violence or (c) other offences in each of the last three years for which figures are available. [177865]

The Solicitor-General: The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does not maintain a central record of the number of convictions for offences involving domestic violence where defendants have previously been convicted of any other offence(s). Such data could not be reasonably obtained locally or nationally other than by a manual exercise at disproportionate cost.

Rape: Convictions

Helen Jones: To ask the Attorney-General how many people convicted of rape had previously (a) been arrested following domestic violence, (b) been convicted of a domestic violence offence, (c) been arrested for an offence involving stalking or harassment or (d) been convicted of a stalking or harassment offence in each of the last three years for which figures are available. [177868]

The Solicitor-General: The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does not maintain a central record of the number of convictions for offences of rape where defendants have previously been convicted of any other offence(s). Such data could not be reasonably obtained locally or nationally other than by a manual exercise at disproportionate cost.

The CPS does not hold a record of the number of people arrested for offences involving domestic violence, stalking or harassment. The official statistics on crime and policing are maintained by the Home Office.

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

Copyright: Arts

Mr Sutcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps he is taking to ensure that copyright protection for artistic designs made before 1 June 1957 is provided under British law. [177901]

Mr Willetts: The Government do not intend to create new copyright in works created before 1 June 1957.

Artistic designs created before 1 June 1957 may attract copyright protection by virtue of the Term Directive (2006/116/EC) if they were protected by copyright in any EU member state on 1 July 1995.

Mr Sutcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the transition period for the implementation of section 74 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013. [177902]

Mr Willetts: The Call for Evidence on the timing of the repeal of section 52 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act closed on 27 November 2013. The Government intends to consult further on proposals for transitional provisions and implementation of section 74 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 in due course.

Mr Sutcliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what his Department's planned timeline is for the implementation of section 74 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013; and if he will make a statement. [177903]

Mr Willetts: The Government has not yet decided on the timing of implementation of section 74 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013.

The Call for Evidence on the timing of the repeal of section 52 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, which would be implemented by virtue of section 74 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013, closed on 27 November 2013. The information submitted is intended to shape the consultation, which will be launched in due course, on the date of the repeal and any necessary transitional provisions.

Private Sector

Mr Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills if he will estimate the proportion of the population of each English region who (a) run their own business and (b) work for private sector small and medium-sized enterprises. [177814]

Matthew Hancock: The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) provides a measure of the percentage of the working age population starting or running a business. The following table provides estimates of activity within the English regions in 2009. Later editions of the GEM survey only provide estimates for countries within the UK, because of a reduction in the size of the sample after 2009.

Percentage of the working age population involved in starting or running a business in the English regions in 2009

<i>English region</i>	<i>Percentage of the working age population involved in either starting or running a business</i>
North East	9.6
North West	10.7
Yorkshire and the Humber	12.8
East Midlands	10.1
West Midlands	10.3
East of England	12.4
London	12.9
South East	12.6
South West	13.8

Source:

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM)—UK report 2009

There are no data available to estimate the proportion of the resident population working in small and medium enterprises by region.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

First Time Buyers

Dr Offord: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what steps his Department is taking to help first-time buyers get onto the housing ladder. [176313]

Kris Hopkins: This Government is committed to supporting people's aspirations to own their own home.

By tackling the budget deficit left by the last Administration, we are keeping long-term interest rates down. Just a one per cent rise in market interest rates would mean the average family with a mortgage would have to pay £1,000 a year more. This Government's steps to ensure financial stability and support the housing market have had a positive effect on mortgage markets—the Council of Mortgage Lenders confirmed recently that the number of new mortgages is now at the highest level since before the last Administration's housing crash in 2008. The number of first-time buyers is at its highest level since 2007 according to estimates by Halifax.

We have also introduced a number of targeted schemes. Since 2010, the Government has been helping over 90,000 hardworking people onto the housing ladder: over 36,000 through innovative Help to Buy and earlier schemes; 20,800 social tenants through the Right to Buy (which has been reinvigorated); and over 37,000 affordable home ownership homes as part of our Affordable Housing Programme.

Housing: Worcestershire

Karen Lumley: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how many new house builds in Worcestershire there have been in each of the last three years. [177281]

Kris Hopkins: Statistics on house building completions in each local authority district, Worcestershire and England are published in the Department's live tables 253 (annual) and 253a (quarterly), which are available at the following link:

<http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building>

Local Government Finance

Andy Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he expects to announce the provisional local government finance settlement. [179136]

Brandon Lewis: As in previous years, the provisional Local Government Finance settlement for 2014-15 will be announced as soon as practicable after the autumn statement.

Andy Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when he will respond to the Report of the Public Accounts Committee on Financial sustainability of local authorities, published 7 June 2013, HC 134. [179137]

Brandon Lewis: We have already have. Our responses to the Public Accounts Committee's recommendations were published in the Treasury minutes on the 12 September.

Local Government: North East

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (1) whether alternative administrative structures for delivering economic development, transport and vocational skills training at a local level in Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and County Durham are being considered by his Department; [177424]

(2) what the timetable is for creation of a combined authority for Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and County Durham; and what functions he intends to devolve to this body; [177431]

(3) what the economic development functions are of (a) the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and (b) the proposed North East Combined Authority covering Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and County Durham. [177433]

Brandon Lewis: I refer the right hon. Member to the consultation paper published by my Department on 7 November, which is available online at:

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposal-to-establish-a-combined-authority-for-durham-northumberland-and-tyne-and-wear

Private Rented Housing: Students

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government whether the Government has given consideration to changing the status for the purpose of council tax of landlords renting properties to university students to classify them as (a) a business and (b) any other classification. [177906]

Brandon Lewis: As I said to the hon. Member in my answer to him of 13 November 2012, *Official Report*, column 112W, the Government has no plans to change the rules governing the long-standing council tax exemption for full-time students; nor do we have plans to charge business rates on the residential dwellings that landlords rent out.

In the last Session, my Department duly noted the amendments to the Local Government Finance Bill tabled by Labour hon. Members to (a) make students liable for council tax and (b) levy business rates on student landlords ('Notice of Amendments given on 26 January 2012, New Clauses 17 and 18'). The Government opposed these Labour proposals for new taxes on students and student housing and the amendments were not approved by the House.

In 2011, the Secretary of State was lobbied by a Liberal Democrat councillor on the Local Government Association to allow councils to increase council tax on students. Details are laid out in my Department's Freedom of Information disclosure log:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/meeting-with-local-government-association

This is not a policy proposal that we supported.

The reason why properties occupied entirely by students are exempt is because students, unlike other groups of people on low incomes, are not normally entitled to income-related benefits, such as housing and council tax benefit/local council tax support. If a government were to make landlords of such properties liable for council tax or business rates, landlords would simply pass the costs on to the students through raising rents.

The Government do recognise the need to compensate local authorities for the notional loss of council tax income from student accommodation, which would otherwise have to be borne by other local residents, and this is done through the local government funding system. Councils are also rewarded for new student accommodation through the New Homes Bonus.

In addition, in July, I took steps to stop the inappropriate practice of local authorities trying to impose backdoor bin taxes on student accommodation. More information can be found at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-bin-charging-on-student-accommodation

CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Digital Broadcasting: Radio

David Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport how many local radio stations in Lancashire broadcast on DAB. [177862]

Mr Vaizey: In the administrative county of Lancashire, there are two local analogue stations which are simulcast on DAB—Rock FM and Magic 999.

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what assessment she has made of the coverage of the trunk and A road network in Cumbria by DAB radio; and when she expects these areas to be fully covered. [177872]

Mr Vaizey: Under the Communications Act 2003 (as amended), Ofcom is required to submit a report to the Secretary of State every three years, describing the state of the electronic communications networks and services in the UK.

<i>Cumbria County</i>	<i>Roads (percentage)</i>
BBC	68
Commercial	44

Source:

Ofcom Infrastructure Report 2013

On 14 October, the BBC has announced improvements to its DAB coverage to reach 97.3% of households by 2015. This will include improvements to the network in Cumbria. We will provide an update on progress on digital radio at the end of the year.

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what proportion of the (a) UK, (b) north west England and (c) Cumbria is covered by DAB radio reception of comparable quality and range to FM coverage. [177873]

Mr Vaizey: The figures are in the following table.

	<i>Percentage</i>	
	<i>Indoor coverage</i>	<i>Outdoor coverage</i>
<i>DAB Coverage of National Commercial Services</i>		
UK	87	73
North West	95	84
Cumbria County	65	44
<i>DAB Coverage of BBC Services</i>		
UK	94	83
North West	97	89
Cumbria County	86	68

Source:

Ofcom Infrastructure Report 2013

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport what recent estimate she has made of the proportion of radio audience represented by digital devices. [177874]

Mr Vaizey: This type of data are collected and published quarterly by RAJAR Ltd (Radio Joint Audience Research). In Q3 2013, 45.2% of the adult population has a DAB radio set at home (or 24 million adults), up 10% year on year and the share of all listening to digital is 35.6%, up 14% year on year.

Telecommunications

Nadine Dorries: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1) whether her Department holds data on the number of instances of telecommunications companies switching a consumer from one company to another without their knowledge or consent; [177295]

(2) what assessment her Department has made of the effect of unintentional phone slamming on small and medium-sized enterprises. [177296]

Mr Vaizey: The Department for Culture, Media and Sport does not hold data on incidences of telecommunications companies switching a consumer from one company to another without their knowledge or consent. However, Ofcom does record the number of complaints it receives about fixed-line mis-selling and slamming (including erroneous transfers).

There has been a significant reduction in complaints about slamming since the introduction of General Condition 24 in 2010—the rule which governs sales and marketing of landline telecoms services and provides greater protection for consumers by enabling Ofcom to take swift and effective action against offending companies. Since 2010, complaints about slamming have fallen from an average of 647 complaints a month to an average of 184 complaints a month in 2013.

Around 46% of incidents where consumers complain they have been switched with no knowledge or consent are a result of erroneous transfers. 2.8 million switches take place each year over BT's copper network. Ofcom estimates that approximately 4.2% of these homes were affected by the wrong line being switched in 2012-13.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has not made any assessment of the effect of unintentional phone slamming on small and medium-sized enterprises, although in both representations to the Department and in complaints to Ofcom there is anecdotal evidence of the harm that small and medium-sized enterprises can be caused when slamming occurs. That is why the system of safeguards exist to recover the situation as soon as possible when an incidence of unintentional slamming occurs, why, (for example) agreed industry practice is that a previously allocated business number that becomes free when switching or slamming takes place should not be reallocated for a period of 14 months and why the prohibition and deterrent fines are in place where slamming is other than unintentional or erroneous.

DEFENCE

Flexible Working

Mr Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many officials in his Department make use of compressed hours arrangements as part of the Civil Service's flexible working hours scheme (a) above and (b) below director level. [177392]

Anna Soubry: The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has a number of flexible working arrangements, such as term time working, irregular hours, home working and compressed hours. MOD defines compressed hours as meaning that an individual works a shorter working week but meets their conditioned hours, in one of the following ways: a nine day fortnight, a four day working week, or a four and a half day working week (because of an individual arrangement not a site closure).

Flexible working arrangements are agreed between staff and their line managers at local level. Although some data are held centrally, not all such arrangements are notified therefore the following table is accordingly likely to be an underestimate of the total number of civilian staff on compressed hours.

Working pattern	Number of staff below senior civil service recorded as working compressed hours (rounded)	Senior civil service recorded as working compressed hours
Compressed hours	360	Fewer than 5

Data relating to the senior civil service cannot be readily split between those at or below director level.

France

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress his Department has made on the Combined Joint Expeditionary Force with France; what plans that body has made for its future; and if he will make a statement. [177900]

Dr Murrison: We continue to make good progress towards our objective of creating a capability able to undertake co-ordinated and coherent expeditionary operations with France through a Combined Joint Expeditionary Force (CJEF) consisting of national force elements operating side by side with the ability to respond to a wide range of scenarios.

This progress is being achieved through the conduct of joint exercises and other training activities, joint work on military concepts and doctrine, the exchange of personnel between national armed forces, the exchange of information and the alignment of capability lines of development.

We remain on track to achieve full verification of concept for the CJEF by the target date of 2016.

