

Friday
5 September 2014

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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Friday 5 September 2014

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): I beg to move, That the House sit in private.

Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 163).

The House divided: Ayes 3, Noes 320.

Division No. 45]

[9.34 am

AYES

Gray, Mr James
Nuttall, Mr David
Rees-Mogg, Jacob

Tellers for the Ayes:
Andrew George and
Annette Brooke

NOES

Abrahams, Debbie
Adams, Nigel
Aldous, Peter
Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
Alexander, Heidi
Allen, Mr Graham
Anderson, Mr David
Andrew, Stuart
Arbuthnot, rh Mr James
Bacon, Mr Richard
Bain, Mr William
Baker, Steve
Baldry, rh Sir Tony
Banks, Gordon
Barker, rh Gregory
Baron, Mr John
Begg, Dame Anne
Beith, rh Sir Alan
Benn, rh Hilary
Bingham, Andrew
Blackman, Bob
Blackwood, Nicola
Blenkinsop, Tom
Blomfield, Paul
Boles, Nick
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, Karen
Brake, rh Tom
Brazier, Mr Julian
Brennan, Kevin
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Brown, Mr Russell
Browne, Mr Jeremy
Bruce, Fiona
Bruce, rh Sir Malcolm
Bryant, Chris
Buckland, Mr Robert
Burden, Richard
Burns, Conor
Burns, rh Mr Simon
Burrowes, Mr David
Burstow, rh Paul
Byles, Dan

Cairns, Alun
Campbell, rh Mr Alan
Carmichael, Neil
Cash, Sir William
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Mr Christopher
Clark, rh Greg
Clark, Katy
Clarke, rh Mr Tom
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Colville, Oliver
Cruddas, Jon
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Darling, rh Mr Alistair
Davey, rh Mr Edward
David, Wayne
Davies, David T. C.
(*Monmouth*)
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
de Bois, Nick
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Dobbin, Jim
Donohoe, Mr Brian H.
Doughty, Stephen
Duddridge, James
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, Mr Philip
Durkan, Mark
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Ellis, Michael
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Graham
Evans, Jonathan
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, Mr David
Fabricant, Michael
Farrelly, Paul
Featherstone, rh Lynne

Field, rh Mr Frank
Field, Mark
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Flint, rh Caroline
Foster, rh Mr Don
Fovargue, Yvonne
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francis, Dr Hywel
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fuller, Richard
Gale, Sir Roger
Garnier, Sir Edward
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, Mr David
Gibb, Mr Nick
Gilmore, Sheila
Glass, Pat
Glen, John
Glindon, Mrs Mary
Goldsmith, Zac
Goodman, Helen
Gove, rh Michael
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Green, rh Damian
Greening, rh Justine
Greenwood, Lilian
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Hague, rh Mr William
Halfon, Robert
Hames, Duncan
Hamilton, Mr David
Hamilton, Fabian
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matthew
Hands, rh Greg
Hanson, rh Mr David
Harper, Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Harris, Mr Tom
Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
Hayes, rh Mr John
Heald, Sir Oliver
Healey, rh John
Heath, Mr David
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Hemming, John
Herbert, rh Nick
Hilling, Julie
Hinds, Damian
Hoban, Mr Mark
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollingbery, George
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Mr Adam
Hood, Mr Jim
Hopkins, Kris
Horwood, Martin
Howarth, rh Mr George
Howell, John
Hughes, rh Simon
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hunter, Mark
Hurd, Mr Nick
Irranca-Davies, Huw
James, Margot
Jamieson, Cathy

Jenkin, Mr Bernard
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, Diana
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Graham
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jones, Susan Elan
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kelly, Chris
Khan, rh Sadiq
Kirby, Simon
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lamb, rh Norman
Lancaster, Mark
Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
Lazarowicz, Mark
Leadsom, Andrea
Lee, Jessica
Lee, Dr Phillip
Leech, Mr John
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leslie, Charlotte
Leslie, Chris
Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Brandon
Lilley, rh Mr Peter
Lloyd, Stephen
Lopresti, Jack
Lucas, Ian
Lumley, Karen
Macleod, Mary
Marsden, Mr Gordon
Maude, rh Mr Francis
McCarthy, Kerry
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McGovern, Jim
McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
McIntosh, Miss Anne
McKechin, Ann
McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
Mearns, Ian
Menzies, Mark
Metcalf, Stephen
Miller, Andrew
Mills, Nigel
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moore, rh Michael
Mordaunt, Penny
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Grahame M.
(*Easington*)
Morris, James
Mosley, Stephen
Mowat, David
Mudie, Mr George
Mulholland, Greg
Munt, Tessa
Murphy, rh Paul
Murray, Ian
Murray, Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Nandy, Lisa
Newmark, Mr Brooks
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, Caroline
O'Donnell, Fiona
Offord, Dr Matthew

Ollerenshaw, Eric
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Pearce, Teresa
 Penning, rh Mike
 Phillips, Stephen
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Pound, Stephen
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pugh, John
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Sir John
 Raynsford, rh Mr Nick
 Reeves, Rachel
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Rogerson, Dan
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Roy, Mr Frank
 Roy, Lindsay
 Ruane, Chris
 Rudd, Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandys, Laura
 Seabeck, Alison
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Shepherd, Sir Richard
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Mr Andy
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Smith, Sir Robert
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stride, Mel
 Stuart, Mr Graham
 Stunell, rh Sir Andrew
 Sturdy, Julian

Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
 Swales, Ian
 Swayne, rh Mr Desmond
 Syms, Mr Robert
 Tami, Mark
 Teather, Sarah
 Thornton, Mike
 Thurso, rh John
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tredinnick, David
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Walley, Joan
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Watts, Mr Dave
 Weatherley, Mike
 Webb, rh Steve
 Weir, Mr Mike
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williams, Mr Mark
 Williams, Roger
 Williamson, Gavin
 Wilson, Phil
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Woodward, rh Mr Shaun
 Wright, Mr Iain
 Wright, Simon
 Yeo, Mr Tim
 Young, rh Sir George
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
John Penrose and
Gavin Barwell

Question accordingly negatived.

Affordable Homes Bill

9.48 am

Andrew George (St Ives) (LD): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I have not been present on Fridays recently and I had forgotten how popular they can be. Perhaps we should move a motion to do this more often.

It was my good fortune to come top of the MPs' national lottery for private Members' Bills, and a great opportunity it was. Just as we have held the Commons prayer that we should be working

“to improve the condition of all mankind”,

I felt that an area of greatest concern in my constituency, and the area of policy that I would like to advance the case for, is that of addressing the desperate need for affordable accommodation of very large numbers of the population throughout the country.

I have been engaged in discussions with many interest groups and many colleagues around the House to seek to advance that cause. Indeed, when my name came out the hat first, I consulted my constituents and proposed a range of ideas. I listened and was bombarded by a large number of proposals for a private Member's Bill, and I narrowed them down to three: one on health, one on devolution and the other on housing. Having consulted my constituents, it was clear to me that housing was the most pressing issue they face, especially the lack of affordable housing and the poverty caused as the result of policies that perhaps need to be adjusted to take account of the conditions in which people live.

Having had a range of discussions on different aspects of the Bill—it started quite wide and we have narrowed it down—we have come to a proposal that has three elements. Existing tenants will not be subject to any housing benefit deduction until they have received a reasonable offer of alternative social rented accommodation with the correct number of bedrooms. Tenants who need a extra bedroom for genuine medical reasons or whose homes are substantially adapted will not have their housing benefit reduced. Clause 3, as people will have noticed, will encourage a systematic review of the Government's efforts to provide affordable housing and, in particular, intermediate market housing.

I consulted the Public Bill Office, and the Clerks were enormously helpful to me in drafting the Bill. They assure me that it meets all the requirements of a private Member's Bill, including that its primary purpose clearly is not to spend money. Indeed, in relation to its housing benefit implications, there is a lot of speculation about the likely impact of the Government's current policy and their policy as amended by the Bill. I am very much reassured that the Clerks have given me that support.

I mentioned that a number of other measures were originally in the first draft of the Bill, including placing a cap on the number of second homes by introducing a new planning use class. In discussions with a wide range of people, I could not get sufficient support for that measure, but I am keen to advance that policy in other ways. Another measure was a “use it or lose it” approach to deal with the problem of large numbers of developers who land-bank, or hold back development land, which has the effect of driving up development land prices and therefore the ability to build affordable homes.

I have promoted intermediate market housing for many years. Indeed, in a professional capacity before I was first elected, I was engaged in that activity and work. I am keen to ensure that we have an opportunity to develop a new lower rung of the housing ladder to advance that case. Clause 3, largely through tentative steps, encourages the Government to look more urgently at the opportunities that people need to address that issue.

This is the first coalition Government for many years, and I have personally taken the strong view that coalition should be relatively easy to do. We should simply get on and deliver the things on which we agree and seek compromise in those areas where we disagree; but I am personally a strong parliamentarian and I believe that, where coalition parties fail to achieve compromise, it is better to resolve the matter here on the merits of the debate, rather through backroom deals and matters that are not open to debate in the House.

Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Andrew George: Will the hon. Lady allow me to make this point, if she does not mind?

In advancing the Bill in the form in which it now appears on Second Reading, I know that there have been a number of discussions between all parties. I ask the Minister whether he will confirm in responding to the debate that collective responsibility will be suspended on this private Member's Bill.

The Minister of State, Department for Work and Pensions (Mr Mark Harper) *indicated assent.*

Andrew George: I notice that the Minister nods his assent to that question, so I am given to understand that collective responsibility will be suspended on the Bill. That is important, and I am very encouraged that we have an opportunity for a more open debate.

Sheryll Murray: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Andrew George: The hon. Lady will have an opportunity to intervene on me in a moment. If collective responsibility has been suspended, I hope that she and her colleagues and, indeed, all hon. Members will have the opportunity to reach a judgment on the merits of the Bill.

Sheryll Murray: The hon. Gentleman has said that with coalition comes partnership. Has he consulted the Minister on the Bill's cost implications?

Andrew George: I have had a wide range of discussions, and when the Bill is considered in Committee, we will doubtless have an opportunity to do that. I was disappointed that, having sought Ministers' co-operation to advance the Bill, I was told that I would not have that co-operation. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] Clearly, in terms of being able to advance a discussion on matters relating to how the Government perceive the effect that the measures in the Bill would have on public expenditure, I would be very keen to have that discussion with the Minister. I certainly hope that when the Bill is supported—as, indeed, I believe it will be because hon. Members will be persuaded

by the strength of the arguments today—we may have the opportunity to have those discussions before the debates in Committee.

Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Andrew George: No, I will not give way. I am well aware—it is quite evident from the large number of Members who are here—that many Members wish to speak in the debate, and I therefore do not intend to speak for long, to enable as many Members as possible to take part.

I can understand the rationale that the Government have advanced for implementing the regulations.

Sheryll Murray: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Andrew George: I am certainly not going to give way to the hon. Lady again.

I can entirely understand the rationale for advancing the regulations: to apply the regulations to the social rented sector that previously applied only to the private rented sector. As a rationale, that is entirely understandable. The Government certainly had an opportunity to see how those regulations would bed in. The purpose of the Bill is to reflect on the results of interim assessments of how the new regulations have fared since their implementation on 1 April last year.

We have now had long enough to be clear about how the regulations have an impact. Therefore, it is clear that if we are to ensure that private and social tenants are treated equally, yet the vulnerable are properly protected, we have as a result of the interim evaluation commissioned by the Government evidence of how the policy has fared. I propose, therefore, that the rules be changed so that existing tenants are not penalised when they cannot move into smaller accommodation because it is not available in their locality, or if they have a serious medical reason for requiring an additional room.

The findings, which have been widely reported, studied and understood, show that, certainly in the first six months of the implementation of the regulations, only 4.5% of affected claimants were reported to have downsized to a smaller social sector property. The researchers found little evidence of claimants finding work, increasing their pay or taking in a lodger, as the Government anticipated when they introduced the regulations. That needs to be taken into account as well. Tenants affected were making cuts and incurring debts, with 57% of them reporting cutting back on what they deemed to be household essentials.

Mr David Anderson (Blaydon) (Lab): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the interim evaluation proved everybody right in what they said about how exactly the regulations would work out? The only people who were wrong were the Government and the Liberal Democrats who supported them?

Andrew George: I urge the hon. Gentleman to study the voting record. The Bill proposes moderate and reasonable measures that should receive the support of all Members from all parties because they are based on the evidence. Perhaps some people had remarkable foresight about how the regulations would fare, as the hon.

[Andrew George]

Gentleman suggests he had, and we can look at Members' voting record. Labour introduced similar regulations concerning a bedroom tax in the private rented sector. We have to reflect on the evidence and consider the consequences, and the Bill is simply a moderate and reasonable measure introducing new regulations based on that evidence.

Mr Nuttall: The hon. Gentleman said that this is a reasonable and moderate measure, but on his website he says:

"Naturally, if I succeed at Second Reading on Friday, I hope I can beef up the Bill with amendments at Committee Stage".

So, in fact, this is not the whole story. Will the hon. Gentleman tell us what he would really like to do with this Bill?

Andrew George: There is nothing on this issue that I have withheld from the public domain. Indeed, I have already said to the House that in its original form the Bill contained a wider range of measures, particularly in the clauses that I have mentioned, and I had a number of other proposals that I wanted to discuss with Members. The whole purpose of the Committee stage of a Bill is to consider whether there is further evidence that might advance the case. This is, in any case, a developing area of policy, and it develops on the basis of the evidence. I have long had a deep concern about it, and all I seek to do is ensure that the Government get it right.

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

Mr Russell Brown (Dumfries and Galloway) (Lab) *rose—*

Andrew George: I shall give way first to the hon. Member for Coventry South (Mr Cunningham) and then to the hon. Member for Dumfries and Galloway (Mr Brown).

Mr Cunningham: The hon. Gentleman has been consistent on the subject of this Bill—let us be quite clear about that. Does he agree that the Government's measures placed a burden on the needy and disabled in this country, and the chickens are now coming home to roost for the Government?

Andrew George: I assume that that remark is directed at those who sit on the Front Bench today.

I want to make a further point about the evidence from the interim evaluation. It is clear that total rent arrears held by landlords increased by 14% in the first six months, and the National Housing Federation says that two thirds—67%—of affected tenants are finding it difficult to afford to pay the rent, compared with less than a third of non-affected tenants. Affected tenants are four times more likely to say that they need to borrow money and therefore go into further debt than they were before 1 April 2013, when the measures were introduced. The evidence that is now available helps us, and I certainly hope that it helps the Government, to consider how best to respond to the issue. That is why I strongly urge all Members of the House to support the Second Reading of the Bill.

Mr Harper: The hon. Gentleman said that he wanted the House to make an informed decision, so I thought it would be helpful if I shared with hon. Members in all parts of the House the Government's estimate of the costings of the Bill, whose drafting goes rather wider than the spare room subsidy. The Government estimate that the Bill would cost about £1 billion of public expenditure, so I would be grateful if he let the House know what spending cuts or tax increases he intends to put before it when it makes its decision.

Andrew George: That is most interesting because the Minister was not prepared to share that estimate—that speculative figure—with me before today's debate. Looking at the consequences of the regulations, we see that if people had no other purpose in their life than simply to be the stimulus for the workings of the housing benefit system, and no say in how or where they lived, there would be no savings for the Government in any case. If the purpose of Government policy is to ensure the proper, efficient and effective use of the social housing resource with no under-occupation, so that every cubic centimetre of every social property is fully occupied, there will be no saving in housing benefit.

My point is that the policy is putting pressure on vulnerable people and they are expected to go into debt, and indeed the evidence shows that they are doing so as a consequence of the policy. That is the reasoning behind these modest and reasonable measures, which are based on the evidence. We can certainly debate the Minister's speculative estimate of the cost. In any case, when the Government first proposed the measures, they said that they would make savings of £500 million, and they have had to revise that down again and again. We must take into account the number of tenants who have had to move into the private rented sector, where rents are higher, and the number of disabled people who have had to move, requiring adaptations to be made at taxpayers' expense.

There are elements of the Government's estimates that we have not seen properly, and I would like to scrutinise the evidence that the Minister believes he has for them. He simply stood up and spouted one figure without any evidence. Perhaps when he winds up the debate, we will hear more about that figure, and I hope that he will come and talk to me before the Bill goes into Committee.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Andrew George: I promised to give way to the hon. Member for Dumfries and Galloway.

Mr Russell Brown: I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on his Bill. He has much support from Labour Members. May I take him back to his remarks about the legislation introduced by the Labour Government on private sector housing and the subject of those who had desperately to look to the private sector for rented accommodation? Will he please correct the record, because that legislation was not retrospective? Moreover, everyone was included in it. There were no exceptions, so pensioner households were included as well. That legislation, which the previous Labour Government put through, made no exceptions for anyone, so it is fundamentally different.

Andrew George: I acknowledge that it is different. I do not wish to be taken down a cul-de-sac of an argument, but regulations that were not retrospective in a sector that is characterised by six-month short-hold tenancies were not going to be non-retrospective for very long.

Sarah Newton (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): There is not a person on the Government Benches who does not care as much as the hon. Gentleman for vulnerable people. There is no doubt that there are huge pressures on housing in Cornwall, but the evidence shows that Cornwall council is using its discretionary housing allowance to help the most vulnerable people in our society. In fact, it has not even spent all the money that is available to help the very same people whom he and I care for, so I really cannot accept that people with disabilities and people who absolutely need help are not able to get hold of it.

Andrew George: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that intervention, because it gives me the opportunity to say that the discretionary housing payment allowance to local authorities is helpful, and it is clearly important given the way in which the Government introduced these regulations. However, the rules attached to it make it extremely difficult to apply it willy-nilly for anyone who says, “I don’t like this tax—could you please just cover it for me?” It does not apply in that way, and it is wrong to imply that it does.

Some Conservative Members are saying that they really care about this sector, so let us look back at the DNA of the Conservative party and the last time we had the opportunity to look at the state’s relationship to under-occupation of property. My hon. Friend will understand this from a Cornish perspective. She will remember that the last time the Conservatives held power on their own, they introduced a 50% council tax rate for second homes. That represented the state spending hundreds of millions of pounds of taxpayers’ money every year to enable the wealthy to own second homes, when thousands of families in constituencies such as mine could not afford their first. There was not just under-occupation but un-occupation of properties that were essential to local communities. I hope that the Conservatives have moved on from that policy and, as a result of their association with the Liberal Democrats, have been prepared to moderate their line in relation to the application of public money and under-occupation.

Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on introducing a Bill that I hope will be the first step in getting rid of this pernicious tax. May I take him back to the Minister’s intervention on sharing the information about the so-called £1 billion cost of these proposals? If the hon. Gentleman is able to have discussions with his colleagues in the Government on the costs, will he make sure that he brings the National Audit Office and the Office for National Statistics into that debate, because we have to talk about the unintended costs in social, health and economic terms of what this tax has created? Those are the issues that we should be costing—not just the straightforward black-and-white costs, which I think the Minister is completely wrong about.

Andrew George: I thank the hon. Lady. I am sure that the Minister will have heard those remarks.

John Pugh (Southport) (LD): Is not the huge amount of discretionary money that the Government have had to throw at this scheme an indication that things are not working and that we need to move towards a more evidence-led policy?

Andrew George: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point for me very articulately.

Sarah Newton: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Andrew George: I am aware of the time. The hon. Lady has already had an intervention, and rather a long one.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con) *rose*—

Andrew George: I believe that the hon. Gentleman has put his name down to speak, so I am sure we will be ready for that when it comes.

With regard to the changes in relation to disability, the clause is self-evident and I do not need to explain the reasoning for those measures. The provision about a reasonable offer of alternative accommodation is entirely reasonable. In a constituency such as mine, anyone engaging in the desperate weekend effort to try to find alternative accommodation through the Homechoice register would be very lucky, if they are seeking to downsize, to be able to move within a radius of 40 miles. If they live on the Isles of Scilly, there is no chance that they will be able to stay there. People who are seeking to downsize clearly cannot do so within their own local community, as would be reasonable. Therefore, as a result of moving, they will lose their ties with their school, their job, their social network, and their family. It is important and reasonable that we address these issues, and that is what the Bill does.

Mr George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab) *rose*—

Philip Davies: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Andrew George: I am conscious of the time. I have taken a large number of interventions, so I will not take any more in order that I can bring my remarks to a conclusion as quickly as possible.

In the light of the evidence, we should try to steer away from implying that it is somehow the fault of the vulnerable that they are living in under-occupied accommodation. In fact, we need to look carefully at the approach of successive Governments in the past who have failed to build the right proportion and number of the right size of accommodation to ensure that we make sufficient decent properties available. We need to recognise the unintended consequences of this regulation, particularly for those living in expensively adapted disabled accommodation. Those costs will have to be paid all over again if we force them to move to alternative accommodation when there is a lack of reasonable alternatives. The mere fact that someone is poor does not mean they are any less entitled to a stable family home than if they are better-off.

[Andrew George]

When I was engaged in the sector before I came to this place, I used to make recommendations as a result of needs assessments. I tried to make sure that we developed in social housing ranges of property that met the future needs of the local community, not necessarily just immediate need, so I would always err on the side of three and four-bedroom properties. The marginal cost at the time of development is only 3% or 4%, and that provides flexibility in future, particularly in small communities. It is essential that we have that. The problem with the regulation as it stands is that it sends the wrong signals to social housing providers whereby they will build too many small properties, creating a legacy for future generations that continues to put pressure on families in social housing. Personally, I find that unacceptable.

Mr Howarth *rose*—

Andrew George: I have said that I will not take any further interventions because of the time I have taken—I apologise.

Clause 3 relates to intermediate market housing. I am keen to make sure that we advance the case for intermediate market housing, which I think is self-evident. I hope that I can have discussions with Government about this measure. It is reasonable to undertake an evaluation of what is going on in that sector and to try to create tools to enable housing associations and community land trusts to construct a new lower rung on the housing ladder.

Having taken a large number of interventions to accommodate those who wished to make them, it only remains for me to say that I believe the measure is reasonable and based on the evidence—I took account of the evidence of the interim evaluation—and I urge all hon. Members from across all parties to support the Bill on Second Reading.

10.20 am

Mr Nick Raynsford (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): May I at the outset draw attention to my interests as declared in the Register of Members' Financial Interests?

I am very pleased to speak in support of the Bill, and I congratulate the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) on seizing the opportunity of his good fortune in being drawn in first place in the ballot to introduce a Bill that will have a significant impact on the living standards and housing prospects of a substantial number of our fellow citizens. The House should warmly welcome this serious Bill, and I applaud his decision to bring it in.

As the hon. Gentleman made clear, the Bill has two main purposes: first, to limit the circumstances in which social housing tenants are subject to deductions in their housing benefit or universal credit because of the impact of the bedroom tax; and secondly, to encourage the development and take-up of low-cost home ownership and other intermediate housing market options to assist people in need of housing who are unlikely to qualify for social tenancies but cannot afford the often prohibitive costs of housing for sale on the open market. I support both objectives, although in several respects I would

like the provisions to go further. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman has made clear his own inclination to go beyond the specific measures, but the Bill as presented to the House is a good start in the right direction, and it deserves our support. I will take the two main objectives in turn.