Watts Andrews Report

Mrs Moon: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence with reference to the answer of 25 April 2013, *Official Report*, column 1287W, on Watts Andrews Report, when he plans to write to the hon. Member for Bridgend; when he plans to place a copy of the Watts Andrews Report in the Library; and if he will make a statement. [167338]

Anna Soubry: I have written to the hon. Member today and have placed a copy of the report in the Library of the House.

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Constituencies

Sheryll Murray: To ask the Deputy Prime Minister pursuant to the answer of 21 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 1015W, on constituencies, whether any additional cost to the public purse will arise from the decision to move the review of equalisation of constituency boundaries from 2013 to 2018. [177457]

The Deputy Prime Minister: The relevant legislation provides for boundary reviews to take place every five years. The 2013 review was not completed, but a boundary review was due to be held in the next Parliament in any event, meaning no additional cost to the Boundary Commissions is anticipated.

EDUCATION

Children: Autism

Andy Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many people with autism are (a) in education and (b) formally or informally excluded from education. [179139]

Mr Timpson: The Department for Education's School Census collects information on the number of pupils whose primary type of special educational need is autistic spectrum disorder.

In January 2013 there were 70,780¹ pupils with autistic spectrum disorder in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools.

In 2011-012, the latest year for which we have data, there were 2,750² pupils in state-funded primary, secondary and special schools with autistic spectrum disorder who received at least one fixed period exclusion and 70² pupils who received a permanent exclusion.

The Department does not collect data on the use of informal exclusions. All exclusions must follow the legal process. Any evidence of unlawful exclusion would be taken seriously by the Department and Ofsted.

Schools have a legal duty to support pupils with special educational needs. This would include those pupils with autism. Support typically includes adapting teaching and lessons, providing specialist teaching and support staff. Some schools have specialist resources (classes) where children with autism spend part of their time, and part in mainstream classes.

The same legal duty and need for support would apply to alternative provision. Statutory guidance on exclusion reinforces that early intervention to address the underlying causes of disruptive behaviour should include an assessment of whether appropriate provision is in place to support any SEN or disability that a pupil may have.

¹ Source:

Table 1.4, Children with special educational needs: an analysis—2013

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/251742/SFR42-2013Chapter1tables.xlsx

² Source:

Table 5.10, Children with special educational needs: an analysis—2013

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/251746/SFR42-2013Chapter5tables.xlsx

Kings Science Academy

George Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) whether the valuers employed to provide a valuation of the land and property owned by Hartley Group which became the permanent site of the Kings Science Academy, Bradford (a) visited and (b) carried out a thorough inspection of this site in assessing the valuation of the land and property with respect to the negotiated lease agreement; [177425]

(2) whether the valuation placed on the land and property owned by Hartley Group which became the permanent site of the Kings Science Academy, Bradford prior to the lease being agreed for this land and property took into account the derelict state of some of the buildings on this site. [177426]

Mr Timpson: The company commissioned to undertake the independent valuation visited and inspected the site. The valuation provided took account of the state of repair and condition of the property.

George Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will commission an independent valuation of the land and property owned by Hartley Group which became the permanent site of the Kings

Science Academy, Bradford to determine whether the lease agreement negotiated for this land and property was fair value. [177427]

Mr Timpson: The Department commissioned and received an independent report and valuation of the Hartley Business Park in Bradford. This confirmed that the annual rent proposed for Kings Science Academy was in line with the market rent for the leasehold interest of the site.

George Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the options appraisal report carried out in relation to the Kings Science Academy, Bradford, prior to the conclusion of a lease agreement for the Hartley Group site in Lidget Green, Bradford. [177528]

Mr Timpson: The Department does not publish options appraisal reports for free schools. To do so could inhibit the free and frank provision of advice and impact on the Department's ability to maintain a strong bargaining position for other free school sites.

George Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what total rent per annum was being received by Hartley Group for the site that became the permanent site for the Kings Science Academy, Bradford, at the time of the options appraisal carried out prior to the lease agreement with Kings Science Academy, Bradford for that site. [177529]

Mr Timpson: The information requested is not held by the Department.

George Galloway: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what area in square feet was covered by the (a) £2.77 and (b) £2.88 per square foot rental agreement with the then existing tenants identified in the options appraisal report into the Hartley Group site which became the permanent site for Kings Science Academy, Bradford; [177530]

(2) what area in square feet would have been covered by the £3.00 per square foot rental agreement then on offer to tenants identified in the options appraisal report into the Hartley Group site which became the permanent site for Kings Science Academy, Bradford. [177531]

Mr Timpson: The information requested is provided in the table:

Rental cost per square foot (£)	Area of property in square feet
2.77	27,854
2.88	31,195
3.00	10,587

Mr Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish the Review of Financial Management and Governance report for Kings Science Academy, Bradford. [177585]

Mr Timpson: A redacted version of the Review of Financial Management and Governance report for Kings Science Academy was published on the Department's website on 29 November:

http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/r/kings_science_academy_final_report.pdf

A copy has been placed in the House Library.

Mirus Academy

Mr Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when it is intended that the Minister for schools will write to the hon. Member for Walsall North on matters arising from the deputation on 17 October 2013 concerning the Mirus Academy. [177808]

Mr Laws: I wrote to the hon. Member and the principal of the academy on Thursday 28 November with my officials' advice on the best way to pursue the development of the academy site, and the funding opportunities available.

Offences against Children

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what assessment he has made of the report of the Children's Commissioner on Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, published on 26 November 2013, and whether he will propose changes to the teaching of sex and relationship education in schools in light of that report; [179149]

(2) what discussions he has had with the Children's Commissioner's office regarding the Commissioner's final report on Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups. [179150]

Mr Timpson: The Government welcomes the important work the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) has been doing in its inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups. The three reports which the OCC published on 26 November have provided new information on the nature and extent of this shocking form of abuse which we will need to consider carefully.

I met the Deputy Children's Commissioner on 25 November to discuss the findings from the inquiry and attended the report launch on 26 November. On the issue of sex and relationships education, the Government agrees that high quality teaching is important and that children need access to reliable and well-informed sources of support.

The Department for Education will reflect on the OCC's recommendations and contribute fully to the Government's response in due course.

Shannon Matthews

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to the answer of 18 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 745W, on Shannon Matthews and with reference to the answer of 20 November 2012, *Official Report*, columns 446-7W, on offences against children: Kirklees, when he agreed with the hon. Member for East Worthing and Shoreham that the Government would not pursue publication of the Kirklees Serious Case Review; and when his decision on that matter was published. [179156]

Mr Timpson: The Secretary of State for Education, my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), had various discussions on this matter with the former Children's Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for East Worthing and Shoreham (Tim Loughton).

The decision not to seek publication of the Overview Report is recorded in a Consent Order of the High Court dated 19 June 2013.

University Cathedral Free School

Mr Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to the answer of 18 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 736W, on free schools: Chester, which key document lawyers for the University Cathedral Free School Trust are awaiting from the landlord of the free school site. [177564]

Mr Timpson: Lawyers for the University Cathedral Free School Trust are still awaiting a draft Joint Use Agreement from the landlord for the use of certain cathedral facilities.

Young People: Unemployment

Rushanara Ali: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what support his Department provides to young people not in education, employment or training. [177440]

Matthew Hancock: In 'Building engagement, building futures: our strategy to maximise the participation of 16 to 24-year-olds in education, training and work', the Government set out a clear strategy to increase participation in education or training and address the challenge of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This includes plans for preparing young people for further education or training, and work; for raising the age for compulsory participation in some form of education or training; and for supporting the most vulnerable.

Local authorities have a statutory duty to support young people aged 16 to 18 to participate in education and training and to provide targeted support for those who are NEET. They know the needs of young people in their area and are responsible for making sure that there is sufficient, suitable education and training provision to meet those needs.

The Government plans to spend £7.4 billion in 2013-14 to fund an education and training place for every 16 to 18-year-old who wants one. We are introducing new individually tailored study programmes; raising the quality and standard of apprenticeships; and introducing traineeships for those not quite ready for apprenticeships.

The Youth Contract provides support for disengaged 16 and 17-year-olds with no or low qualifications to address the barriers they face to accessing and staying in education, an apprenticeship or employment with training.

Young People: Voluntary Work

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what National Citizens Service projects he has visited since taking office. [179148]

Elizabeth Truss: A list of National Citizen Service projects visited by the Secretary of State for Education, my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Responsibility for the policy was transferred from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, my

hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mr Timpson), to the Cabinet Office in July 2013. The Department for Education remains committed to young people and its responsibilities for education and children's services in England.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION COMMITTEE

Electoral Register

Chris Ruane: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission how many electors were on the electoral register in each local authority area in each of the last 10 years. [176815]

Mr Streeter: The Electoral Commission informs me that it does not hold this information. However, the relevant data for each local authority, by year, is held by the Office for National Statistics and can be found on their website here:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/pop-estimate/electoral-statistics-for-uk/index.html>

Chris Ruane: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission which local authorities did not conduct a door to door canvass in each of the last 10 years. [176816]

Mr Streeter: The Electoral Commission informs me that it has set standards and monitored the performance of Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) since 2008. Information before this point is not held.

The Electoral Commission's Performance Standards, specifically Standard 3 aim to ensure that EROs make the necessary house-to-house enquiries to ensure that all eligible residents are registered, in line with their legal duty to maintain the electoral registers. The following list sets out which local authorities' Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) did not meet performance standard 3 in each of the years 2008 to 2012.

2008:

Brentwood
Bridgnorth
Broad land
Caerphilly
Cambridge
Carmarthenshire
Chester-le-Street
Conwy
Copeland
Coventry
Craven
Crewe and Nantwich
Derwentside
Dumfries and Galloway
Durham
East Dorset
East Hampshire
East Lindsey
Eastbourne

Epping Forest
Forest Heath
Gwynedd
Halton
Harborough
Harrow
Hillingdon
Hyndburn
Leeds
Mendip
Merthyr Tydfil
Newport
North Dorset
North Lanarkshire
Nuneaton and Bedworth
Orkney Islands
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff
Ryedale
Sefton
Shetland Islands
Shrewsbury and Atcham
Slough
Solihull
South Lanarkshire
South Norfolk
South Northampton shire
Stratford Upon Avon
Sutton
Tameside
Teesdale
The Vale of Glamorgan
Uttlesford
Warrington
Wellingborough
West Devon
Weymouth and Portland
Windsor and Maidenhead
Wirral

2009:

Basingstoke and Deane
Brentwood
Broadland
East Hampshire
East Hertfordshire
Epping Forest
Hyndburn
Merthyr Tydfil
Newport
Runnymede
South Lakeland
The Vale of Glamorgan
Uttlesford
Warrington
Warwick
West Devon
West Somerset

2010:

Brentwood
East Hertfordshire

Epping Forest
 Hertsmere
 Hyndburn
 Maldon
 Mid Devon
 West Devon

2011:

Angus
 Arun
 Braintree
 Broxbourne
 Cannock Chase
 Castle Point
 Chichester
 Clackmannan shire
 East Ayrshire
 East Devon
 East Dorset
 East Hampshire
 East Hertfordshire
 East Lindsey
 East Lothian
 Edinburgh, City of
 Falkirk
 Fife
 Gravesham
 Great Yarmouth
 Hart
 Lancaster
 Maldon
 Malvern Hills
 Medway
 Merthyr Tydfil
 Mid Devon
 Midlothian
 Milton Keynes
 Mole Valley
 North Ayrshire
 North Devon
 North Dorset
 North Lanarkshire
 North Somerset
 North Warwickshire
 Perth and Kinross
 Powys
 Rhondda, Cynon, Taff
 Sedgemoor
 Shropshire
 Solihull
 South Ayrshire
 South Lanarkshire
 Stirling
 Suffolk Coastal
 Tandridge
 Taunton Deane
 Thanet
 The Vale of Glamorgan
 Torfaen
 Warwick

West Devon
 West Lothian
 West Oxfordshire
 West Somerset
 Windsor and Maidenhead
 Wycombe

2012:

Arun
 Braintree
 Broxbourne
 Castle Point
 East Devon
 East Dorset
 East Hampshire
 East Hertfordshire
 East Lindsey
 Eastbourne
 Great Yarmouth
 Gwynedd
 Lancaster
 Merthyr Tydfil
 Mid Devon
 Mid Sussex
 North Devon
 North Hertfordshire
 North Warwickshire
 Powys
 Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
 South Oxfordshire
 Taunton Deane
 Torbay
 Torridge
 Uttlesford
 Vale of White Horse
 West Devon
 West Oxfordshire
 West Somerset

In 2013 the Commission also required all EROs to report on their performance prior to the start of the canvass, to confirm that arrangements were in place for the necessary house to house enquiries to be carried out. The Commission has intervened where issues were identified and recommended improvements to be made before the completion of the canvass. The Commission's report on ERO performance in 2013 will be published in March 2014.

Chris Ruane: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, what future plans the Electoral Commission has for use of the household enquiry form for the purposes of electoral registration.

[177060]

Mr Streeter: The Electoral Commission informs me that it is required by law to design the household enquiry form, which must then be approved by the Lord President of the Council. The approved form will be made available to electoral registration officers to support the transition to individual electoral registration in Great Britain, which is expected to commence in June 2014.

The Commission is also required to design a number of other statutory registration forms, notices and letters to support individual electoral registration, including the invitation to register and individual electoral registration application form. These documents must also be approved by the Lord President of the Council.

The Commission has published guidance for electoral registration officers setting out how they should use household enquiry forms during the transition to individual electoral registration and as part of their ongoing duty to maintain the register.

The Commission will be monitoring the response that electoral registration officers receive from electors to the household enquiry form through a joint data collection exercise with the Cabinet Office so that any necessary changes to legislation or practice can be made.

Chris Ruane: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission what milestone dates have been set by the Electoral Commission and local electoral registration officers for (a) gathering, (b) processing and (c) publishing data on electoral registration before the introduction of individual electoral registration. [177061]

Mr Streeter: The Electoral Commission informs me that it intends to collect data from all Electoral Registration Officers at the conclusion of the final household canvass in early 2014.

The final household registers are due to be published in England on 17 February 2014 and on 10 March 2014 in Wales and Scotland. The Commission has asked for data to be returned by 28 February 2014 in England and 21 March 2014 in Wales and Scotland. The data will be published shortly thereafter.

The Commission will also publish electorate figures for the European Parliament and local elections due to be held on 22 May 2014. The last date for electors to apply to be included on the registers for these elections is 7 May 2014.

Chris Ruane: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, if the Electoral Commission will undertake an assessment of electoral registration rates in university towns and cities for the purpose of determining best practice in these circumstances. [177062]

Mr Streeter: The Electoral Commission informs me that it has previously published research which indicated that registration rates among students are lower than average and that university towns and cities were one of several areas likely to see higher levels of under-registration.

In addition, the Commission recently evaluated the data matching process, known as confirmation, which will be used to support individual electoral registration (IER). They found that students were much less likely to be successfully matched with the Department for Works and Pensions' database and therefore automatically transferred to the new individual electoral registers.

The Commission has no current plans to undertake a direct assessment of registration rates in specific university towns and cities. However, their programme of research

during the transition to individual registration will continue to assess how various demographic and other characteristics affect registration rates.

The Commission is currently reviewing public engagement strategies produced by all electoral registration officers for the transition to individual electoral registration to ensure that they take account of their local context, including that they have plans in place for engaging with students in their area.

Chris Ruane: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, what recent assessment the Electoral Commission has made of the effects of illiteracy on registration levels. [177063]

Mr Streeter: The Electoral Commission informs me that it has undertaken no assessment of the effects of illiteracy on electoral registration levels.

The Commission is currently designing the registration forms that they will recommend be used by members of the public under the new system of individual electoral registration.

The Commission has taken account of the available evidence on varying levels of literacy across the UK and the forms are being designed to be as accessible as possible, including for people with low literacy. The forms have been user tested with the public and people with low literacy were included within the research.

Chris Ruane: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission what estimate the Electoral Commission has made of the number of people eligible to vote who were not on the electoral register in each of the last 10 years. [177064]

Mr Streeter: The Electoral Commission informs me that it has not made an assessment of the number of eligible electors who were registered to vote in each of the last 10 years.

However, the Commission's research on the December 2000 registers in England and Wales found that they were 91-92% complete, meaning that approximately 3.5 million people were not registered at their current address. More recently their research into the December 2010 registers in Great Britain found that they were 85-87% complete, meaning that approximately six million were not registered at their current address.

The Commission plans to undertake further work on the level of registration in Great Britain immediately before the introduction of individual electoral registration and after it has been fully implemented.

Chris Ruane: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, what the (a) top and (b) bottom performing electoral registration departments were in terms of the proportion of the eligible population registered to vote in each of the last seven years. [177065]

Mr Streeter: The Electoral Commission informs me that they do not have this information.

The Commission also informs me that there is no reliable method for calculating annual registration rates for local authorities. The only available data is the mid-year population estimates produced by the Office for National Statistics and the number of entries on the registers. However, the population estimates include people who are not eligible to register and the registers include inaccurate entries.

Chris Ruane: To ask the hon. Member for South West Devon, representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission, what progress the Electoral Commission has made on providing individual constituency reports on the levels of voter registration and key indicators for registration performance to hon. Members, Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Members of the Scottish Parliament and Members of the National Assembly for Wales; and what changes have been made to the reporting process in each of the last seven years. [177066]

Mr Streeter: The Electoral Commission informs me that in July 2008 the Commission published performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) in Great Britain and has monitored and reported on the performance of EROs against these standards in each year since. The Commission writes to all hon. Members on publication of its annual assessment of the performance of EROs, providing information on the performance framework and directing Members to more detailed information and registration data on its website, where they can review the individual performance of each local authority in Great Britain. In addition to this, since 2011, the Commission writes specifically to those hon. Members, Members of the Scottish Parliament and Members of the National Assembly for Wales whose EROs have failed to meet one or more of the standards, setting out which standards have not been met and highlighting questions they may consider asking of their ERO(s) regarding what practices they follow in order to keep their electoral registers as complete and accurate as possible.

The Commission's report on ERO performance in 2013 will be published in March 2014 and at that time the Commission will write to all hon. Members, Members of the Scottish Parliament and Members of the National Assembly for Wales, and will again highlight any cases where their ERO(s) have failed to meet one or more of the standards.

The Commission's statutory power to set performance standards does not extend to Northern Ireland and we have therefore not corresponded directly with Members of the Legislative Assembly to date on key indicators for registration performance. The Commission is, however, working with the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland to pilot a set of registration performance standards for Northern Ireland.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Coal

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of coal reserves available in (a) Wales, (b) each region of England, (c) Scotland and (d) Northern Ireland. [177550]

Michael Fallon: The following table shows the coal reserves for England (Central North, Central West and Northern), Scotland and Wales. There are no reserves in Northern Ireland.

	England					Total
	Central North	Central West	Northern	Scotland	Wales	
Current Sites and Licences	296	878	35	124	448	1,781
Prospects	1,397	571	558	115	147	2,788
Total	1,693	1,449	593	239	595	4,569

Million tonnes of reserves

The data are provided by the Coal Authority.

Current Site and Licences includes: operational mines, planning granted, in planning process and pre-planning.

Prospects include: well developed, identified, fully and partly proved and potential.

Coal Gasification

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what steps he is taking to create a regulatory environment governing underground coal gasification. [177547]

Michael Fallon: We are keen that Government plays its part in creating a regulatory environment which helps rather than hinders those with ambitions in the sector. With this in mind we will shortly launch a Working Group involving both DECC and the Coal Authority to look at the current licensing processes and in particular the interaction between underground coal gasification and coal bed methane. The group will consult with the relevant parties as part of its work.

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what recent discussions he has had with the Coal Authority on underground coal gasification. [177548]

Michael Fallon: The Coal Authority is the freehold owner of the UK's coal resources and the licensing body for the exploitation of coal. We maintain a regular dialogue with it on the range of its activities including licensing. The Coal Authority has issued several offshore conditional licences to interested companies to assist in facilitating the development of UCG and full details of the Authority's processes for licensing in this area can be found on its website:

http://coal.decc.gov.uk/en/coal/cms/services/licensing/license_apps/license_apps.aspx

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what assessment he has made of the potential of underground coal gasification in the UK; and if he will make a statement. [177549]

Michael Fallon: The Government undertook a feasibility study of UCG in 2004 which concluded that, in conjunction with carbon capture and storage, UCG had the potential to contribute to the UK's energy requirements. No further assessment has been undertaken by Government but we have held meetings with interested companies as they continue to look at how this technology might be developed.

Energy: Sussex

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what the average household (a) gas and (b) electricity bill was in (i) West Sussex and (ii) Mid Sussex constituency in each year since 2010. [177879]

Michael Fallon: Energy bill data are only available at a Public Electricity Supply (PES) region level. The Mid Sussex constituency is within the South East PES region. However, West Sussex has postcodes in both the South East and Southern PES regions. Energy bill estimates for these regions have been provided in the following table.

	South East PES Region		Southern PES Region		£
	Gas	Electricity	Gas	Electricity	
2010	661	408	657	424	
2011	724	438	723	445	
2012	808	464	807	470	

These data are taken from Tables 2.2.3 and 2.3.3 of DECC's publication Quarterly Energy Prices (QEP), assuming an annual consumption of 3,300 kWh for electricity and 18,000 kWh for gas. Provisional annual bill estimates for 2013 will be published in December's edition of QEP on 19 December 2013.

Fuel Poverty

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change pursuant to the answer of 18 November 2013, *Official Report*, columns 724-5W, on fuel poverty, if he will also give the proportion of people living in fuel poverty under the old measure. [177841]

Gregory Barker: The following table shows the number and proportion of fuel poor households in England under the previous 10% indicator of fuel poverty as well as the new Low Income High Costs (LIHC) indicator:

	10% indicator		LIHC indicator	
	Number of households (thousand)	Proportion of households fuel poor (%)	Number of households (thousand)	Proportion of households fuel poor (%)
2009	3,964	18.4	2,486	11.5
2010	3,536	16.4	2,474	11.5
2011	3,202	14.6	2,390	10.9

Office of Unconventional Gas and Oil

Mark Menzies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what steps the Minister is taking to ensure the Office of Unconventional Gas and Oil is working with regulators to encourage public engagement. [177912]

Michael Fallon: The Office of Unconventional Gas and Oil (OUGO) works closely with the regulators on public engagement and to improve understanding of the facts about shale gas development. Staff from OUGO have attended a number of events alongside colleagues from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and the Environment Agency (EA), in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the regulation in this area.

Renewable Energy

Glyn Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what proportion of energy (a) consumed and (b) produced in the UK is sourced from each renewable source. [177261]

Gregory Barker: The following table shows the proportion of UK energy consumed and produced from each renewable source in 2012:

	UK production (ktoe)	Proportion of UK primary energy production (%)	UK consumption (demand) (ktoe)	Proportion of UK primary energy consumption (demand) (%)
Plant biomass (wood, wood waste, SRC, straw)	1,703	1.4	2,480	1.2
Animal biomass (poultry litter, meat and bone, farm waste)	443	0.4	443	0.2
Sewage gas	308	0.3	308	0.1
Landfill gas	1,704	1.4	1,704	0.8
Waste and tyres ¹	1,688	4.1	1,688	0.8
Geothermal and Solar (thermal and PV)	256	0.2	256	0.1
Heat pumps	56	0.05	56	0.03
Hydro	454	0.4	454	0.2
Wind, wave and tidal	1,684	1.4	1,684	0.8
Liquid biofuels	317	0.3	958	0.4
Total renewables and waste	8,613	7.1	10,032	4.7
Total UK primary energy	122,142	—	214,312	—

¹ Includes 696 ktoe of non-biodegradable waste, which is not considered renewable.

Source:

Digest of UK Energy Statistics, 2013, tables DUKES 1.1 (total energy production/demand) and DUKES 6.1 (renewables production/demand), available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/energy-chapter-1-digest-of-united-kingdom-energy-statistics-dukes>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/renewable-sources-of-energy-chapter-6-digest-of-united-kingdom-energy-statistics-dukes>

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS**Fly-grazing**

Mike Thornton: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) what assessment he has made of the extent of fly-grazing in (a) England, (b) the South East, (c) Hampshire and (d) Eastleigh constituency; [177798]

(2) what steps he is taking to tackle fly-grazing; and what recent assessment he has made of the adequacy of existing legislation to tackle fly-grazing in England; [177803]

(3) what assessment he has made of the effect of the Control of Horses (Wales) Bill, due to come into effect in 2014, on fly-grazing in England. [177804]

George Eustice: No specific assessment has been made by Government on the extent of horse welfare problems in specific parts of the country. However, the most recent estimates by welfare organisations suggest that there may be 2,500 horses being fly-grazed in England.