I applaud the three proposed limitations on the impact of the bedroom tax, which is one of the harshest measures introduced by the present Government. The bedroom tax was misconceived from the outset, being promoted on a false—indeed, one might say fraudulent—premise that the objective was to encourage better use of the country's social housing stock. It was misconceived in that there was no way that the measure could achieve its supposed objective of prompting tenants under-occupying social tenancies to move into smaller homes because the supply of smaller homes available to accommodate them was hopelessly inadequate. Social housing providers and local authorities presented such evidence to the Government time and again when they proposed the bedroom tax, but the Government ignored all the clear evidence that there was simply not a sufficient supply of smaller homes to make it possible for people who would be penalised to move into smaller accommodation.

Mr George Howarth: On that point, I can give the example of the Ravenscroft Re-build Housing Co-operative in my constituency. At my surgery last week, two ladies told me that because of how it is funded, the rent for a two-bedroom property is £54.50 a week and the rent for a three-bedroom property is £56 a week, while there are no smaller properties within the co-operative and there is a waiting list of one. If they moved to social housing—say, a one-bedroom flat—the rent would be between £70 and £80 a week, which makes a complete nonsense of the purpose of the policy in the first place.

Mr Raynsford: My right hon. Friend's point is absolutely valid. The policy is based on extremely unproven and in many cases very suspect assumptions. The idea that people eligible for housing benefit will benefit either themselves or the public purse by moving out of accommodation costing £55 a week into accommodation costing £70 seems absurd. That, however, is the consequence of the bedroom tax as it is currently constituted. The Government have made it clear that they expect people to look for alternative options in the private rented sector, even though that sector is in general hugely more expensive than social housing. There are a whole series of contradictions at the heart of this policy.

Julie Hilling (Bolton West) (Lab): Like my right hon. Friend, I absolutely welcome the Bill. Does he agree that from the start there has been a problem about the definition of under-occupation? If someone is disabled and needs a spare room, perhaps to keep their oxygen cylinders in, they are not under-occupying their property?

Mr Raynsford: My hon. Friend makes an absolutely valid point. The definitional issues about what constitutes under-occupation have bedevilled the policy right from the outset. We all know circumstances of people who have medical needs that mean they require an extra room or spare bedroom, and of those who for a variety of disability reasons cannot share a bedroom with the partner with whom they are assumed to be able to share. We also know the basic human wish of individuals

after a relationship breakdown to have a spare room so that their children can come to stay with them. The appalling way in which the Government have ignored these real human concerns and have imposed rules that have a harsh impact without taking account of such issues is one of the greatest condemnations of the whole policy.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Raynsford: I intend to make some progress, because many hon. Members want to speak. I may give way later, but for the moment I intend to make some progress.

I have made it clear that I regard the premise on which the policy was promoted as fraudulent because the Government's real objective was to cut £500 million of public expenditure out of housing benefit. As the hon. Member for St Ives has clearly said, that could not be achieved if the policy's ostensible objective—to encourage movement by tenants in social housing into smaller accommodation—was successful, because there would be no saving in public expenditure. The Government have been in the tortuous position of trying to justify the policy on the basis of making better use of the social housing stock when in practice they were after cuts in public expenditure that could not be delivered if the ostensible objective was met.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman has made the point that some people in social housing provided by local councils want a spare room to enable their children or friends to stay. We all recognise that that is the case, but his Government changed the rules about that for the thousands and thousands of people in private accommodation in every constituency. Why should there be one rule for one lot of people and another rule for another lot? It is rank hypocrisy.

Mr Raynsford: The hon. Gentleman has clearly not been listening to the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries and Galloway (Mr Brown) very forcefully made the point that the policy introduced by the previous Labour Government was not retrospective and did not penalise people on the basis of their existing circumstances. Quite simply, given the higher cost—*[Interruption.]* Perhaps the hon. Gentleman who asked the question would like to listen. He will know that private rented housing is generally very much more expensive than social housing. Social housing is allocated by landlords on the basis of how many bedrooms people need. If people who take private rented housing—they are not subject to allocation, but can choose their property—were able to select much more expensive properties that are larger than they need, that in itself would be a reasonable grounds for a restriction. However, that applies only when people move into such housing, not retrospectively. Finally, I put it to him that if he and the Government were really concerned to make better and more efficient use of under-occupied social housing, they would not have exempted elderly people because it is predominantly that group whose properties are under-occupied. That point absolutely goes to the heart of the process: this is not about better use of the social housing stock; this is about trying to make cuts in public expenditure, which has been the Government's objective from the outset. I now want to make some progress.

This whole ghastly process, which has caused anxiety, misery and hardship on a very large scale to hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens, was based on a false premise, without any proper evidence to justify what was done. It was a truly dreadful example of the worst type of policy making. Ideally, the whole policy should be consigned to the dustbin immediately, and it will be if the Labour party forms the Government after the next general election.

In the meantime, the hon. Member for St Ives has given us an opportunity significantly to limit its negative impact by restricting its application in three specific ways. The first way is by excluding cases where significant adaptations have been made to a property to meet the needs of a disabled tenant or a close relative who lives in the house. Quite why the Government did not accept the need for such an amendment from the outset is difficult to understand. It is clearly wasteful of public expenditure to drive disabled people out of properties that have been adapted for their needs if, as a consequence, they move into unadapted properties that have to be adapted at considerable expense to make them fit for them to live in. That is yet another illustration of the perversity of the whole policy. The exemption is long overdue and will remedy one of the blatant injustices and endemic nonsenses that are inherent in the bedroom tax policy.

Secondly, an exemption is proposed for tenants and close relatives who are in receipt of disability living allowance or personal independence payments and who, because of their disability, are not able to share a bedroom with someone with whom, under the bedroom tax regulations, they would be expected to share a bedroom. Again, that is a sensible, humane exemption that ought to have been agreed from the outset. Instead, the Government argued that discretionary housing payment could be made in such cases, ignoring three principal objections.

First, not everyone who might qualify for discretionary housing payment will apply for it. The Government's own review has demonstrated that that is the case. Secondly, not every local authority will approve DHP in all appropriate cases. Thirdly, the DHP regime is temporary. The Government have not confirmed that it will continue to be available beyond 2014-15, despite being pressed by the Work and Pensions Committee to give such a guarantee. It is far better to exempt those who are in receipt of DLA or PIP from the bedroom tax than to depend on the vagaries of DHP.

I do, however, have an anxiety about the precise wording of clause 2(1)(b). I have mentioned this point to the hon. Member for St Ives and I hope that, if necessary, the provision can be amended in Committee. As hon. Members will know, there are two levels of bedroom tax: it is 14% when the tenant is deemed to have one bedroom more than is strictly required and 25% when the tenant is deemed to be occupying two or more bedrooms more than they need. The exemption in the Bill is qualified by clause 2(1)(b)(v), so that it does not apply when the tenant has two or more bedrooms more than is strictly needed, even when the tenant has established that he or she cannot share a bedroom and so needs one bedroom more than their strict entitlement. The provision appears, therefore, to leave the tenant exposed to a 25% benefit reduction in such cases, rather than the more limited 14% reduction, which would

[Mr Raynsford]

appear to be fairer. I may be wrong in seeing that as a potential loophole that needs closing, and I would be delighted to hear from the hon. Gentleman if that is the case. If not, I hope that he will consider an amendment in Committee.

Mr Harper: I want to correct for the record a factual point that the right hon. Gentleman made about future funding. In the autumn statement in 2013, the Chancellor announced that an extra £40 million would be made available in 2014-15 and 2015-16 to ensure that discretionary housing payment for those affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy would be maintained. The right hon. Gentleman said that no such commitment had been made. I just wanted to ensure that the facts were put on the record.

Mr Raynsford: I immediately withdraw my comment if that is the case. I was working from the Library briefing dated 3 September—so it is very recent—which indicates that no such commitment has been given. I apologise if that is not the case, but I was speaking in good faith on the basis of the latest available Library briefing.

Thirdly, we come to the last and most far-reaching exemption. Clause 2(1)(c) exempts tenants from liability to the bedroom tax when neither their landlord nor the local authority, in cases where they are not council tenants,

“has made a reasonable offer of alternative accommodation.”

That addresses the appalling unfairness by which tenants who cannot move into smaller accommodation because their landlord or the local authority does not have sufficient homes to provide that option still end up having their benefit cut.

The DWP’s own evaluation admits that in the first six months of the bedroom tax, only 4.5% of affected tenants were able to downsize. Even though the figure subsequently rose to 19%, the DWP still confirmed that social landlords

“had not yet been able to accommodate most of those who wanted to move to a smaller home”.

On those figures, we know that less than 10% of those who are affected and who want to move are able to do so because of a lack of alternative accommodation.

It is a common-sense amendment to stop penalising people who have no opportunity to move into smaller accommodation and so avoid the impact of the bedroom tax. It is a long overdue amendment and, once again, a far better safeguard than the hope of getting discretionary housing payment.

Sarah Newton: I am finding the right hon. Gentleman’s comments deeply offensive. The social landlords to whom I spoke this summer, when I was finding evidence on what is happening under this policy, treat their tenants with respect, dignity and compassion. The professional housing officers, who do such a difficult job so well, use discretionary housing allowance and the powers that they have to ensure that tenants are treated well. I urge the right hon. Gentleman not to be so offensive to hard-working housing officers up and down the country.

Mr Raynsford: I have to say to the hon. Lady that the hundreds of thousands of people who are unfairly penalised by the bedroom tax find it an offensive policy. I in no way withdraw my remarks about the culpability of the Government she supports for introducing such an ill-conceived and, in many ways, fraudulent policy.

We come now to the second part of the Bill. Clause 3 addresses a very different but also very important housing need. We are all well aware of the huge constraints facing people who aspire to own a home, but who are squeezed out by the astronomical house prices in most parts of the country or by their inability to raise the necessary deposit to qualify for a mortgage. The option of shared ownership, shared equity or other discounted sub-market sale schemes has been an important, albeit not yet widely available, route into home ownership for people in such circumstances. Developing such options and parallel intermediate market rental schemes also has the merit of reducing the pressure on social housing waiting lists, which are, as we all know, under huge pressure because of the acute shortage of affordable housing in most parts of the country.

The irony of the current situation is that, despite the obvious logic of such low-cost home ownership and intermediate rented housing schemes, and the evidence from so many social housing providers and others that such options are popular and in high demand, they have not yet been developed on a sufficient scale to make an impact on housing needs. That is the background to clause 3, which requires the Secretary of State to carry out a review of the availability of such arrangements, the need for financial instruments to support them, the case for intermediate housing options and some of the obstacles and impediments to the expansion of the sector. It is only a report, but if it acts as a catalyst to stimulate increased activity in this section of the market, it will be worthwhile and should certainly be supported.

I know, from talking to the hon. Member for St Ives a month or so ago when he was framing the Bill, that he would have liked to go further. He was interested in promoting a new financial regime to help overcome some of the practical obstacles that cause difficulties when shared owners seek to sell their home and move on, as well as in helping the development of community land trusts. Those are worthwhile objectives and I hope that he will press for them, whether by tabling amendments in Committee or seeking assurances from Ministers. However, given the constraints facing private Members’ Bills, particularly in a Session that will end sooner than most because of the general election, I understand why he has taken the cautious path of limiting the provisions of the Bill.