There is a range of existing legislation that can be used to deal with the issues, including the Animals Act 1971 and the Animal Welfare Act 2006. In addition, because fly-grazing is a form of antisocial behaviour, existing antisocial behaviour legislation and forthcoming measures in the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill may be used to tackle it. There are no plans to go down the same legislative route as the Wales Government. We consider the practical answer lies in tackling local issues through effective use of existing and forthcoming legislation together with sharing best practice and joined-up working by interested parties.

Pate de Foie Gras

Andy Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps he is taking to introduce an EU-wide ban on foie gras. [179140]

George Eustice: The UK Government is opposed to foie gras production. In many European Union member states it is already banned on the grounds that it is contrary to animal welfare laws. However, any future ban on its production in the few member states which still produce it is a matter for the European Commission.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

European Parliament

Dr Huppert: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that the recent vote of the European Parliament to meet in a single location is agreed to by the European Council. [177444]

Mr Lidington: We are pleased to see that the European Parliament continues to push for a single seat. The current arrangements are expensive, impractical and indefensible on environmental grounds. The UK Government's position remains the same; we are in favour of a single seat.

The European Parliament's vote on 20 November 2013 committed it to initiating the Ordinary Revision Procedure, with the aim of amending the Treaties with regards to the institution's location. When a proposal comes forward, we will work with our partners in the European Council, with the aim of reaching a settlement that results in less waste.

Flexible Working

Mr Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many officials in his Department make use of compressed hours arrangements as part of the Civil Service's flexible working hours scheme (a) above and (b) below director level. [177396]

Hugh Robertson: Flexible working is delegated to line managers and staff. Line managers are responsible for recording and monitoring working patterns in their teams. There is no central record on the number of staff working compressed hours at each grade. Gathering this information could be done only at a disproportionate cost.

Libya

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what steps he plans to take in respect of the expiry of the Libyan General National Congress's mandate on 6 February 2014; and if he will make representations to the Libyan government on the importance of progress towards democracy; [179125]

(2) what reports he has received on the progress made by the General National Congress and Libyan government in respect of creating a common national vision; and what assessment he has made of the need for a different approach to reaching a political solution in Libya; [179127]

(3) what account his Department has taken of Libyan social media in its assessment of national confidence in the political progress in that country; what assessment he has made of popular support for the current political process in Libya; and what steps his Department has taken to engage the people of Libya in political reform; [179128]

(4) what assessment he has made of the progress made by the Libyan General National Congress (GNC) in producing an agreed constitution; and what assessment he has made of the likelihood of such a constitution being agreed before the expiry of the GNC's mandate on 6 February 2014. [179129]

Hugh Robertson: I discussed these, and other issues, with Prime Minister Zeidan during my recent visit to Tripoli of 18-19 November. The Libyan Prime Minister also met the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), during his recent stopover in London on 24 November.

The UK Government is concerned at the instability in Libya and the threat that poses to Libya's democratic transition. We are monitoring events in Libya closely, including via social media, and are in continuous dialogue with the General National Congress and Government as they continue to make steady progress steering Libya's transition to a democratic state.

However, political divisions within Libya are hampering progress overall. It is essential that all Libyans work towards agreement on a single, inclusive, authoritative, and independently-facilitated national dialogue process.

The Libyans need to work through the Constitutional Drafting Assembly and national dialogue to reach a political settlement. While the substance of any settlement must be worked out by the Libyans themselves; the UK is committed to working with Libya and its international partners to create an enabling environment that supports the Libyan people reaching a political settlement that will bring stability.

Daniel Kawczynski: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support the Government provided to Libya in order to establish a national army and police force; and what assessment he has made of reasons for the failure of the Libyan government to establish such forces to date. [179126]

Hugh Robertson: In addition to our political support and co-operation in a range of fields, the UK is providing considerable security assistance to Libya's armed forces and police force, including:

A Defence Advisory and Training Team (DAT) of approximately 20 personnel, with advisers embedded in the Libyan Ministry of Defence, Navy, Air Force, Border Security Force and Joint Training Directorate;

A 12-18 month project to assist the Libyan Army in training and creating a joint operational planning staff; and,

A strategic policing expert, embedded within the Libyan Ministry of Interior, to provide support and guidance on reforming the Libyan police.

Furthermore, as the Prime Minister announced at the G8 Summit, the UK, US and other European partners have offered to train more than 7,000 Libyan troops to help the Libyan Government disarm and integrate militias and improve the security and stability of the country. As part of this package, the UK will train up to 2,000 Libyan armed forces personnel, in tranches, in basic infantry skills.

We have further committed additional support through a three and a half year security, justice and defence programme which will strengthen the capability, accountability and responsiveness of these sectors, including through training 30,000 police officers in investigative techniques, 1,500 judicial police in courts and prisoner protection, and supporting the integration of up to 40,000 militia into the police or armed services.

Maldives

Karen Lumley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the recent presidential elections in the Maldives. [177280]

Mr Swire: The British Government monitored with concern the delays to Maldives presidential elections. We are pleased that the second round of elections was able to take place on 16 November, and that the winner, President Yameen, has now been inaugurated.

The Maldivian people demonstrated their commitment to democracy throughout the electoral process, as evidenced by their high turnout of over 90% for the last round of elections. As I said in my statement of 18 November, I urge the new Government and the opposition to work together constructively in the interests of all Maldivians and to avoid any acts of recrimination or retribution. I raised this point during my meeting with the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dunya Maumoon, during my visit to the country on 18 November.

The UK looks forward to working with the new Maldives Government, and to the strengthening of democratic institutions in Maldives.

Tibet

Mr Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to protect the safety of people living in Tibet. [177441]

Mr Swire: We regularly express our concerns about the situation in Tibet with the Chinese authorities. We did so most recently at official level on 24 October. The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), has also raised this in parliament, most recently on 3 September. Our concerns are addressed

in detail in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's Annual Human Rights Report, published on 15 April: www.hrdreport.fco.gov.uk

and in the update to it, published on 17 October.

We also work with international partners and through multilateral fora. For example, we made a strong statement regarding human rights issues, including Tibet, during China's UN Universal Periodic Review on 22 October, and we will continue to work with the UN Human Rights Council to engage China on human rights issues, including Tibet.

It is only through engaging China that we can help bring about positive change to human rights in China, including for Tibetan communities.

USA

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to his US counterpart about the fairness of the trial of the Miami Five; and if he will make a statement. [177523]

Hugh Robertson: The British Government will not make representations to the US Government on this issue, or a formal statement.

HEALTH

Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what accident and emergency unit waiting times were for each accident and emergency unit in the North East and Cumbria in the most recent period for which data is available. [177435]

Jane Ellison: There are three measures of waiting times in the NHS Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) for accident and emergency departments (A&E). These are time to assessment; time to treatment; and time to departure.

The following table shows the average (mean and median) waiting times for all providers of A&E departments in the North East Strategic Health Authority (SHA) and the area covered by Cumbria Teaching Primary Care Trust (PCT) for 2011-12. Information for 2012-13 is not yet available.

The mean and median duration (in minutes) to assessment, treatment and departure in A&E for 2011-12 for providers in the North East SHA Region or within the boundaries of Cumbria Teaching PCT.

Provider	Duration to assessment		Duration to treatment		Duration to departure	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
Gateshead PCT	3.7	1	12.0	4	67.9	56
Sunderland Teaching PCT	0.0	0	0.0	0	55.0	38
South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust	9.0	3	22.6	6	87.8	60
City Hospitals Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust	19.0	13	39.3	20	123.3	108

Provider	Duration to assessment		Duration to treatment		Duration to departure	
	Mean	Median	Mean	Median	Mean	Median
North Cumbria University Hospital NHS Trust	15.1	10	55.2	25	107.4	91
Cumbria Partnership NHS foundation Trust	32.4	12	79.7	51	184.0	74
Gateshead Health NHS Foundation Trust	10.6	7	67.2	57	140.8	136
The Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	72.9	10	71.6	22	104.7	90
Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust	16.4	7	62.7	53	115.1	107
South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	30.3	13	50.8	35	109.9	95
University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust	5.7	1	65.6	51	142.1	132
North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust	16.1	10	45.5	35	109.7	96
County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust	19.6	9	42.9	23	83.4	50

Notes:

1. Duration to assessment: This is the total amount of time in minutes between the patients' arrival and their initial assessment in the A&E department. This is calculated as the difference in time from arrival at A&E to the time when the patient is initially assessed.
2. Duration to treatment: This is the total amount of time in minutes between the patients' arrival and the start of their treatment. This is calculated as the difference in time from arrival at A&E to the time when the patient began treatment.
3. Duration to departure: This is total amount of time spent in minutes in an A&E department. This is calculated as the difference in time from arrival at A&E to the time when the patient is discharged from A&E care. This includes being admitted to hospital, dying in the department, discharged with no follow up or discharged and referred to another specialist department.
4. Mean and Median: The mean (average) and median (middle in ranking when all values are sorted in order) duration in minutes to assessment, treatment or duration.
5. Providers are included if their headquarters are located within the relevant SHA or PCT. It may be that some of the reported activity takes place outside of the area if the provider has hospitals sites across a geographic area.

Source:

Hospital Episode Statistics (HES), Health and Social Care Information Centre. Activity in English NHS Hospitals and English NHS commissioned activity in the independent sector

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what reports his Department has received on pressure in accident and emergency departments in the forthcoming winter. [179130]

Jane Ellison: NHS England publishes weekly statistical reports on accident and emergency (A&E) performance on all 144 trusts, available publicly. The data covers the 95% patients seen in under four hours target, emergency attendance and emergency admissions for that week and performance cumulatively for the year.

During the winter period, NHS England collects daily situation reports from acute trusts each weekday. These indicate where there are any winter pressures on the service around the country such as A&E closures, cancelled operations, bed pressures, or ambulance delays. Daily Flu highlights the number of patients with confirmed or suspected influenza in critical care beds at 8 am.

Furthermore, NHS England produces monthly reports on five key clinical indicators. These look across a range

of factors to give a broader indication of the quality, experience and timeliness of care.

The indicators are:

1. Left before being seen for treatment rate
2. Unplanned re-attendance rate
3. Time to initial assessment
4. Time to treatment
5. Total time spent in the A&E department

Electronic Cigarettes

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what his policy is on the classification of e-cigarettes as medicinal; [177479]

(2) what research has been carried out by his Department and the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency in relation to the use and efficacy of e-cigarettes; and who funded such research. [177481]

Jane Ellison: The United Kingdom Government supports a requirement to introduce an approved regulatory framework. This position will need to take account of the final form of the Tobacco Products Directive. In the meantime, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) continues to encourage companies voluntarily to license nicotine containing products on the basis of presentation and will continue to decide on whether products are medicinal products on a case by case basis. This is intended to ensure that products are available that meet appropriate standards of safety, quality and efficacy to help reduce the harms of smoking to smokers and those around them.

The MHRA has commissioned two studies at the Tobacco Dependence Research Unit, Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine, Queen Mary University of London. The first study was an analysis of nicotine content in the cartridge contents and in the generated vapour of electronic cigarettes and has been published. The outcome of the second study, evaluating toxin and nicotine delivery in electronic cigarette has not yet been reported to the MHRA.

Flexible Working

Mr Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many officials in his Department make use of compressed hours arrangements as part of the civil service's flexible working hours scheme (a) above and (b) below director level. [177397]

Dr Poulter: The Department recognises that all types of flexible working hours-including compressed hours-enable staff to manage their work-life balance and helps with the retention of valuable, experienced and qualified staff. Staff can request to work compressed hours at any point in their employment, although there can be no guarantee that such requests will be met.

Decisions to agree or refuse compressed-hours working are made by local line managers and records of these arrangements are not held centrally. It would incur disproportionate costs to establish the information requested.