In conclusion, this is a Bill that meets very real social and housing needs. It is a worthwhile Bill that addresses serious injustices and that deserves the support of the House on Second Reading.

10.39 am

Sir Tony Baldry (Banbury) (Con): It is always a genuine pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Mr Raynsford). We have both been Housing Ministers in our time, and I concede that he was always a genuine expert on housing and local government policy.

I will start by focusing on the cost of today's Bill. Listening to the right hon. Gentleman's speech and some of the interventions from Labour Members, I reminded myself—I thought I might have forgotten—that there was an agreement earlier this year to introduce a welfare cap. Such are the wonders of modern technology, that even I can now google “welfare cap” on my BlackBerry, and I am reminded by the BBC that on 26 March this year—

Stephen Pound (Ealing North) (Lab): He's reading!

Sir Tony Baldry: I am. I am quoting from the BBC. I can read. It states:

“MPs approve annual welfare cap in Commons vote.”

[*Interruption.*] Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would rather I did not read this and remind the House of the reality, but I think we ought to share it:

“MPs have overwhelmingly backed plans to introduce an overall cap on the amount the UK spends on welfare each year. Welfare spending, excluding the state pension and some unemployment benefits, will be capped next year at £119.5 billion. The idea, put forward by Chancellor George Osborne in last week's Budget, would in future see limits set at the beginning of each Parliament. With Labour supporting the idea, the measure was approved in the House of Commons by 520 to 22 votes... The cap will include spending on the vast majority of benefits, including pension credits, severe disablement allowance, incapacity benefits, child benefit, both maternity and paternity pay, universal credit and housing benefit... Under the proposed system, if a government wanted to spend more on one area of the welfare state it would have to compensate by making cuts elsewhere, to stay within the overall cap.”

Sheila Gilmore (Edinburgh East) (Lab) *rose*—

Sir Tony Baldry: Let me finish this point and then I will gladly give way to the hon. Lady.

My hon. Friend the Minister intervened on my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives (Andrew George) to say that the Government and Department have costed this Bill at £1 billion. Could that calculation and the arithmetic that supports it be put in a written answer in *Hansard*, and the figures placed in the Library so that we can all see them? This is important because it follows a decision the whole House took overwhelmingly earlier this year that if this Bill for example, costs £1 billion, then £1 billion of cuts must be made elsewhere in the welfare budget.

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman can help us. The Government's original estimate of the saving to the taxpayer of introducing the bedroom tax was £490 million. Today apparently, with a suspiciously round figure, the cost of getting rid of the bedroom tax would be £1 billion. How can that be possible?

Sir Tony Baldry: My hon. Friend the Member for St Ives sought to lull us all into a sense of reasonableness by asserting that this was just a Bill to tidy up and amend the spare room subsidy. It is clear, however, from the comments of the right hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich, that the real intention of those who support this Bill is to remove the spare room subsidy completely, so the purpose of the Bill is not what my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives said; it has a completely different purpose.

My fundamental point is still valid. If this Bill costs £1 billion, then given the welfare cap—which the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) and pretty much all Labour Members voted for earlier this year—the consequences of enacting it will mean that £1 billion must be saved from somewhere else in the welfare budget.

Mr Harper: I had not intended to intervene, but perhaps I can help to clear up the point. The cost of reversing the removal of the spare room subsidy is around £0.5 billion, as the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) confirmed. I spoke about the cost of the Bill because, whether the hon. Gentleman knows this or not, the Bill as drafted goes much wider than the removal of the spare room subsidy and fundamentally changes the way housing benefit is calculated—for example, it removes deductions for other people living in the household. That adds a further £500 million to the cost of the Bill. Members need to know that when they decide whether they will vote for it.

Sir Tony Baldry: May I invite my hon. Friend to intervene on me one more time to clarify and confirm this important point? Am I right in thinking that as a consequence of the welfare cap, whatever this Bill costs, whether it be £0.5 billion or £1 billion, that money must be saved and found somewhere else in the welfare budget?

Mr Harper: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. Labour Members supported the welfare cap, as did the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George). I have yet to hear anyone explain how they will pay for the cost of this Bill and which benefits they will cut.

Sir Tony Baldry: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The whole House must recognise that when we debate issues of welfare, we cannot pretend that we did not collectively, and by a very large majority, vote for the welfare cap.

Sheila Gilmore: I heard one of the right hon. Gentleman's colleagues on the radio this morning saying that there is no problem for disabled people and others affected by this because discretionary housing payments would cover it. Leaving aside the fact that I know full well that such payments do not cover everyone, if they did, it would balance out anyway. Why incur the additional administrative costs, as well as putting people through the anxiety of applying for discretionary housing benefits, if his colleagues think that the money is there anyway? Why not simply exempt those people and make it much simpler?

Sir Tony Baldry: If I recall correctly the hon. Lady was one of those who voted for the welfare cap. Discretionary allowances have been working. Indeed, the constituency of the right hon. Member for Greenwich and Woolwich still has discretionary grant to spare.

Mr Dave Watts (St Helens North) (Lab): The right hon. Gentleman should not let the Minister escape the question he was asked: will he put those figures in the Library so that we can see how that calculation of £1 billion has been made? We will then see whether those figures are real. Labour did agree to a cap on the welfare bill, but there are many other ways of bringing

[Mr Dave Watts]

that down, such as getting employers to pay proper wages, bringing down unemployment, and many other things.

Sir Tony Baldry: Having been in the House for nearly a third of a century, I implicitly trust what those on the Treasury Bench say. If the Minister says that the cost of the Bill will be £1 billion, I am sure that it will be and that he will be able to demonstrate to the House how he has come to that figure. The fundamental point, which I think we are all agreed on, is that whatever the Bill costs, whether £0.5 billion or £1 billion, that sum must be found somewhere else in the welfare budget. We cannot simply come to the House and seek to spend taxpayers money without that having consequences. Given that everyone has pretty much signed up to the welfare cap, one consequence is having to make savings elsewhere in the welfare budget.

When I first saw the Bill, one of the policy conundrums for me was why the previous Labour Government introduced almost identical proposals for tenants in the private rented sector—[*Interruption.*] I will come on to this in some detail, don't you worry! Why did they think that it was appropriate to treat tenants on housing benefit in social housing differently from tenants on housing benefit in the private rented sector? [*Interruption.*] The hon. Member for Rhondda, who is probably one of the greatest chunterers in the House, says that it was not introduced retrospectively. Given the length of the average private rented tenancy, if his best point is that there is somehow a distinction because shorthold assured tenancies usually run for six months so the policy was not introduced retrospectively, it is not a very good point.

Chris Bryant: I am sorry, but the right hon. Gentleman is talking utter Baldrydash. First, the truth of the matter is that the first measures on size criteria were introduced by a Conservative Government in 1989. Secondly, the Labour Government never introduced any retrospective measure. Thirdly, but far more important, the key point about social housing is that it is allocated on the basis of need. Our measure was completely different.

Sir Tony Baldry: One thing I will miss when I eventually leave the House is the hon. Gentleman's charm. I suspect I will not miss it for long, but I will miss it.

I looked back in detail at the local housing allowance legislation, which was introduced for new claimants living in the deregulated private sector from 7 April 2008. Following the Social Security Act 1986, the housing benefit scheme was introduced in April 1988. As the House knows, housing benefit is a means-tested benefit administered by local authorities. It is paid to eligible tenants who live in the social and private rented sectors. Entitlement to housing benefit is calculated by comparing the needs and resources of the household, taking the liability for rent payments into account in calculating household net income. Before local housing allowance was introduced, private sector tenants also claimed housing benefit.

On 17 October 2002, the right hon. Member for Oxford East (Mr Smith), my county colleague, who was then Chief Secretary to the Treasury, announced plans

for a new form of housing benefit that could no longer be directly linked to rent. He described the plans as

“the biggest reform in Housing Benefit since the benefit began.”

One characteristic of housing benefit reforms is that Ministers always say that their reform is the biggest since the benefit began, but he did seek to make significant savings.

The new approach was introduced in nine pathfinder areas from November 2003 and was extended to a further nine areas from April 2005. At the time, this is how the Department for Work and Pensions described the aims and objectives of the local housing allowance:

“Local Housing Allowance...is the cornerstone of the Government's Housing Benefit reform programme which aims to simplify Housing Benefit and ensure it supports the wider objectives for welfare reform.”

Most hon. Members are sufficiently savvy to recognise the phrase

“ensure it supports the wider objectives for welfare reform”

as Treasury-speak for making public sector savings. That is exactly what the Labour Government sought to do. The Department for Work and Pensions website at the time said:

“The fundamental aims of the LHA scheme are to promote...Fairness...LHA bases the maximum amount paid to tenants on the size, composition and location of the household. Benefit will no longer be based on actual rents but on median levels of rent within localities.”

Yvonne Fovargue (Makerfield) (Lab): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Tony Baldry: I will give way in a second.

The current Government have extended the same principle to social housing tenants of paying the benefit on the size and composition of household.

Dame Anne Begg (Aberdeen South) (Lab): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Tony Baldry: I will certainly give way to the Chair of the Work and Pensions Committee.

Dame Anne Begg: I assume the right hon. Gentleman wants savings in the housing benefit bill. Rents are much higher in the private rented sector, yet that sector is growing, partly as a result of the bedroom tax. Does he accept that the bedroom tax pushes people who are in cheaper social housing into more expensive private housing, which results in a greater call on the housing benefit bill?

Sir Tony Baldry: The hon. Lady is missing the point I seek to make, which is that the Labour Government, whom she supported, introduced almost identical provisions for tenants in the private rented sector, and there seems to be no reason why tenants in the private rented sector should be treated differently from social housing tenants.

Mr Nuttall: My right hon. Friend makes a compelling case. Does he agree that the measures the Government are taking to stimulate housing supply, and the increase in the housing supply, will help to keep private rented sector rents in check, notwithstanding the fact that more people might seek smaller accommodation within the private rented sector?

Sir Tony Baldry: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I suspect other hon. Members will enlarge upon the fact that, under Governments of both parties, new social housing has tended to be a planning windfall gain from new house building. Under the Labour Government, very little new housing was built. In Banbury and Bicester and throughout my constituency, more new housing is going up—as a consequence, new social housing is going up—than for a very long time. He is correct that that leads to new social tenancies.

Mr Raynsford: The right hon. Gentleman should bear in mind the fact that the average number of homes built per year during the lifetime of the Labour Government was 145,000. The lowest number in any one year was 124,000. The current Government have not completed 124,000 homes in any single year they have been in office, so it is simply not true that more housing is being built than was built under the previous Government.

Sir Tony Baldry: The right hon. Gentleman is a little selective in his use of figures. The previous Government were in office for 13 years, and had they not built houses in all those years, we would have been in serious difficulty. As a consequence of the economic mess they got the country into, during their final years in office and during the early part of the recession—the hangover of the recession overlapped with our being elected—the construction industry was in dire straits. I am glad to say that, wherever I go in my patch, I see signs saying “Bricklayers wanted” outside building sites. The construction industry tells me that it finds it very difficult to get the people with the skills it needs because the building boom, with new housing going up, is running apace, thanks largely to the policies pursued by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in turning the economy around.

I should get back to the central point to which I wish to draw the House’s attention. The experience of the pathfinder areas of the local housing allowance led to the previous Government legislating for a national roll-out from 7 April 2008. The local housing allowance measure was contained in the Welfare Reform Act 2007 and associated regulations.

Sheila Gilmore: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Tony Baldry: I am sure the hon. Lady will have the opportunity to make her own speech in her own time.

Local housing allowance was rolled out nationally for new claimants in the deregulated private sector from 7 April 2008. The Library note makes it clear that local housing allowance

“is paid at the standard rate to the tenant based on the size of the accommodation they are deemed to need, e.g. a couple with no children would receive the LHA based on a one-bedroom property.”

I suspect that that is exactly the same provision as now applies to tenants in social housing.

Dame Angela Watkinson (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the other side of the coin of the spare room subsidy is that it addresses not only under-occupancy, but over-occupancy? It allows families previously overcrowded in unsuitable accommodation to move into larger properties vacated by families previously over-provided for.

Sir Tony Baldry: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point.

So much did the Labour Government think their policy would work that they were going to allow tenants to retain up to £15 a week in surplus benefit, if they could make sufficient savings on their rent. We might not remember it now, however, but as part of the 2009 Budget, they announced that the local housing allowance would be amended from April 2010 to remove that provision:

“The Local Housing Allowance...was introduced in April 2008, and costs have exceeded the planned expenditure for this policy. To bring the cost into line with what is affordable, whilst still ensuring all recipients can afford their rent, the Budget announces that from April 2010 there will no longer be scope for anyone to receive more LHA than they have to pay in rent. Existing claimants will move onto the new arrangements on the anniversary of their claim.”

That makes it absolutely clear that the last Labour Government introduced these changes in housing benefit for tenants in the private rented sector entirely, solely and totally to save money and reduce the housing benefit bill.

The effect of the proposal was summarised thus:

“All new customers claiming Housing Benefit in the deregulated private sector on or after 5 April 2010 would not be entitled to any excess benefit over their contractual rent...Existing customers, including those in the former LHA Pathfinder areas, who are currently entitled to an excess payment of up to £15, would see a reduction in their benefit when their claims are reviewed, usually on the anniversary date of their claim.”

Contrary to the blandishments of the hon. Member for Rhondda, that change was retrospective. A lot of people who thought they would be better off by £15 a week suddenly discovered, as a consequence of that Budget, that that money had been taken away from them.

Yvonne Fovargue: The right hon. Gentleman described this system as almost identical to the local housing allowance, but as he himself pointed out, the LHA is a median figure. In Wigan, therefore, somebody moving out of a three-bedroom local authority property can find a three-bedroom, non-social housing, private rented property at the median rent, while still being paid £10 a week more and receiving housing benefit. They could move out of and leave vacant a three-bedroom social housing property, but still have a three-bedroom property even though they only have one child.

Sir Tony Baldry: The hon. Lady and other Labour Members are refusing to acknowledge some fundamental points about the Bill. She voted for the welfare cap and the Minister has said that the Bill would cost the Treasury £1 billion. If it were passed, therefore, and if, by any mischance, a Labour Government were to be elected next spring, they would have to find £1 billion of savings elsewhere in the welfare budget. If Labour votes in support of the Bill, it will behove Labour Front-Bench team, given that the Labour party is governed by collective responsibility just as much as the Government are, to tell the House and the country exactly where they would find £1 billion of savings elsewhere in the welfare budget to compensate for the cost of the Bill.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mr Iain Duncan Smith): For clarification, all the figures were adjudicated by the independent Office for Budget

[Mr Iain Duncan Smith]

Responsibility, not the Government. The Opposition and the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George), who is promoting the Bill, have said they want the figures checked, but the OBR is an independent body and therefore the figures stand and include all the costs and savings.

Sir Tony Baldry: I am sure the whole House is grateful to my right hon. Friend for that clarification and confirmation.

I thought it would be interesting to go back and read the Committee proceedings of the Welfare Reform Bill in 2006. Hon. Members might not recall, but, interestingly, when the proposal for limiting housing benefit for those in the private rented sector was first mooted, the original consultation paper also consulted on a proposal to limit housing benefit for those in social housing on exactly the same basis. Nowhere on Second Reading or in Committee did the right hon. Member for Stirling (Mrs McGuire), the then Minister, ever explain to the House or the Committee why the then Labour Government decided only to focus the housing benefit changes on the private rented sector and not to include social housing.

In Committee, various hon. Members sought to make exactly the same proposals and changes as are being proposed today. For example, Members were keen to know whether alterations could be made for under-25s in the private rented sector, and the Minister said that the changes were

“part of a package that is intended to make housing benefit more transparent and more understandable to people...I hark back to our short debate on Tuesday evening: the new local housing allowance applies only to those in the private rented sector.”—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 2 November 2006; c. 424-5.]

In other words, the changes were being introduced entirely because the last Government thought it necessary to save money.

Mr Harper: Perhaps I can help my right hon. Friend. In 2004, my hon. Friend the Member for The Cotswolds (Geoffrey Clifton-Brown) asked the then Minister, the late Malcolm Wicks,

“for what reasons the local housing allowance applies only to the de-regulated private sector.”

The then Minister replied:

“We hope to implement a flat rate housing benefit system in the social sector, similar to that anticipated in the private rented sector...We aim to extend our reforms to the social rented sector as soon as rent restructuring and increased choice have created an improved market.”—[*Official Report*, 19 January 2004; Vol. 416, c. 1075W.]

It is clear, despite all we hear from the Opposition, that the last Labour Government intended to do exactly the same thing.

Sir Tony Baldry: It is clear they had exactly the same intentions.

In the final debate in Committee on the revisions of the local housing allowance, when asked to make amendments similar to those being invited in the Bill, the Minister said:

“I reassure the Committee that we already have powers to make different provisions for different classes of people...However...adding the qualification suggested by the amendment to the local housing allowance would undermine its main advantages of

simplicity, transparency and fairness....As I said during a debate on a previous amendment, the discretionary housing payment scheme is also in place. That flexible system will enable the local authority to target help to those who most need it.”—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 2 November 2006; c. 434-5.]

May I suggest that this Government’s discretionary payment scheme for tenants in the social housing sector is exactly the same? Indeed, those comments could have been made by a Minister in this Government in exactly the same way as suggested by the amendments and reforms proposed for changing housing benefit for tenants in the social housing sector.

I conclude by saying that this Parliament has to be grown up about the issues. If the House introduces a cap by an overwhelming majority, we cannot gaily come along, turn up on a Friday in September and seek to spend £1 billion of public money without making it clear to the House and to the country where the consequential savings are to be made elsewhere in the welfare budget. This will happen whether it be under this Government or any other Government. It behoves the Labour party, Labour Front-Bench Members and the shadow Minister when he gets to the Dispatch Box to tell us in terms where he intends those savings to be made. If he cannot do that, it would be irresponsible to support the Bill in the Lobby today. There is no justification for a Labour party and a Labour Government who introduced reforms and changes to housing benefit for those in the private rented sector to think that tenants in the social housing sector should be treated any differently.

11.11 am

Mr David Anderson (Blaydon) (Lab): We are supposedly here today because of the impact of the interim evaluation reports. As I said in an intervention on the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) who proposed the Bill, there is lots of evidence to suggest that we would end up exactly where we have. Hon. Members need not take it from people like me, who are completely opposed to the proposal on ideological grounds; they can take it from people such as the Chartered Institute of Housing, which said in 2011:

“Tens of thousands of households will be hit hard in the pocket or even be completely priced out of the communities where they are currently living and working. And all this is without consideration of the overall effect these changes will have when combined with significant cuts and changes to funding”.

It went on to say that what we could expect movement of low-income tenants from more expensive rental market areas to cheaper ones; households struggling to access private rented accommodation; increased hardship; a concentration of tenants in receipt of LHA in cheaper, poorer-quality private rented housing; and greater demand on homelessness and housing services.

That was said in April 2011. In February 2012, a study by Cambridge university looked at four specific areas and reached these conclusions a year before the Bill became an Act. The study said that in Sunderland, for example, moving people on the level suggested by the Government would take eight years—it would take that long to get all the one-bedroom houses re-let. It continued:

“Evidence...from groups of local residents and Housing Officers in these...case studies suggests that many households will be pushed into severe financial difficulties by the cuts.”

I am not sure how many of the colleagues of the hon. Member for St Ives who were listening to that were taken in by it. Perhaps they were taken in by the DWP's own impact assessment of February 2011. It asked whether there would be an impact on health and well-being—no; will there be an impact on human rights—no. If that is what they believe, this report has clearly proved it wrong.

For months and years we have been lectured by the Deputy Prime Minister—he has stood at the Dispatch Box to defend this policy—who said that there were 1.8 million spare bedrooms in this country. It is as if he was talking like someone looking after racing pigeons. Pigeons are put in what are called “duckets” in my part of the world; that is where the pigeons go. There we have it—1.8 million bedrooms, let's stick people in there. Is that really happening in this country? If that is not social cleansing, I do not know what is. We are treating as second-class citizens people who have lived a long time in their communities and they might have lived in the same house in the same area for 40 or 50 years. These are people in stable communities who have a sense of place, a sense of belonging, a sense of security.

It was said earlier that the Englishman's home is his castle. Most of these people will not be living in castles, but the same principle applies to them: they should be allowed to live in security in their own homes where they have lived for years. We all know what this is about: it is not about housing issues; it is about the failure of capitalism and who pays for the failed banking system. We know, too, who is not affected. It is not the fiddlers who fixed the LIBOR rate or the spivs selling mortgages to people who could not afford to pay them. It is the landlords who are the real gainers from housing benefit for decades, under both Governments, as they have been able to put up rents at whatever level they can get away with. When it is suggested that perhaps the one way to deal with this and keep the costs down is to apply rent controls, everyone waves their hands in the air to say, “Oh, no, we cannot interfere with the market”. Why not? It is the market that has got people into this situation in the first place, and the people who pay are the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, the disabled and the dispossessed—the people without a voice. We in the House should obey that voice. We are trying to give them a little voice today, and some people are whispering when they should have been shouting while we Opposition Members have tried to help over the past few years, but the Government have ignored not just the voice of politicians, but the voice of people such as Citizens Advice.

My hon. Friend the Member for Makerfield (Yvonne Fovargue) intervened to try to explain the situation from her personal experience over many years of working in the real world with the people affected, but she was brushed aside. The Government have ignored people such as my hon. Friend, ignored the professionals who work in housing offices, ignored people working at the front line, people in local councils and in the trade unions who represent the workers, the Churches, the chartered institutes and especially the people who are living in and are affected by this situation. Some Members have ignored all those people; we are now trying to redeem the situation.

Is this debate really about putting things right? I would like to think it was, but the cynic inside me says that it is much more about some people trying to

survive the next general election or might be about some people trying to write the headline for their next newsletter or about trying to rewrite history in the hope that people will forget what has happened here over the last four years. I shall support the Bill and anything we can do to alleviate the suffering that some people are going through, but I will not do that to give any succour to people who should have known better, did know better, but ignored the reality four and five years ago when they pushed these measures through this House.

11.16 pm

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I want to say a few words in support of my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives (Andrew George) and his Bill. He has proudly put forward not just a single-headed, but a double-headed proposal today. We are talking about not only how to tackle some of the injustices and unfairnesses surrounding the spare room subsidy, but how look to the creation of more affordable housing and provide greater levels of stock across the country.

It is important to recognise that over the last few years we have acknowledged and seen an explosion in the housing benefit bill. That happened for a variety of reasons, but principally because of the rise in the cost of housing. While the Opposition when in government introduced the abolition of the spare room subsidy for the private rented sector, the coalition parties did so for the social rented sector. We understand the reasoning behind it, but we recognise, too, that the burden has fallen on some of the people least able to cope with the cost. We have not collectively, as either a Parliament or a country, tackled the real problem, which is of course the fact that there are simply not enough social rented homes and not enough homes generally.