Health

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what meetings he has held with ministerial colleagues on public health marketing campaigns since his appointment. [179131]

Jane Ellison: The Secretary of State for Health, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Mr Hunt), has so far not held any meetings with ministerial colleagues on solely on specific; individual public health marketing campaigns but has held regular meetings with colleagues where a variety of public health campaigns have been discussed.

Health Education

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health pursuant to the written answer of 25 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 147W, on Health Education, what the rationale was for suspending work on the draft guidance. [179094]

Norman Lamb: The Government carried out a review of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence public health work programme in 2010 to ensure that topics referred to it by the previous Administration were aligned with the Government's sexual health strategy.

Following the review, the public health guidance on personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) focusing on sex and relationships and alcohol education was suspended to allow a decision on its alignment with the Government's sexual health strategy and continued development to be taken in light of the new public health structures, and subsequently the Government's review of PSHE education.

Health Services

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the timetable is for the transfer of public health functions from the NHS to local authorities; what steps he has taken to date to implement that transfer; and if he will make a statement. [177428]

Jane Ellison: Upper tier and unitary local authorities were given a new statutory function from April 2013 to take appropriate steps to improve the health of their populations. However, responsibility for commissioning a small number of public health programmes, including children's public health services from pregnancy to five, rests with NHS England.

The Government remains committed to transferring commissioning of children's public health services from pregnancy to five to local authorities from 2015. In order to ensure the safest and most effective transfer discussions about the timetable and process are being held with key stakeholders including the Local Government Association, Public Health England and NHS England. When these discussions are concluded an announcement will be made.

Health Services: Females

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that clinical care commissioning groups commission appropriate

services for women who have been victims of violence; and what monitoring his Department undertakes to check that such services meet the requisite standards. [177905]

Jane Ellison: Except for the immediate response to sexual assault, the provision of services for women who have been-victims of violence as for all health services is decided by the local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs). In providing services, CCGs take into account the needs of the population overall. CCGs decisions are underpinned by clinical insight and knowledge of local healthcare needs. As such, provision of services will vary in response to local needs. NHS England, through its area teams, will be conducting quarterly assurance meetings with CCGs to ensure patients receive high quality services that deliver better outcomes for patients.

NHS England directly commissions sexual assault referral services for victims of sexual violence, and in doing so, works in collaboration with police forces and others in the criminal justice system, local authorities and CCGs with the aim of providing an integrated care pathway. The Health and Justice Clinical Reference Group is the route through which NHS England will get clinical advice into justice health commissioning.

Health Services: Weather

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what support his Department provides during exceptionally cold weather for health trusts. [177454]

Jane Ellison: We are providing an extra £250 million of funding for urgent and emergency care this winter, and NHS England have also announced a further £150 million to ensure the national health service is able to maintain the current high-level of patient care during winter.

In addition Public Health England published the 2013 Cold Weather Plan for England on 25 October 2013. It sets out a number of valuable actions that health trusts can take to manage pressures during cold weather and is available at:

www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/252838/Cold_Weather_Plan_2013_final.pdf

Health Services: Worcestershire

Karen Lumley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent meetings he has had on health service reconfiguration in Worcestershire. [177282]

Jane Ellison: The Department's Ministers have had two recent meetings to discuss the review of acute services at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust.

On 5 September 2013, the Under-Secretary of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich (Dr Poulter), met my hon. Friend. Prior to that meeting, on 16 May 2013, my hon. Friend the Member for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich (Dr Poulter) met my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), local national health service and council representatives and a local campaigner.

The reconfiguration of local health services is a matter for the local NHS. Commissioners in Worcestershire are currently working with local providers and stakeholders to develop proposals for the future provision of acute services across the county, including Alexandra hospital, which will be subject to public consultation.

Health: Finance

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much each local authority was allocated for public health expenditure in 2013-14; and how much each local authority has spent on public health to date. [179090]

Jane Ellison: We have allocated £2.66 billion to local authorities (LAs) in the year 2013-14 for their public health responsibilities. At the end of June 2013 £542 million had been spent, 20% of the total allocation. The following table shows total LA allocation and related spend at quarter one:

Total public health grant allocations to local authorities and total spent in quarter one (April to June) in the year 2013-14

<i>Local authority</i>	<i>Ring-fenced grant budget</i>	<i>England (£000)</i> <i>Total spent at Q1 (April to June 2013)</i>
Barking and Dagenham	12,921	3,223
Barnet	13,799	3,450
Barnsley	13,571	2,555
Bath and North East Somerset	7,183	1,934
Bedford UA	6,676	1,221
Bexley	6,886	246
Birmingham	78,636	19,660
Blackburn with Darwen	12,776	2,063
Blackpool	17,457	4,364
Bolton	18,115	4,500
Bournemouth	7,542	1,119
Bracknell Forest	2,772	718
Bradford	31,545	4,951
Brent	18,335	4,843
Brighton and Hove	18,185	3,864
Bristol	27,313	6,969
Bromley	12,601	2,973
Buckinghamshire	15,681	2,617
Bury	9,147	1,743
Calderdale	9,829	1,496
Cambridgeshire	21,230	5,308
Camden	25,649	0
Central Bedfordshire	9,873	2,469
Cheshire East	13,762	3,470
Cheshire West and Chester	13,371	3,793
City of London	1,651	107
Cornwall	17,839	4,460
Coventry	17,832	2,943
Croydon	18,312	4,328
Cumbria	14,176	1,594
Darlington	6,989	1,130
Derby City	13,167	3,292
Derbyshire	34,680	0
Devon	20,748	5,358
Doncaster	19,648	4,874
Dorset	12,538	3,134
Dudley	18,457	3,588
Durham	44,533	4,590
Ealing	21,376	5,344

Total public health grant allocations to local authorities and total spent in quarter one (April to June) in the year 2013-14

<i>Local authority</i>	<i>Ring-fenced grant budget</i>	<i>England (£000)</i> <i>Total spent at Q1 (April to June 2013)</i>
East Riding of Yorkshire	8,341	2,033
East Sussex	23,839	2,344
Enfield	12,961	2,794
Essex	48,874	12,334
Gateshead	15,401	726
Gloucestershire	21,126	2,577
Greenwich	18,277	4,570
Hackney	29,005	3,243
Halton	8,510	2,128
Hammersmith and Fulham	20,287	5,150
Hampshire	36,753	7,596
Haringey	17,587	508
Harrow	8,874	656
Hartlepool	8,255	2,112
Havering	8,833	1,603
Herefordshire	7,753	1,939
Hertfordshire	34,220	8,614
Hillingdon	15,281	3,820
Hounslow	12,804	2,500
Isle of Wight	5,922	1,447
Isles of Scilly	71	0
Islington	24,737	6,184
Kensington and Chelsea	20,636	5,455
Kent	49,843	11,563
Kingston upon Hull	21,945	2,361
Kingston upon Thames	9,049	2,062
Kirklees	22,603	8,123
Knowsley	15,929	2,080
Lambeth	25,438	6,359
Lancashire	57,991	14,444
Leeds	36,855	8,786
Leicester City	19,995	5,526
Leicestershire	20,206	4,185
Lewisham	19,541	4,880
Lincolnshire	27,542	2,693
Liverpool	40,308	6,030
Luton	11,877	2,015
Manchester	40,105	10,128
Medway Towns	13,170	3,295
Merton	8,985	2,246
Middlesbrough	15,932	3,987
Milton Keynes	7,989	1,217
Newcastle upon Tyne	20,721	5,180
Newham	23,738	5,935
Norfolk	29,798	2,029
North East Lincolnshire	9,700	2,600
North Lincolnshire	8,071	1,038
North Somerset	7,381	1,845
North Tyneside	10,417	2,751
North Yorkshire	19,021	4,867
Northamptonshire	26,839	6,787
Northumberland	13,043	1,513
Nottingham City	27,081	6,512
Nottinghamshire	35,135	5,675
Oldham	13,559	2,356
Oxfordshire	25,264	6,355
Peterborough	8,446	1,831
Plymouth	11,160	2,835
Poole	5,892	1,473
Portsmouth	15,737	910
Reading	7,466	2,110

Total public health grant allocations to local authorities and total spent in quarter one (April to June) in the year 2013-14

Local authority	Ring-fenced grant budget	England (£000)
		Total spent at Q1 (April to June 2013)
Redbridge	10,374	2,560
Redcar and Cleveland	10,620	2,655
Richmond upon Thames	7,676	828
Rochdale	14,256	3,846
Rotherham	13,790	3,448
Rutland	1,044	161
Salford	17,075	4,075
Sandwell	20,816	2,171
Sefton	19,408	4,808
Sheffield	29,665	4,227
Shropshire	8,948	2,242
Slough	4,988	705
Solihull	9,635	2,456
Somerset	14,403	3,772
South Gloucestershire	6,677	1,608
South Tyneside	12,565	3,203
Southampton	14,313	3,579
Southend-on-Sea	7,327	1,749
Southwark	21,809	5,400
St Helens	12,680	384
Staffordshire	32,322	7,503
Stockport	12,360	2,512
Stockton-on-Tees	12,711	939
Stoke-on-Trent	19,690	529
Suffolk	25,572	2,126
Sunderland	20,656	4,669
Surrey	23,237	-801
Sutton	8,384	1,447
Swindon UA	7,891	2,017
Tameside	11,454	292
Telford and the Wrekin	10,616	2,653
Thurrock	7,417	0
Torbay	7,450	1,788
Tower Hamlets	31,382	7,713
Trafford	10,171	881
Wakefield	20,230	4,382
Walsall	14,984	984
Waltham Forest	11,161	2,790
Wandsworth	24,738	6,287
Warrington	10,052	2,517
Warwickshire	21,216	6,075
West Berkshire	4,381	1,140
West Sussex	26,698	5,048
Westminster	30,384	7,747
Wigan	23,020	5,674
Wiltshire	13,261	1,408
Windsor and Maidenhead	3,192	578
Wirral	25,720	6,308
Wokingham	3,839	508
Wolverhampton	18,770	4,693
Worcestershire	25,806	7,046
York	6,641	1,666
England total	2,661,795	541,786

Healthwatch England

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his policy is on whether councillors who sit on a social services authority can also act as members or chairs of Healthwatch. [177904]

Norman Lamb: Membership and chairmanship are matters for each local Healthwatch organisation.

There are no regulations governing the membership or chairmanship of local Healthwatch but the Government expects that any actual or potential conflicts of interest would be appropriately handled in line with the organisation's policy.

In March 2013 the Local Government Association published a briefing note 'Local Healthwatch: Governance and involvement of councillors' setting out a common sense approach to being aware of, and dealing with, any potential conflicts of interest inherent in any such situation. The briefing note is available at:

www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/publications/-/journal_content/56/10180/3899675/PUBLICATION

Heart Diseases: Children

Mr Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress his Department has made on its review of the number of children's specialist heart units in England; and when he expects a decision to be made on this matter. [177437]

Jane Ellison: NHS England is responsible for conducting the new review of congenital heart disease services.

NHS England is working closely with ail 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.

Ministers' Private Offices

Mr Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he (a) has appointed or (b) intends to appoint an enlarged ministerial office. [177517]

Dr Poulter: I refer my hon. Friend to the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, my right hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Mr Maude), answer of 28 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 398W.

NHS England: Lancashire

Rosie Cooper: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he plans to take to reduce the time taken by NHS England's Lancashire area team to respond to correspondence from hon. Members. [177802]

Jane Ellison: This is a matter for NHS England.

We are advised that NHS England Lancashire Area Team is looking to improve the processes for handling all correspondence to ensure that responses are timely and to the same standard used by the Department.

NHS: Training

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many training posts for (a) nurses and (b) doctors were commissioned in England in each of the last five years. [179089]

Dr Poulter: The following table details the nurse training commissions by year, for the period 2008-09 to 2012-13:

	<i>Total nurse commissions</i>
2008-09	20,664
2009-10	20,829
2010-11	20,092
2011-12	17,741
2012-13	17,219

Source:

Multi professional education and training budget monitoring returns

The national health service is not responsible for commissioning undergraduate medical degrees. The Higher Education Funding Council for England is responsible for agreeing the number of medical degrees at each institution and for monitoring the actual number of students recruited.

Nurses

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many British nationals were registered as a nurse in the NHS in each of the last five years. [177911]

Dr Poulter: The nationality of registered nurses working in the NHS is not collected centrally.

Pregnancy: Influenza

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps the Government is taking to encourage take-up of the influenza vaccine among pregnant women. [179091]

Jane Ellison: We are taking a range of measures to encourage uptake of influenza (flu) vaccination of pregnant women. These measures include:

- publishing a seasonal flu plan to assist the national health service and local government to plan for flu, including advice to improve vaccine uptake among pregnant women;

- providing the NHS and local government with detailed guidance on the flu immunisation programme, including recommendations for close liaison between midwifery services and general practices;

- running a targeted national communications campaign to promote improved uptake of flu vaccine in clinical risk groups including pregnant women;

- monitoring levels of flu and vaccine coverage in pregnant women throughout the flu season; and

I wrote to all hon. Members on 23 October 2013 with details of the seasonal flu strategy and information about eligible groups.

Public Health England

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will publish the results of the Public Health England staff survey. [179092]

Jane Ellison: Yes. In the coming weeks Public Health England (PHE) will be sharing and discussing the results of the survey with staff. After this internal dissemination has been completed, PHE will publish the results of the Public Health England staff survey on their external website. This will take place by 30 January 2014.

HOME DEPARTMENT**Animal Experiments**

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many animal experiments were conducted in the UK in (a) 2012, (b) 2011, (c) 2010 and (d) 2009; and if she will make a statement. [177094]

Norman Baker: In Great Britain, there were (a) 4,110,028 scientific procedures performed on living animals in 2012, (b) 3,792,857 in 2011, (c) 3,724,726 in 2010, and (d) 3,619,540 in 2009.

The Northern Ireland Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) separately publishes figures for Northern Ireland. DHSSPS plans to publish figures for (a) 2012 in November/December 2013. In Northern Ireland, there were (b) 18,538 scientific procedures performed on living animals in 2011, (c) 18,311 in 2010 and (d) 51,753 in 2009.

Antisocial Behaviour

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what guidance commitments she has given to police forces on the use of the new injunctions to prevent nuisance and annoyance contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Bill and the need not to curtail freedom of religious expression. [177880]

Norman Baker: We published draft guidance for frontline professionals in October. That guidance made clear that the police and other agencies must make proportionate and reasonable judgments before applying for an injunction to prevent nuisance and annoyance and that they should not use it to stop behaviours which have not caused, and are not likely to cause, harm to victims or communities. We are currently seeking the views of frontline professionals to ensure the guidance helps them use the new powers effectively, and will publish a final version in due course.

Antisocial Behaviour Orders

Mr Steve Reed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the likely change in the number of prison inmates due to the abolition of anti-social behaviour orders; and if he will make a statement. [177279]

Norman Baker [*holding answer 27 November 2013*]: The published impact assessment estimates that replacing the antisocial behaviour order on conviction with the criminal behaviour order will have a negligible impact on prison places. The impact assessment also judges that replacing the antisocial behaviour order (ASBO) on application with the injunction to prevent nuisance and annoyance will lead to a reduction in the number of prison places, although it is not possible to quantify the reduction at this stage.

The purpose of replacing ASBOs is to tackle antisocial behaviour more effectively, not to increase or decrease prison population numbers.

Crime

Mr Steve Reed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of the effects of performance-related pay in the police on the accurate recording of crime; and if she will make a statement. [177653]

Damian Green: The Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), has not made any such assessment.

The principle of linking pay progression to satisfactory annual performance for police officers has been agreed in the Police Negotiating Board. The College of Policing are now designing this system to reward officers for their level of skill, contribution and professional development.

The Government takes crime recording seriously. It is vital that crime is recorded accurately and all officers are expected to act with the highest level of integrity.

Drugs: Misuse

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what assessment her Department has made of the measures recently introduced in New Zealand to reduce the harm caused by legal highs; [177092]

(2) what plans she has to reduce the harm caused by legal highs; and if she will make a statement; [177093]

(3) if she will publish any information which her Department holds on the efficacy of educational projects that resulted in a reduction in the use of controlled drugs in the UK or elsewhere in the last 10 years. [177133]

Norman Baker: We already control hundreds of “legal highs” and are working with law enforcement partners to disrupt the supply of these often dangerous substances. The Home Office has led communications activity to engage young people and students to advise of the risks of “legal highs”. We also regularly update public health messaging on those risks. We are not complacent and continue to look at ways in which we can enhance our response.

We are also building on the 2010 Drug Strategy commitment to “review new evidence on what works in other countries and what we can learn from it” through our International Comparators Study looking at the impact of drug policies in other countries, which includes New Zealand.

The research Centre for Analysis of Youth Transitions is a key Government resource in providing information on services and programmes that support the development of young people, including those aimed at reducing drug and alcohol use. The Home Office evaluated ‘Blueprint’ a large-scale drug education programme which ran between 2004 and 2005. Findings from the evaluation have been put in the public domain.

Gareth Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many substances have been made subject to a temporary class drug order since 15 November 2011. [177897]

Norman Baker: A total of eleven named substances have been placed under Temporary Class Drug Orders since their introduction in November 2011. This includes methoxetamine in April 2012 and substances from both the NBOMe and Benzofuran groups in June 2013.

Independent Police Complaints Commission

Ian Swales: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether her Department will make additional funding available to cover the costs of enlarging the Independent Police and Crime Commission. [177355]

Damian Green: The Government intends to transfer resources from police forces to the Independent Police Complaints Commission to enable it to deal with all serious and sensitive cases involving the police.

Ian Swales: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will make it her policy that additional funding for the Independent Police Complaints Commission will not be drawn from the policing budget. [177807]

Damian Green: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 25 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 32W.

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) pursuant to the answer of 25 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 32W, on Independent Police Complaints Commission, what discussions she has had with ministerial colleagues on the transfer of funds from the (a) Ministry of Defence Police, (b) Civil Nuclear Constabulary and (c) British Transport Police to fund the expansion of the Independent Police Complaints Commission; [179143]

(2) if she will provide a detailed breakdown of the transfer of funds from each territorial police force in England and Wales to fund the expansion of the Independent Police Complaints Commission. [179144]

Damian Green: The Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), has not discussed with ministerial colleagues transferring resources from those organisations to enable the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) to deal with all serious and sensitive cases involving the police.

The Government has not yet made an announcement on the funding of the transfer of resources from police forces to the IPCC. Announcements will be made in line with the police annual settlement process. The Provisional Police Grant Report will be laid in Parliament in December.

Kings Science Academy

Kevin Brennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if she will publish all information held by Action Fraud associated with the crime reference number NFRC130400222669. [179093]

James Brokenshire: When Action Fraud takes a report, the victim or the person reporting is asked to provide as much information as possible concerning the alleged suspect, the victim, how the incident took place, details of any other organisations that the fraud may have been reported to and any transaction or bank account information that is known to the reporter. Given the level of personal and monetary information collected the contents of reports and phone calls are confidential, however the person who made the report can be provided with a copy of the report which Action Fraud submitted to the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau on request.

Metropolitan Police: Uniforms

Richard Drax: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions she has had with the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police on

future uniforms to be worn by police in London; and what the cost has been of the Metropolitan Police's recent research into its future uniform needs. [177789]

Damian Green: Home Office Ministers have regular meetings with ministerial colleagues and others as part of the process of policy development and delivery. As was the case with previous Administrations, it is not the Government's practice to provide details of all such meetings. With regards to the information on what the cost has been of the Metropolitan Police's recent research into its future uniform needs, this information is not held centrally.

Offences against Children

Nicola Blackwood: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures she is introducing to tackle the exploitation of children. [900698]

Norman Baker [*holding answer 28 October 2013*]: This Government is absolutely committed to tackling child sexual exploitation. Within the progress report and action plan of the National Group on Sexual Violence Against Children and Vulnerable People we have set out a range of measures being undertaken across Government and the police to prevent child abuse from happening, significantly improve support for victims and to bring perpetrators to justice.

Police: Cleveland

Ian Swales: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent assessment she has made of the potential effect of the 2013 Comprehensive Spending Review's additional grant reduction of £4.8 million on policing in Cleveland. [177806]

Damian Green: The Chancellor of the Exchequer's spending round announcement on 26 June concerned decisions on Government funding for the financial year 2015-16 only.

As a result of the spending round in 2013, the Home Office has committed to resource savings of 6.1 % in 2015-16. However, central Government revenue funding to the police has been prioritised and will reduce by 4.9 % in real terms.

No decision has been made on funding allocations for individual police and crime commissioners in 2015-16. Provisional allocations will be announced as part of the annual police funding settlement process next year.

Police: Disclosure of Information

Mr Steve Reed: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment she has made of the effects of the prohibition on police officers reporting their own constabulary to the Independent Police Complaints Commission under section 29 of the Police Reform Act 2002; and if she will make a statement. [177654]

Damian Green: Police officers may report colleagues from the same force to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) through the dedicated IPCC phone line and e-mail address.

Sexual Offences

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment her Department has made of the allegations made at the Public Administration Select Committee on 19 November 2013 by the Metropolitan Police on the under-reporting of rape and other sexual offence crimes over the last five years. [177121]

Norman Baker: We want to ensure that all victims of rape and sexual violence are treated with dignity, and that police investigations are conducted thoroughly and professionally. Any officer suspected of falsifying crime figures should be investigated and punished if found guilty.

The Government is encouraged that the most recent crime statistics showed an increase in the number of rape and sexual violence cases reported to the police, indicating that more victims are having the confidence to come forward and report these crimes. In addition, the 'no crime' rate for rape has fallen year on year from 12.6% in 2009-10 to 9.6% in 2012-13.

As part of their work to ensure the quality of police crime recording and service delivery to victims, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary is inspecting forces to ensure standards are being met and will publish a national thematic report next year.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Pay

Andy Sawford: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross representing the House of Commons Commission how many staff of the House of Commons at each grade have been consulted on pay in the last year. [179138]

John Thurso: In the last year, all staff have been consulted directly about pay on a number of occasions. In particular:

In March 2013 all staff were invited to attend a series of open meetings; to brief them on the pay offer and to provide an opportunity to ask questions and make representations. Over 500 staff in all pay bands attended these meetings, and their questions were subsequently made available to all staff on the parliamentary intranet, together with the answers which were given.

In June and July 2013, following rejection of the pay offer, all staff were invited to take part in a series of exploratory discussion groups on pay. Some 95 staff attended these groups, again representing all pay bands and including both union and non-union members.

In June 2013 we ran our annual staff survey. 1,223 staff (62%) responded to the survey and gave extensive feedback on pay issues. Their responses are available on the parliamentary intranet.

In addition, there have been two full pay negotiations with the recognised trade unions, as well as various more informal meetings and exploratory discussions.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Central African Republic

Alison McGovern: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what recent assessment she has made of the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic; and if she will make a statement. [177876]

Lynne Featherstone: The humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) is acute and rapidly changing. The UN estimates that the whole population (4.6 million people) have been affected by this conflict and that 1.6 million people (a third of the population) are in need of humanitarian assistance, including protection, food, health, water and sanitation and shelter. DFID currently has a team in CAR assessing the humanitarian situation together with other agencies.

Conflict Pool

Mr Ellwood: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what her policy is on the future of the Conflict Pool; and if she will make a statement. [177412]

Mr Duncan: The 2013 Spending Round agreed to build on the success of the Conflict Pool and to increase its size and broaden its scope with a new £1 billion Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) for 2015/16. The CSSF brings together new and existing resources from across Government to prevent conflict and tackle threats to UK interests that arise from instability overseas, including implementing the Building Stability Overseas Strategy. The National Security Council (NSC) will set priorities for the fund, drawing on the most effective combination of defence policy, diplomacy, development assistance, security policy, and intelligence.

Developing Countries: Sanitation

Andy Sawford: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps she is taking to increase global access to proper sanitation facilities. [179141]

Lynne Featherstone: The UK Government has promised to support 60 million people to gain access to sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in the developing world, mainly in Africa and South Asia, by the end of 2015. We are on track to achieve this target through expanding existing projects and by entering into new partnerships with major WASH organisations.