I am proud of my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives for bringing this Bill forward, and I am proud of my party for pushing us all collectively to reflect on the proposals before us today. I would like to mention Vikki Slade and Julie Pörksen, who proposed at our conference a year ago that we look again at this policy. Frankly, Members of all parties would do well to admit that, on reflection, things could have been done better. Given that we were put in this economic crisis in the first place, it would be lovely to see from Opposition Members a change of heart and an admission that things did not go as well as they could have done.

Many people will be talking about the spare room subsidy today, and they are right to do so, but the second part of my hon. Friend's Bill is equally important. The fact is that in 1981, the average deposit for a first-time buyer was 12% of the average income. Today, it is 83%, and nearly 3 million people aged between 18 and 30 are living with their parents, which is likely to go up by another 25% over the next five or six years. We have the lowest levels of home ownership in over a quarter of a century, and if we look at our social rented stock across the country, we see that it has been decimated over 30 years through “right to buy” with no compulsion to replace the properties in any meaningful way.

Ian Swales (Redcar) (LD): Does my hon. Friend agree that the record of the previous Government, which saw 420,000 social houses disappear from the stock, was truly shameful?

Tim Farron: Absolutely; it was truly shameful. Governments would have to try really hard—as the previous one did—to build fewer social rented properties than Baroness Thatcher. That is quite an achievement, and one they should be thoroughly ashamed of. The current Government have not built enough social rented houses. They are, however, the first Government in over 30 years to have seen any net rise in the number of social rented properties at all.

Neil Carmichael (Stroud) (Con): The key issue in this whole question is the supply of social housing. Does my hon. Friend therefore agree that the real issue here is the Localism Act, neighbourhood planning, the need to encourage local authorities to build the right kind of houses in the right places, and that social housing is obviously the priority?

Tim Farron: Absolutely. The reality is homes need to be built from a variety of different sources. If we believe all the statistics—and I am convinced by the evidence put forward by Shelter, the National Housing Federation and others—that show we need something in the region of 300,000 new homes a year, the bulk of which need to be affordable, and if we realise that at the height of the property boom in the 1990s the private sector was building less than 200,000 a year, we realise that this is not just about allowing the market to provide that supply. That is absolutely part of the answer, but we need to allow housing associations and local authorities, as well as private developers, off the leash. We need to allow, for example, housing associations to borrow against the full value of their stock, so they have got access to proper equity, to give them the freedom to make use of all the Government finance initiatives, not just the ones covering existing schemes. If we do not do that, we will continue to have generation after generation that cannot afford to buy their own home.

Politicians, frankly, have been too over the last two generations to build the homes that our people, particularly our younger people, need. This situation is not their fault: our younger people are working just as hard, if not harder, than they ever did before. However, they cannot afford a home, including in the rented sector very often, because of our collective failure to deliver the homes they deserve.

The top end of that renting generation is now well into their 40s. The notion that this is a non-voting, non-interested demographic has gone. Politicians have often been too spineless because of the demographic of people. Those who are comfortable are older, more settled and they were, by definition, more likely to vote. Those who are not in that position were by definition less likely to vote. That is changing, and that generation is crying out for people who will step up to the plate and argue their case. Britain's future depends on being able to house our young people—all our people—in an affordable and decent way.

I commend the Bill of my right hon. Friend, or rather my hon. Friend the Member for St Ives to this House. *[Interruption.]* Indeed, and he would deserve it. I commend my hon. Friend's proposals on the improvements to the spare room subsidy and his recommendations for tackling the critical lack of affordable housing in this country. I think of my constituency up in the lakes and the dales in south Cumbria where the average house price is

11 times higher than the average wage. We are losing a quarter of our young people, who move out of the area and never come back because they cannot afford to put down roots. My area is very like my hon. Friend's and many other colleagues' here today: how important it is that we make sure our communities remain multigenerational and we keep our talent and do not force our young people into another generation of poverty and housing need.

Housing supply is the issue, and it will not be tackled unless we allow housing associations to build the houses they can and they desperately want to, and unless we invest in garden cities, and unless we tackle—my right hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Sir Tony Baldry) referred to this—the critical lack of housing and building skills and labour necessary to build those houses. The Government's apprenticeship programme is an important step in the right direction, but without the skills, we will not be able to build the houses.

What I want us to see in politics is the ambition that Government can change things. In the face of a critical crisis such as the housing crisis and the lack of supply, it should not be a case of washing our hands and letting the market deliver, or praying that it might; it should be about rolling up our sleeves and making sure it does. My hon. Friend's Bill is an important step in that direction.

11.24 pm

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) on bringing forward the Bill and on managing to get the Government to disband their collective responsibility. I agree with virtually everything he said in his speech, and, indeed, in the e-mail he sent all of us last week, which I shall refer to later. I also agree with everything the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) said, not least about access to the housing market and there being a generation of young people for whom it is almost impossible to conceive of buying a house or having access to private rented properties, which are considerably more expensive than those in the social housing sector. Incidentally, I also agree with what he said about the right to buy. Many people forget that the first council to introduce that was a Labour council in Newport in south Wales, but the key difference was that Newport was determined to match every house that was sold with a new one that was built. To my mind the great destruction of social housing over the last 35 years, introduced by Mrs Thatcher, was that when she introduced the right to buy, she refused to allow local authorities to rebuild, and that is one of the central problems that, in the end, this generation of politicians is having to deal with and the generation of politicians a decade ago had to deal with, too.

Paul Farrelly (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Lab): This Bill is supported across the parties, including by the very honourable Member for Stafford (Jeremy Lefroy), a near constituency neighbour of mine. Does that not show that this is not a partisan debate, and that feeling runs across the political spectrum against this unfair and discriminatory tax?

Chris Bryant: I think that most of my speech is going to be fairly partisan, so I am not sure I can entirely agree with my hon. Friend on that.

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

Chris Bryant: The hon. Member for the 16th century wants to intervene.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, and it is always a pleasure to listen to his speeches, but in his criticism of Margaret Thatcher is he saying that he regrets the fact that millions of people were able to buy their own houses and be property owners, which is surely a great thing that the Conservatives achieved?

Chris Bryant: The hon. Gentleman should listen more carefully to my speeches. I was always in favour of the right to buy scheme and enabling people to buy, and live in, their home—an Englishman's home is his castle and all of that kind of stuff, and that applies equally to Scots, Welsh and Irish—but local authorities were not allowed to replace that housing stock with social housing, and we set ourselves a long-term economic problem from which we have still to recover. If the hon. Gentleman wants to have another go and attack me by saying the Labour Government did not do enough when we were in power, he is absolutely right: we did not, and we acknowledge that, which is why one of our key commitments is to guarantee that by the end of a Labour Government in 2020—by that general election—we will be building 200,000 properties in the United Kingdom.

Mr David Ward (Bradford East) (LD) *rose*—

Chris Bryant: If the hon. Gentleman does not mind, I will make a little progress.

The bedroom tax was ill prepared and it has been very poorly implemented by the Government. It is riddled with logical inconsistencies—as we have heard several times already today—and it has a central injustice at its very heart: the poor and the vulnerable are being made to pay for a recession that was caused by irresponsible lending not by them but by the wealthy in the City of London and in other countries around the world.

Some Government policies introduced since 2010 have been incompetent, and others, I believe, have been unfair, but this one manages to combine unfairness and incompetence to a phenomenal degree—quite a feat—and I am delighted that not only the two hon. Members from the Liberal party who have already spoken will be joining us in supporting that conclusion today, but that, I hope, all the other Liberal Democrat Members will do so as well. What particularly galls me and many on the Opposition Benches is that this was not only predictable but was predicted by countless Members of this House and by countless organisations—the National Housing Federation, the Local Government Association, local authorities up and down the land, individuals coming forward to newspapers—yet all the warnings were completely ignored.

I am sure the Conservative Minister will tell us that the aim of the bedroom tax is solely to end overcrowding in the social housing sector—the hon. Member for Hornchurch and Upminster (Dame Angela Watkinson) was, I think, trying to suggest that earlier. The declared aim was to force the nation to use the social housing stock more efficiently. I am sorry, but I simply distrust Conservatives talking about the social housing sector.

We now have the lowest number of social housing completions in 20 years. I have already talked about the way in which the right to buy was implemented. In 2010, one of the first things this Government did was to slash the affordable housing budget by 60%. How on earth can people make an argument in favour of social housing when they have just slashed its budget by 60%?

From the outset, the Government knew that the vast majority of people would not be able to move into smaller accommodation—not because they did not want to move, but simply because there were no other suitable properties. Indeed, such is the cynicism of this Government that that was factored into the original financial assumptions that they made. They did not presume that 75% of the people affected by the bedroom tax would move, or 50% or even 20%. Their working assumption was that fewer than one in 10 families affected would be able to move to a suitable property, yet they went ahead with their retrospective change to a benefit that goes to hundreds of thousands of people who are in work. That is another element that galls me. So often, the rhetoric—from Conservative Ministers in particular—has suggested that this is all about the workshy, but actually a great many people in receipt of housing benefit are in work. It is the matching of housing benefit and work that makes work pay and makes it possible for those people to work.

The Government's own evaluation, published this July, makes really depressing reading on this very point. Just 4.5% of those affected by the bedroom tax moved within six months. In the areas with the fewest people affected, a higher percentage—some 16%—moved, but in some areas, the numbers were even lower. The Secretary of State seems to think that that represents a great success, but I disagree. It points to the real problem, which is that there simply are not enough suitable smaller properties to move into, and that the areas with the highest number of people affected have the fewest properties for them to move into. In other words, the poorest communities in this country are the worst hit, through absolutely no fault of their own. That means that, at a time of real financial hardship, money is being deliberately siphoned off from the poor at the rate of £14 or £22 a week.

Ian Swales: The hon. Gentleman represents a community similar to mine. Is he aware that this policy has created a new form of housing blight, in which we have three-bedroom properties boarded up while people requiring one-bedroom and two-bedroom properties are on the waiting list?

Chris Bryant: Notwithstanding the hon. Gentleman's voting record in Committee, he is absolutely right on that point.

Another problem has arisen. For years, in order to tackle antisocial behaviour, local authorities and social landlords have often tried to limit the number of young families in a development. They can no longer make that judgment and the consequence has been a new rise in antisocial behaviour in areas where there are now too many young families, all because of the bedroom tax.

The National Housing Federation made it absolutely clear last year that there simply were not enough houses for people to move to. I do not know why Ministers and other Conservative Members do not understand that.

[Chris Bryant]

In the north of England, families with a spare room outnumber overcrowded families by three to one. In other words, we would have to move thousands of families thousands of miles across the United Kingdom if the aim of using the housing stock more efficiently, as the hon. Member for Hornchurch and Upminster suggested, were to be met by this policy.

Dame Angela Watkinson: Would the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that people in work who are just above the threshold and therefore not entitled to any benefits have to choose to live in an area and a size of property that they can afford? Is it not only fair that people in receipt of taxpayer-funded benefit should have to make those same decisions?

Chris Bryant: That is true. Many people who are in that situation are in socially affordable housing, some of which is local authority or former local authority accommodation. However, I do not see how that militates against the fundamental problem that although there might be plenty of housing for people to move to in Conservative seats in some parts of the south-east, there simply is not enough in the areas where the greatest number of people are affected by the bedroom tax. So unless the hon. Lady wants to move thousands of people from the north of England into constituencies such as hers, there will continue to be a problem.

What are the wider effects of the policy? We already know that, notwithstanding the Prime Minister's original announcement that the disabled would not be affected by it, two thirds of those affected have a disability of some kind. Nurses, members of the armed forces and families with sons or daughters in the armed forces have also been affected.

There is also clear evidence that countless families are cutting back on household essentials or running up debts. The Government's own evaluation—not an evaluation made up by anyone else—states that 50% of claimants reported cutting back on what they deemed to be household essentials in order to pay the bedroom tax. More than a quarter of claimants—26%—said that they had borrowed money to pay it, mostly from family and friends, while 3% had borrowed money on a credit card, 3% had taken out payday loans, 10% had used savings and 9% had been given money from other members of their family. That is a devastating record. It shows the poverty into which the Government seem deliberately to be pushing people.

Six out of 10 households affected by the bedroom tax are now in arrears. At the moment, social landlords have decided to hold off from evicting such tenants, but there will come a point at which they will have to make the difficult decision whether to allow the situation to continue or to remove those people.

Mr Ward: There is also a knock-on effect, in that the increase in arrears leads to an increase in the cost of borrowing for social housing providers, and the composition of housing stock differs from area to area. In some areas where families were unwilling to move into blocks of flats, many of the flats remained empty. Single people were then encouraged to move into the empty flats, but following the introduction of this policy were told that

they would have to pay extra money to stay there. They were encouraged to move into them, but then found themselves at a disadvantage.

Chris Bryant: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. I do not need to reiterate it, except to say that that is why I find the retrospective element of the policy's application to be one of its cruellest aspects.

Simon Kirby (Brighton, Kemptown) (Con): The hon. Gentleman talks about difficult decisions. Did he vote for the benefits cap and, if so, what other benefits that affect my constituents is he planning to cut?

Chris Bryant: Of course we voted for the overall benefits cap. I want to cut the cost of welfare in this country, but the best way of doing that is to ensure that the minimum wage and wages in general catch up with inflation. However, we have had inflation ahead of wages for every month except one since this Government came to power in 2010, which is making that a darn sight more difficult to achieve.

Mr Harper: As usual, the hon. Gentleman is making a speech that is very rhetorical but rather short on facts. The rate for overall rent collection by housing associations is 98%. Rent arrears for housing associations have actually fallen, rather than go up, for two quarters in a row between September last year and March this year. On the latest data, they are still lower than they were last September. So they have not gone up, as was suggested. Homelessness is down, arrears are down and rent collection is at 98%, so what he is saying is simply not true.

Chris Bryant: To be honest, I am always a bit dubious about this particular Minister's use of statistics. I remember the days when he boldly stood at the Dispatch Box as immigration Minister and told us that we did not have to worry about net migration because it was falling dramatically, and that we would be able to see that when the figures were placed in the public domain. I think it was last Thursday when we were shown that net migration had risen by 38%. Admittedly, he had stopped being immigration Minister by then, but—[*Interruption.*] The truth is that, according to the Government's own evaluation, one in five people affected are in arrears because they have not yet been able to pay any of their bedroom tax, and that another 29% have not been able to pay all of it. So the honest truth is that one in four of the people in social housing are in arrears. That is a long-term problem that will undermine the whole of the social housing sector.

Steve Rotheram (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way, and I apologise to the House for my late arrival this morning, which was due to the west coast main line train service. He just mentioned arrears. I can guarantee that such arrears have increased in my constituency and many others, and that that is having a detrimental effect on the health of the people involved. Mental health issues in Walton have gone up exponentially. Does he agree that that is one of the unforeseen disgraces of this pernicious tax?

Chris Bryant: I would agree with my hon. Friend, except for his use of the word "unforeseen", as this was completely foreseeable and indeed completely foreseen by every organisation in the land, apart from the

Government. I sometimes think to myself that blindness is one thing but wilful blindness in politics is disgraceful beyond measure, and that is what has been shown on this.

John Hemming (Birmingham, Yardley) (LD) *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I want to make a bit more progress, because I know that lots of people want to speak. I hope the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

The Government will no doubt argue that they have made allowances for such instances of hardship as have been mentioned in the debate through the discretionary housing payments, but those have been fraught with problems. I gently suggest that the clue is in the word “discretionary”; one local authority may hold back, either at the beginning of the year or throughout the year, because they do not know what demand there will be, whereas another authority, possibly a neighbouring one, will open its hands far more swiftly. So two families divided by a local authority boundary will have had completely different results when they have made claims, and that is for those who know about the right to make a claim. The situation has not been helped by the completely uneven allocation of cash. Redcar and Cleveland’s authority received £400,000 for 2,313 applications, which works out at £181 each, whereas Tory Wandsworth council—surprise, surprise—received £1.83 million to divvy up between fewer applications, just 1,629, which works out at £1,129 each. When the Government are being incompetent, they could at least be incompetent in a fair way.

Another element of discretion is involved in all this. The total funding made available for 2014-15 under the discretionary housing payments was £165 million, and the original allocation for 2013-14 was £155 million, which was then increased to £180 million. But local authorities are permitted to contribute two and a half times the Government contribution to this, so in 2013-14, 85 English local authorities, 15 Welsh local authorities and 27 Scottish local authorities felt that the problem was so severe in their area that they had to spend more than the contribution provided by the Department for Work and Pensions. That works out as a third of all local authorities across the United Kingdom, 55% of authorities in Wales and 84% of those in Scotland. So, yet again, the poorest local authorities in the land are forced to rob Peter to allow Paul to pay Iain. Local authorities have therefore had to close libraries and swimming pools, and cut services—those have all been slashed to pay for a Conservative ideology-driven policy.

The Government’s evaluation highlighted a range of other problems. It said:

“local authorities struggle to make long-term plans for this resource”.

It made criticisms, saying:

“There was some variation in who was assisted, even within a local authority”.

It also talked about:

“Uncertainties around both future demand and the size/availability of the fund”.

That did not help, not least because

“the 2014-15 allocation was only announced in January 2014”.

In addition, many have pointed out that disabled people in adapted homes have not always been awarded discretionary housing payments because disability benefits,

which are intended to help with some of the extra costs of having a long-term disability or health condition, can cause them to fail means tests based on their income.

Annette Brooke (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (LD): The hon. Gentleman rightly reminds us of the human side of all this. Sadly, I have to tell hon. Members that a severely disabled constituent of mine committed suicide having been turned down for her discretionary housing benefit. I believe we would have won the appeal, with everybody supporting it, but unfortunately that was the last straw in her life.

Chris Bryant: The right hon. Lady makes a very fair point, and I suspect that many Labour Members, if not Members around the House, can cite distressing cases where people, particularly those with mental health problems—they are expressly referred to in the Government’s evaluation—have not known how to make an original claim for discretionary housing payment, do not understand the rules and have been very much left out in the cold. Her constituent is not the only one who has taken their own life because of this.

John Hemming: Does the shadow Minister agree that because substantially what the Bill does is formalise what is currently mainly paid through discretionary housing payments, there will not be any substantial additional cost as a result of it?

Chris Bryant: Those are the kinds of issues we need to discuss in Committee. However, as I said earlier, I am profoundly distrustful about this, as one thing I have learnt in my time in the House is that when a Minister stands at the Dispatch Box when the debate is already going on and says that something is going to cost £1 billion, the figure has normally been invented the night before when someone was desperate to come up with something. The figure is suspiciously round.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Chris Bryant: If hon. Members do not mind, I am going to move on because I am sure they will want to make contributions of their own.

I have referred to some of the elements of the unfairness, but the incompetence in how the policy has been advanced has also angered many of us. I am talking not only about the dodgy statistics, but the fact that, as the hon. Member for St Ives said, the original savings figure of £490 million has been downgraded and downgraded. It has been questioned by the National Housing Federation, the National Audit Office and a range of different bodies, and in some areas it is pretty uncertain that any saving will be made at all. Of course there was also the loophole. So, again, when the Minister stands up to tell us a decided figure of £1 billion, I merely say to him that he does not even know how many people were affected by the loophole. He does not even know how much that has cost, and that has already come into operation. So I do not understand how he can make wild accusations about the cost of the Bill on the basis of a calculation done on the back of a fag packet.

Other elements of the incompetence of the policy have already been referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Mr Raynsford). Many people are being forced out of properties that

[Chris Bryant]

have been specifically adapted for them in order to go to smaller properties, which end up being more expensive because they are in the private sector or more expensive in the social sector because the local authority has to re-adapt another property. Adaptations that were made specifically for one person are not necessarily right for another person, so we see a waste of time, energy and money.

Alison Seabeck (Plymouth, Moor View) (Lab): I wholly agree with what my hon. Friend says. I introduced a ten-minute rule Bill in the previous Session which exactly highlighted the costs for domestic violence victims and the adaptations to their homes, and it simply does not make good financial sense not to have these exemptions.

Chris Bryant: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about that. The hon. Member for St Ives also made the point about people in work who are in receipt of housing benefit, because the number of hours does not add up for them. There is a real danger that if they are forced to move to properties that are not easily accessible from their work, are too far away or where no family support network is in place, they simply will not be able to stay in work. We, thus, end up shoving up the welfare bill rather than tackling the real problems in welfare. That is far from an invented problem; it is a very real problem, which I suspect many hon. Members will have encountered. Constituents, especially single parents, will have come to them saying, "I have a job. It is close to where I live. It means I can turn up when there is an emergency at school. All those problems are solved. But if I have to move to a property 5, 10 or 20 miles away, I simply will not be able to stay in work." That is the kind of problem the Government are coming up against.

Dame Angela Watkinson *rose*—

Stephen Pound *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I cannot remember whether I gave way to the hon. Lady earlier, but she is so appealing—

Stephen Pound: I am right behind you, Chris.

Chris Bryant: I am not asking you! I give way to the hon. Lady.

Dame Angela Watkinson: I am most grateful. I am very pleased to report that I have not had one complaint from a constituent with a disability who has been asked to move property, and I have great confidence in my local authority. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that an adaptation to a property could range from a handrail going up to the front door for somebody who needs to get up some steps, which would not affect their need for a spare bedroom, to major adaptations such as having widened doorways to accommodate a wheelchair, hoists and stairlifts? So, for that reason, it is right that this should be a discretionary matter and not a statutory one.

Chris Bryant: I cannot explain why the hon. Lady has not had constituents come to her about the matter. Perhaps it is because of her voting record on the bedroom

tax. Constituents may feel that they would not get as warm a hearing from her as they might from someone else. I am sure that she is a very good constituency MP. Perhaps it is because the needs in her constituency are rather different from those in other constituencies. But let me say gently to her that I know from talking to my Labour colleagues, a number of Liberal Democrats and Members of other minority parties that the number of people who have come to our constituency surgeries or who have got in touch by phone or e-mail about the bedroom tax and other issues is very high. Many of those are people who are disabled and who have adaptations. In fact, a large proportion involves people who have friends and family in the armed forces.

Sheryll Murray *rose*—

Stephen Pound: *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I will not give way to the hon. Lady because I hope to get to the end of my speech very soon. Notwithstanding that, I feel that I must give way to my hon. Friend.

Stephen Pound: I am overcome by my hon. Friend's generosity and tolerance. The previous intervention referred to handrails. My brother's case is very different. He has a separate room that has been supplied with a different water supply for his dialysis. Does my hon. Friend not agree that the real cruelty of the discretionary regime is that it is precisely that—discretionary. It is not good enough to say that money has been allocated for the next financial year, because the principle remains in place. The anxiety of those people who live in adapted properties and who can only see that sword of Damocles hanging over their heads is one of the cruellest and most brutal aspects of this incompetent legislation.