Flexible Working

Mr Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many officials in her Department make use of compressed hours arrangements as part of the Civil Service's flexible working hours scheme (a) above and (b) below director level. [177399]

Mr Duncan: As of 27 November 2013, DFID had no employees at director level or above working on a compressed hour pattern. 42 employees below director level are using a compressed hour working pattern.

Libya

Mr Ellwood: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what (a) progress has been made on and (b) funding has been allocated to her Department's Security, Justice and Defence Programme for Libya. [177411]

Mr Duncan: The UK Government is committing up to £62.5 million over the next three and a half years to support the Libyan Government in strengthening the capability, accountability and responsiveness of its security, justice, and defence sectors. This tri-departmental programme began in October 2013.

JUSTICE

Alternatives to Prison

Karen Lumley: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what assessment he has made of the restorative justice programme implemented by the West Mercia and Warwickshire police force. [177283]

Jeremy Wright: The Government is committed to ensuring that restorative justice is victim-focused, of a good quality and available at all stages of the criminal justice system across England and Wales. On 19 November we announced plans for at least £29 million recovered from offenders to help deliver RJ for victims over the coming three years. Much of this money will go to police and crime commissioners (PCCs).

I welcome efforts by police forces (including West Mercia and Warwickshire) to help deliver this vision and I expect PCCs to work closely with all relevant organisations at a local level to ensure that RJ is only delivered in appropriate circumstances and is safe and competent.

Courts: Clothing

Mr Hollobone: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice Pursuant to the answer of 15 October 2013, *Official Report* column 655w, on courts: clothing, if he will request that the Crown Prosecution Service formulate a policy on the wearing of face coverings in court. [901111]

Mr Vara: Guidance on the issue of wearing face coverings in court is a matter for the courts to consider. The Lord Chief Justice, the right hon. Lord Thomas, announced on 5 November 2013 that he intends to issue a practice direction which will give clear guidance on the wearing of a niqab in criminal courts. The Lord Chief Justice intends to hold a public consultation on the guidance in due course.

Trials

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many mistrials occurred (a) in the most recent period for which figures are available and (b) in each of the last five years. [177499]

Mr Vara: The outcomes of trials are not recorded in a way which fits the meaning of a mistrial as it is commonly understood, because the term is not applied as such in the courts of England and Wales. There are a number of reasons why a trial might not reach a conclusion, and sometimes another trial is ordered in as a consequence. Retrials can also be ordered by the Court of Appeal.

PRIME MINISTER

China

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Prime Minister what his objectives are for his discussions with the Chinese Government during his forthcoming visit. [177785]

The Prime Minister: In all my international activity my priority is to advance the UK national interest by supporting the security and prosperity of this country.

TRANSPORT

Bus Services: North West

John Woodcock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what funding his Department has made available for Better Bus Areas in (a) Cumbria and (b) the North West since May 2010. [177875]

Stephen Hammond: In October this year, the Department announced that a new Better Bus Area would be created in Merseyside after a successful bid from the local transport authority. Funding for this scheme up until 2017 will amount to some £2.7 million.

In 2012, the Department provided the following funding to local authorities in the North West through an earlier Better Bus Area Fund scheme:

Local Authority/ Local Transport Authority	Scheme Name	Funding provided (£)
Blackpool City Council	Bus led regeneration of Blackpool Town Centre	1,073,000
Transport for Greater Manchester	Better Bus Area Fund Bid for Greater Manchester	4,999,000
Merseytravel	Merseyside's Measures for Better Bus Travel	4,207,000
West Yorkshire ITA	Smarter journeys	4,325,000

The Department has not received any Better Bus Area bids from Cumbria.

East Coast Railway Line

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many officials in his Department are currently working on the East Coast franchising programme. [179134]

Stephen Hammond: The core InterCity East Coast franchising team consists of 15 officials, who are wholly dedicated to the project. They are supported on an ad hoc basis by relevant officials from across the Department who provide specialist advice.

Flexible Working

Mr Gibb: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many officials in his Department make use of compressed hours arrangements as part of the Civil Service's flexible working hours scheme (a) above and (b) below director level. [177404]

Stephen Hammond: The following table details the number of staff who are currently on compressed hours.

	Below Director	Director and above
DFTc	24	0
HA	59	0
DVLA	41	0
DSA	50	0
VOSA	8	0
MCA	1	1

¹ No records held centrally.

Goring and Streatley Station

John Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made on assessing the cost and feasibility of adding step-free access to Goring and Streatley station. [177866]

Stephen Hammond: Network Rail has provided a cost estimate for the provision of lifts to facilitate step free access.

John Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions his Department has had on the ongoing issue of the installation of lifts for disabled passengers at Goring and Streatley station. [177867]

Stephen Hammond: I have asked the electrification programme to fund footbridge and lift works at this station but in parallel I have also asked them to nominate the station for funding through the Access for All programme.

High Speed 2 Railway Line

Mrs Gillan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in view of the expected size and length of the Environmental Statement which will accompany the Hybrid Bill on High Speed 2, if his Department will place a paper copy of the statement in the Library on the day that it is deposited. [177414]

Mr Goodwill: In line with Private Business Standing Order 27 a hard copy of all Bill documents was deposited in the Private Bill Office on the day of deposit. We understand that the House authorities will make this available in the Library.

In addition, memory sticks with electronic copies of all the documents were provided to the Vote Office at the time of deposit.

Level Crossings

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will bring forward legislative proposals aimed at making it cheaper and quicker to close level crossings. [179132]

Stephen Hammond: At the request of the Department, the English and Scottish Law Commissions have considered the legislative framework surrounding level crossings. The Law Commissions have made over a hundred recommendations for change, including proposals for a new dedicated closure process.

The Law Commissions report was published on 25 September 2013 and the Department's policy and legal analysis will closely consider their recommendations in the formulation of its policy.

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the average cost is of closing a level crossing on (a) public land and (b) private land. [179133]

Stephen Hammond: The Department does not hold figures for the costs of level crossing closure. However, this information can be obtained from Network Rail:

Network Rail
Kings Place
90 York Way
London
N1 9AG

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the Law Commission's report on Level Crossings published in September 2013, Cm 8711. [179135]

Stephen Hammond: The Law Commissions' 300-page report contains over 100 recommendations as well as a draft bill and regulations. It represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to bring the legislative framework surrounding level crossings up to date and make it more responsive to the competing demands often placed on this infrastructure. We need to ensure that any legislation we bring forward utilises this opportunity, requiring detailed policy and legal analysis, which remains ongoing.

We are extremely grateful to the English and Scottish Law Commissions for the significant amount of work they have undertaken since the Department requested them to look at this issue in 2008.

Pedestrian Crossings

Mr Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review his Department's guidance on pedestrian crossings. [177442]

Mr Goodwill: The Department's guidance on designing pedestrian crossings, including setting timings, is given in Local Transport Note 1/95: The Assessment of Pedestrian Crossings, Local Transport Note 2/95: The Design of Pedestrian Crossings, and Traffic Advisory Leaflet 5/05: Pedestrian Facilities at Signal-controlled Junctions.

The Department is currently undertaking a review of traffic signing legislation, including the Zebra, Pelican and Puffin Pedestrian Crossings Regulations and General Directions. Once this is concluded, the Department will consider the need to update guidance to reflect these changes.

David Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if his Department will make an assessment of the potential effect on motorists of providing an additional three seconds' time to pedestrians at signalised crossings; [177476]

(2) whether his Department has plans to increase the time for pedestrians on signalised crossings. [177477]

Mr Goodwill: Traffic authorities are responsible for ensuring that their pedestrian crossings provide everyone with enough time to cross the road safely. The timings used at each crossing will vary, as they depend to an extent on individual site circumstances. In designing crossings, traffic authorities will also need to assess the impact of the timings on all traffic. The Department provides advice on calculating timings for crossings in guidance, but this is not mandatory.

The Department recommends that where a crossing may be used by a large number of older people or those with mobility issues, for example outside residential care homes, this should be taken into account when setting timings.

Railways: Finance

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer of 21 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 977W, on railways:

finance, when he or his officials have met with (a) train operating companies, (b) the Association of Train Operating Companies and (c) the Rail Delivery Group to discuss reducing flex in 2014. [179142]

Stephen Hammond: The reduction in flex policy was announced as part of the 'Rail Fares and Ticketing: Next Steps' report, and there was ongoing liaison and consultation with a wide range of external stakeholders throughout the development of that document, including train operating companies and representative groups.

Railways: Franchises

Kelvin Hopkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on which occasions officials in his Department have discussed rail franchising policy with founder members of the Rail Delivery Group since June 2012. [179354]

Stephen Hammond: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 4 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 45W.

Road Traffic Control

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what account his Department takes of evidence of public consultation undertaken by local transport authorities or local highway authorities when considering applications to the local pinch point fund. [177484]

Mr Goodwill: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 22 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 1052W.

Rolling Stock: Lancashire

Graham Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had with Northern Rail on the provision of modern rolling stock to service East Lancashire. [177846]

Stephen Hammond: The Department has very recently received a proposal from Northern Rail for the introduction of electric rolling stock in north-west England, and for the introduction of a new train service from Manchester to Blackburn via Todmorden, to be funded for its first three years of operation by Lancashire county council. A decision will be taken on whether to accept the proposal in due course. In the longer term, the provision of rolling stock on routes in east Lancashire will be a matter for the new Northern franchise, due to start in February 2016.

Rolling Stock: Manchester-Burnley Railway Line

Graham Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the answer of 25 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 976W, on Manchester-Burnley railway line, if he will require that Northern Rail provides modern and quality rolling stock for the Manchester-Burnley rail route as a condition of accepting the proposal to be considered. [177886]

Stephen Hammond: It is not the Department's policy to specify age or other characteristics of rolling stock. This is a matter for train operators. It has been proposed that the Manchester-Burnley service will be funded by Lancashire county council for its first three years of operation. If this is agreed, the Department's policy is that it will be for the council to decide whether to accept the terms offered by Northern Rail.

Secondment

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many of his Department's civil servants have been seconded to (a) the private sector and (b) trades unions in each year since 2010. [177724]

Stephen Hammond: According to our centrally held records, since 2010, two of the Department's civil servants have been seconded to the private sector.

According to our centrally held records, since 2010, none of the Department's civil servants have been seconded to the trade unions.

Given the very small numbers involved in the request, detailed breakdown of secondments by individual organisation and year cannot be provided.

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many secondees from (a) trades unions and (b) the voluntary sector have worked in his Department since 2010. [177747]

Stephen Hammond: According to our centrally held records, no secondees from trade unions have worked in the Department for Transport since 2010. And, according to our centrally held records, no secondees from the voluntary sector have worked in the Department for Transport since 2010.

TREASURY

Co-operative Bank

John Mann: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many telephone calls were made by the hon. Member for Fareham to the senior management of the Co-operative Bank during his time as Financial Secretary to the Treasury; how many such calls have been made by each other Minister in his Department since May 2010; and if he will publish the transcript and minutes of each such call; [177423]

(2) how many meetings his Department held with the Co-operative Bank between June 2010 and August 2013. [177429]

Cathy Jamieson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when Ministers in his Department have met staff of the Co-operative Bank since 2010. [R] [177352]

Nicky Morgan: [holding answer 26 November 2013]: Treasury Ministers have meetings with a wide variety of organisations in the public and private sectors, as part of the process of policy development and delivery. HM Treasury publishes a list of ministerial meetings with external organisations. This is available online at:

www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmt-ministers-meetings-hospitality-gifts-and-overseas-travel

Information about all ministerial phone calls and all departmental meetings is not routinely collected and is not held centrally.

Mortgages: Government Assistance

Chris Leslie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many Help to Buy mortgage guarantee applications have been made for properties worth (a) less than £150,000, (b) £150,001 to £300,000, (c) £300,001 to £400,000, (d) £400,001 to £500,000 and (e) £500,001 to £600,000. [177589]

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.

On 8 October, the Government published the scheme rules for the Help to Buy: mortgage guarantee scheme. Lenders are now able to sign up to the scheme and originate mortgages that will be eligible for the scheme when it opens in January.

The figures demonstrate that the Help to Buy: mortgage guarantee scheme is supporting responsible lending. On average households have asked to borrow around £155,000 for houses worth about £163,000, which is below the UK average price of £247,000.

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.

New Towns

Nadine Dorries: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what discussions his Department has had with outside experts and consultants regarding the potential construction of a new town within the boundaries of the Mid-Bedfordshire constituency; [177244]

(2) what discussions his Department has had with experts and consultants on promoting economic growth by building a new town in the south east of England. [177302]

Danny Alexander: The Treasury has regular discussions with outside experts on housing supply. The Government do not currently have any plans to construct a new town.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Employment and Support Allowance

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 21 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 1019W, on employment and support allowance, if he will take steps to record details of occasions on which decision makers have used powers of supersession. [177786]

Esther McVey: The Department gathers data with regard to the total numbers of decisions made following a Work Capability Assessment, as well as their outcomes

e.g. which component has been applied. There is no facility to efficiently gather more detailed information regarding the use of supersession powers in each case and the Department has no plans to introduce a mechanism for doing so.

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 21 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 1019W, on employment and support allowance, what mechanisms his Department has to monitor the appropriateness of instances of supersession following a repeat work capability assessment. [177787]

Esther McVey: The Department has in place a Quality Assessment Framework which measures the appropriateness of decision outcomes. This ensures that all available evidence has been given due consideration before a decision is made. This check encompasses supersession decisions following a repeat work capability assessment.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 29 October 2013, *Official Report*, columns 455-7W, on employment and support allowance, how many claimants of employment and support allowance in each of the main diagnosis groups were referred to the Work Programme between 1 June 2011 and 28 February 2013. [177832]

Esther McVey: The latest Work programme information available is to 30 June 2013 and is given in the following table:

Number of Work programme referrals, attachments and job outcomes for claimants in each of the main diagnosis groups for those in the employment support allowance (ESA) payment groups: 1 June 2011 to 30 June 2013

	Referrals	Attachments	Job outcomes
ESA customer groups total	196,420	186,530	6,210
Other/missing	2,120	1,990	130
Symptoms, signs and abnormal clinical and laboratory findings, not elsewhere classified	19,760	18,890	730
Pregnancy, childbirth and the puerperium	230	200	20
Diseases of the skin and subcutaneous system	1,200	1,150	40
Certain infectious and parasitic diseases	1,440	1,380	50
Mental and behavioural disorders	104,100	98,310	2,680
Diseases of the genitourinary system	1,500	1,420	90
Factors influencing health status and contact with health services	1,740	1,660	50
Diseases of the blood and blood forming organs and certain diseases involving the immune mechanism	360	340	10
Diseases of the digestive system	3,250	3,100	130
Diseases of the circulatory system	5,620	5,420	200
Injury, poisoning and certain other consequences of external causes	11,500	11,030	760
Diseases of the musculoskeletal system and connective tissue	27,150	25,960	830
Diseases of the respiratory system	3,020	2,870	60
Diseases of the nervous system	7,710	7,340	200
Diseases of the eye and adnexa	790	750	20
Neoplasms	1,900	1,840	140
Diseases of the ear and mastoid process	510	480	10

Number of Work programme referrals, attachments and job outcomes for claimants in each of the main diagnosis groups for those in the employment support allowance (ESA) payment groups: 1 June 2011 to 30 June 2013

	Referrals	Attachments	Job outcomes
Endocrine, Nutritional and Metabolic Diseases	2,430	2,290	50
Congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal abnormalities	90	90	
Certain conditions originating in the perinatal period	—	—	—

Employment Schemes: Fraud

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps he is taking to investigate allegations of fraud in the Work Choice contract in West and North London; and if he will make a statement. [177799]

Esther McVey: The Department treats any allegation of fraud by contractors very seriously. Any fraud is completely unacceptable. Where we identify, or are notified of, allegations of contractor fraud, these cases are investigated thoroughly by the Department's professionally trained and experienced investigators to a standard required to support reference to the police whenever evidence of criminal offences is discovered.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what steps his Department has taken to prevent fraudulent manipulation of Work Choice and Work Programme job outcomes; and if he will make a statement. [177800]

Esther McVey: DWP has robust control and assurance arrangements in place to guard against fraudulent claims being made by providers.

Before payment, every job outcome claim is checked to ensure that the programme participant has left benefit. A sample of claims is further checked to ensure that the participant has not only left benefit but is also in employment. In addition, the Department requires all providers to have robust and effective controls in place to mitigate the risk of internal manipulation, and to operate whistleblower facilities to enable staff to report any concerns. Programme providers are regularly inspected to ensure that their internal processes and controls are operating effectively.

Errors can and do occur in the claims process for legitimate reasons, and the Department will recover any monies paid in these circumstances. However where the Department identifies, or are notified of, allegations of contractor fraud, these cases are investigated thoroughly by DWP's professionally trained and experienced investigators.

Housing Benefit

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how much was paid in housing benefit to families placed by local authorities in temporary accommodation in (a) 2008, (b) 2009, (c) 2010, (d) 2011 (e) 2012 and (f) January to October 2013. [177801]

Steve Webb: The total housing benefit expenditure in each financial year between 2008-09 and 2012-13 on claimants in temporary accommodation is shown in the following table:

<i>Housing benefit expenditure on claimants in temporary accommodation</i>	
	<i>£ million (nominal)</i>
2008-09	677.6
2009-10	602.2
2010-11	501.2
2011-12	521.3
2012-13	560.1

Note:

Information sourced from local authority claims for housing benefit subsidy. Such information is only available on a financial year basis. No information is currently available for the 2013-14 financial year.

Industrial Health and Safety: Temperature

Mr Crasby: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent guidance he has given to the Health and Safety Executive with regard to the monitoring of employers' compliance with their duty under the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 to ensure that the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable; and what guidance he has issued on appropriate enforcement measures which should be taken where employers are found to be in breach of that duty. [177662]

Mike Penning: On 3 October 2013, the former Minister for Employment, my hon. Friend the Member for Fareham (Mr Hoban), agreed to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) publishing a revised Approved Code of Practice and guidance on the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992. This contains clear information and guidance on employers' responsibilities to maintain reasonable temperatures in the workplace.

HSE's published Enforcement Policy Statement applies to this area, and I have not issued any specific guidance on enforcement measures in relation to workplace temperatures.

New Enterprise Allowance: Sussex

Nicholas Soames: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many (a) referrals, (b) clients engaged, (c) approved business plans and (d) business starts there have been under the National Enterprise Allowance scheme in (i) Mid Sussex constituency and (ii) West Sussex since the inception of that scheme. [177878]

Esther McVey: The Department routinely publishes Official Statistics on the New Enterprise Allowance. These statistics show mentoring starts and allowance starts. NEA participants receive the weekly allowance after their business plan has been approved and their business begins trading. The Department does not publish information on referrals.

The Get Britain Working August 2013 official statistics:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/230333/

RESTRICTED_GBW_Official_Statistics_Release_Aug_2013_final.pdf

give the business mentor and weekly allowance starts, broken down by months and demographically, including by region.

Further geographical breakdowns, by Jobcentre Plus district, local authority and parliamentary constituency, have been published separately:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/230306/gbw-geo-breakdown-_aug-13.xls

Staff

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 21 November 2013, *Official Report*, column 1022W, on Jobcentre Plus, how many staff were directly employed in his Department and its agencies in (a) 2008, (b) 2009, (c) 2010, (d) 2011, (e) 2012 and (f) January to October 2013; and if he will estimate how many such staff worked in jobcentre operations in (i) 2012 and (ii) January to October 2013. [177881]

Mike Penning: Table 1 shows the number of staff who were directly employed in the Department at the end of each year from 2008 to 2012 and on 30 October 2013. The figures are 'staff in post', ie people counted as a single unit irrespective of the hours they work.

Table 1

	<i>Number</i>
31 December 2008	104,662
31 December 2009	121,824
31 December 2010	112,135
31 December 2011	101,331
31 December 2012	197,984
30 October 2013	192,946

¹ For the purposes of consistency the figures for 31 December 2012 and 30 October 2013 do not include the Child Maintenance Group, previously known as the Child Maintenance and Enforcement Commission, a non-departmental public body, which became part of the core Department on 1 August 2012.

As part of restructuring Jobcentre Plus became part of the core Department, as part of DWP Operations in October 2011. An estimate of the number of staff directly employed in DWP Operations at 31 December 2012 and 30 October 2013, in those areas of work most closely aligned with previous Jobcentre Plus operations functions, is shown in Table 2 as follows. As part of the restructuring a number of non operational support activities undertaken in Jobcentre Plus were subsumed into departmental corporate functions. These are not included in the figures in Table 2.

Table 2

	<i>Number</i>
31 December 2012	75,777
30 October 2013	70,527

Universal Credit

Lucy Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many households will receive a maximum childcare component of (a) 70 per cent and (b) 85 per cent once universal credit is fully introduced. [177783]

Steve Webb: Universal credit will provide support towards the costs of child care for 500,000 working families.

200,000 families will benefit from the proposed introduction of an 85% rate of child care support where all parents earn enough to pay income tax.

Based on current work patterns, less than 50,000 families will receive child care support as part of a UC award which has not been tapered due to earnings. All of these cases would receive child care support at 70%.

However, UC offers a simpler child care arrangement which pays child care support to people no matter how many hours they work, which we believe is the best way of supporting people into work. We therefore expect many more people to enter work at less than 16 hours per week, while taking advantage of child care support, due to the greater flexibility and higher work allowances under universal credit.

Notes:

1. The results of the analysis do not take account of any potential increase in employment as a result of the greater flexibility of child care support under universal credit. This is in line with the Universal Credit Impact Assessment published in December 2012.

2. This analysis has been modelled using the Department's Policy Simulation Model, using data from the Family Resources Survey data, 2010-11. The analysis has been carried out at the Benefit Unit level, which is defined to be a single adult or cohabiting couple, and any dependent children.

Winter Fuel Payments

Dan Jarvis: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many people received the winter fuel allowance in (a) Barnsley Central constituency, (b) South Yorkshire and (c) England in each of the last three years. [177472]

Steve Webb: The information is available on the internet at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/winter-fuel-payments-caseload-and-household-figures>

CABINET OFFICE

Flexible Working

Mr Gibb: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) how many officials in his Department make use of compressed hours arrangements as part of the Civil Service's flexible working hours scheme (a) above and (b) below director level; [177389]

(2) how many officials in the Deputy Prime Minister's 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. [177406]

Mr Maude: The Deputy Prime Minister's Office is an integral part of the Cabinet Office and is included in this reply.

To deliver public services on a 24/7 basis the civil service, like comparable private sector employers, needs a flexible workforce. Staff in my Department may be

provided with flexible working options including working compressed hours at the approval of their line managers. It is only authorised when it meets the business need, and like all areas of staffing, is kept under constant review.

Details of such staff working arrangements are not held centrally.

Iraq Committee of Inquiry

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office with reference to Sir John Chilcot's letter to the Prime Minister of 4 November 2013, what the role of Sir Jeremy Heywood is in collating and clearing documents included in the 10 requests submitted by the Iraq Inquiry since June 2013. [177779]

Mr Maude: The Minister for the Cabinet Office's role is set out in the protocol agreed between Government and the Inquiry, which is published on the Inquiry's website at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/iraq-inquiry-information-sharing-protocol

Population

Mr Denham: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office what the change in population of each English region was between 2001 and 2011. [177853]

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 question asking the Minister for the Cabinet Office the change in population in English regions between 2001 and 2011 (177853).

Table 1 shows the population estimate for each region for mid-2001 and mid-2011 together with the derived estimates of absolute and percentage change.

Table 1: Population Change in English Regions, 2001-11

	Resident population			
	Mid-2001	Mid-2011	Change	Percentage change
England	49,449,746	53,107,169	3,657,423	7.4
North East	2,540,090	2,596,441	56,351	2.2
North West	6,772,985	7,055,961	282,976	4.2
Yorkshire and the Humber	4,976,643	5,288,212	311,569	6.3
East Midlands	4,189,622	4,537,448	347,826	8.3
West Midlands	5,280,727	5,608,667	327,940	6.2
East	5,400,463	5,862,418	461,955	8.6
London	7,322,403	8,204,407	882,004	12.0
South East	8,023,449	8,652,784	629,335	7.8
South West	4,943,364	5,300,831	357,467	7.2

Source:
Office for National Statistics

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