Chris Bryant: I should have trusted my hon. Friend all along. He is absolutely right. I visited a man in Birmingham who was in a situation similar to that described by my hon. Friend. In my constituency, I have had several people who have required a second room for dialysis equipment. There is a wide range of situations out there. For example, one partner in a couple may have a disability which means that they are not able to sleep in the same bed and the same room. Those people on an annual basis have to go through the whole business of explaining again to their local authority, civil servants and council officials why they are not sleeping in the same room. That is degrading and unfair. It makes it seem as if this is an act of charity by Government, whereas in fact the way in which this legislation has been drafted is exactly the opposite of charity. As my hon. Friend said, the word discretionary is one of the cruellest elements of the whole thing.

Tessa Munt (Wells) (LD): *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I will give way to the hon. Lady, and that will be the last intervention that I take.

Tessa Munt: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Let me pick up on the point that he made. There is no automatic exclusion for people who have to sleep in separate bedrooms for medical reasons. I have had an ongoing correspondence with the Minister for welfare reform. He said that disabled adults are "able to exercise a greater degree of choice"

than children, and can

“enter into living arrangements knowing that they may have to compromise their individual needs.”

I do not understand how it can possibly be the case that these sorts of couples either have to take in a tenant in the bedroom that is not spare or that they should separate in order to have their accommodation needs met. That is just absurd.

Chris Bryant: I am glad that I gave way to the hon. Lady, because she made a very fair point. In all honesty, if I were to take any single one of the Conservative Members of the House who will vote against this Bill today to meet any of the kind of constituents that we are talking about, their hearts would be changed. That is why I hope that, in the end, we will be able to get rid of the bedroom tax in its entirety. We will support the Bill today. I congratulate the hon. Member for St Ives on bringing it forward, but in the end I want to scrap the bedroom tax, and that is what a Labour Government will do if we are elected. If this Bill is allowed to go to Committee, I hope that the hon. Lady and others will support amendments that strengthen the move in that direction, rather than amendments that might pull us in a different direction.

Mr Harper *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I have already said that I will not give way again. The hon. Gentleman will get a whole speech—*[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State has made many allegations in his life. I have hardly ever heard him substantiate a single one. If there was ever an example of someone who is involved in policy-based evidence making, that person is sitting right there now. He is a man who has invented evidence to back up a policy without any facts to back it up, so I will not give way.

Mr Harper *rose*—

Chris Bryant: No, I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman gets to make a speech later.

In an e-mail to me, and I suspect to many others as well, the hon. Member for St Ives said:

“This is a compromise on what I had hoped to bring forward at this stage, which would have been to abolish the Bedroom Tax altogether.”

I am not sure with whom he is compromising. Obviously, it is not with the Conservatives: they are on a three-line Whip to vote him down. I suppose it must be with those on the Liberal Democrat Front Bench. Perhaps it is with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury or the Pensions Minister, who was one of the stoutest defenders of the bedroom tax and saw off all amendments in Committee, including the amendments that will now be brought forward today.

Andrew George: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Chris Bryant: Having refused to give way to the Minister—oh, go on then.

Andrew George: I am grateful to the shadow Minister for giving way. The compromise was in relation to the Bill that I had previously proposed, which included measures to put caps on second homes, but that was

opposed by Labour. What I seek to do is to help people who are unfairly affected by this legislation. This is a reasonable measure on which the House can unite. Yes, it is a compromise, but that is because I want to get something through that helps people.

Chris Bryant: And so do I, but I think the hon. Gentleman also wants to scrap the tax as well. Or has he reneged on the position in his e-mail. He sent me an e-mail, and I thought that it was a personal one, so I am taking him at his word.

Mr Harper *rose*—

Chris Bryant: I am being very soft, because the Minister is smiling at me in a cheeky little way. Go on, then.

Mr Harper: Given that the shadow Minister took an intervention from the hon. Member for St Ives, he should take one from me. I thank him for giving way. The shadow Minister made a serious allegation that somehow we cooked up the allocation of discretionary housing payments on some sort of party political basis—based on the control of local authorities. I just want to make it clear that the allocations in 2014-15 were based on local housing allowance, removal of the spare room subsidy, the benefit cap and then there is the underlying £20 million a year that is not related to welfare reform. Each element is based on the affected caseload in each local authority area and on the average loss. The reason why there may be higher amounts in London is that London borough rents for social housing are higher on average, and the benefit cap losses are greater. That is the reason. It is nothing to do with the party political control of the local authority, and I hope that he withdraws that appalling allegation.

Chris Bryant: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I have heard it all before.

Let us go back to the Liberal Democrats. There is of course more rejoicing in heaven when one sinner, or one party, repenteth—*[Interruption.]* I am not talking about the hon. Members for St Ives or for Westmorland and Lonsdale because they are slightly saintly in this regard. I hope that we will see an act of mass repentance led by the Liberal Democrat Chief Whip today, including the Pensions Minister, who declared in Committee that all the exemptions we are considering today were “absurd”, the hon. Member for Cardiff Central (Jenny Willott), who is now a Whip, the hon. Member for Redcar (Ian Swales) who, despite making charming speeches in Committee, voted against the exemptions, and the whole bang shoot of them who voted for the tax, voted against amendments and voted against our Opposition day motions on 13 November 2013 in this House and in the Lords. I love them all and I am delighted to hope that they will all vote with us—or rather that we will vote with them—en masse later.

The bedroom tax has pushed the poor further into poverty. I believe that it is at the heart of the malaise of Tory Britain, with millions in arrears, millions relying on food banks, millions having to choose between heating and eating, millions on low wages that have never caught up with inflation and millions on zero-hours contracts desperate to work more hours—two nations if ever there was such a thing. That is why we should scrap

[Chris Bryant]

the bedroom tax. We will vote for this Bill today and we will try to amend it in Committee. If that fails, we, the Labour Government, next year, in May 2015, will scrap the tax.

11.59 am

Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con): I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. I am particularly grateful to the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant), for reminding the House of the great divide between our respective parties on welfare. It was certainly a big issue at the last general election and there were strong feelings in my constituency that the previous Labour Government had allowed spending on welfare to get out of control. The job of this Government has been to try to control it.

I congratulate the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) on coming top in this year's private Members' Bills ballot. Of course, although I say that he came top he was not first—he was, in fact, 20th. The first Member whose name was drawn out of the hat at the ballot was my hon. Friend the Member for Cheltenham (Martin Horwood) so, either way, with the first two Bills in the listing and five out of the first 20 Bills, the party of the hon. Member for St Ives did very well in this year's ballot. The hon. Gentleman said on his website:

“Coming top in the Private Members' Bill ballot is a once in a lifetime opportunity to create new legislation”,

but I am afraid that I must gently remind him that the hon. Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) came top in the ballot twice running earlier in this Parliament, so it can happen. Nevertheless, it is a great opportunity.

The hon. Member for St Ives came up with a rather novel method of determining which measure to introduce. Rather than going with his initial instincts or listening to numerous calls from the various pressure groups that were, I am sure, badgering him to adopt their pet legislative proposals, he effectively sub-contracted the decision to his constituents. On the face of it, that would seem a wise and sensible idea, and I always believe in trusting the people. Unfortunately, I think that in this case he might have drawn the wrong conclusion from his research. As I understand it, he put forward three proposals for consideration: one on health care standards, one—apparently starting a campaign for Cornish independence—for the establishment of an assembly for Cornwall, and the Bill we are considering today. Apparently, 2,000 people commented and indicated their support for one of those three proposals. On 26 June, the hon. Gentleman said on his website:

“By a short margin it has become clear that the proposal for an Affordable Homes Bill was the most popular choice amongst constituents.”

What is not clear from that statement is whether the proposal for an Affordable Homes Bill gained the approval of more than half of the respondents. By virtue of the phrase “a short margin”, I think it is fair to assume that most actually preferred one or the other of the other two ideas so only a minority of the 2,000 were in favour of this Bill. Either way, there can be no doubt that as at the last election there were about 67,000 electors in the St Ives constituency, 65,000 of them did not bother to comment at all or give any opinion on the three proposals.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way and allowing me to interrupt him at an early stage in his remarks. Does it occur to him, as it does to me, that those constituents who went through the consultation process and asked for a Bill on affordable housing would not have thought that a Bill on affordable housing would merely get them a review? That does not seem to be a very active Bill.

Mr Nuttall: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and I was just about to deal with that point.

Philip Davies: My hon. Friend suggested earlier that the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) might have misjudged the mood of his constituents. The hon. Gentleman may also have misjudged the mood of the nation. He obviously had not read the Ipsos MORI opinion poll on this policy, which asked:

“In principle, do you support or oppose the reduction in the amount of Housing Benefit for those of working age and living in social housing...if they have more bedrooms than the Government thinks they need?”

Of the responses, “strongly support” and “tend to support” made up 49%, and “tend to oppose” and “strongly oppose” made up only 33%, so it appears that he has misjudged the mood of the nation as well as the mood of Cornwall.

Mr Nuttall: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for that contribution, which reflects the messages that I was getting in my constituency, in Bury, Ramsbottom and Tottington, before the most recent general election.

To go back to the consultation that the hon. Member for St Ives carried out, we know that 65,000 people did not bother to comment at all, or give an opinion either way. In my view, those who did indicate their support for this Affordable Homes Bill will be very disappointed, to say the least, with its content. The Bill appears to be a mere shadow of the one that the hon. Gentleman put forward for consultation to his constituents. That Bill contained an extension of the Government's Help to Buy scheme, a proposal to create an affordable homes investment bank—there is no mention of such an institution in the Bill before us—and a proposal to create a new planning use class for non-permanent residential use, in other words, for second homes. That would have given local planning authorities power to control the number of second homes in their area. There is no mention of that in this Bill.

The Bill that the hon. Gentleman asked his constituents to comment on was also scheduled to give local authorities immense powers of compulsory purchase where developers held back land for development, or where they failed to develop sites for which planning permission had been granted but on which no development had yet begun. Well, surprise, surprise: there is no mention of that measure either.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is a jolly good thing that that has been dropped from the Bill, as it would have been a fundamental attack on the rights of private property, which the House has always protected?

Mr Nuttall: I completely and 100% agree with my hon. Friend. I for one am extremely grateful that those measures are not in the Bill, but I am worried, as I shall explain in a moment, that the Bill may be just an

opening salvo for the introduction of those measures at a later stage. Although what is left is a proposal to change the eligibility for housing benefit and a proposal to require the Secretary of State to carry out a review of the availability of affordable homes and intermediate housing, that is it; there is no mention of any affordable homes investment bank, no mention of any change to planning use classes and no mention of any enhanced powers for local councils. We must ask ourselves why that is so. On one level, I would like to think it is because the hon. Member for St Ives has seen the light and realised that his proposal for Government interference in the free market—as my hon. Friend the Member for North East Somerset (Jacob Rees-Mogg) identified it—would not have had the effect he hoped for. However, the truth is, I believe, rather more worrying.

As I mentioned in an intervention at the outset, the hon. Member for St Ives perhaps gave an explanation of why there is so little in the Bill on his website last week:

“If I succeed at Second Reading...I hope I can beef up the Bill with amendments at Committee Stage.”

There we have it: this skeleton of a Bill is actually a Trojan horse Bill. If it is granted a Second Reading today, the hon. Gentleman admits that he will use it to try to introduce those other measures later in its parliamentary proceedings.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: I am grateful once again to my hon. Friend for giving way. I wonder whether anyone consulted the Clerks on whether amendments to widen the Bill by so much would be within its scope.

Mr Nuttall: I have not inquired of the Clerks whether that would be correct parliamentary procedure. It is certainly unusual for a Bill's promoter to admit at the outset that the measure being proposed is not the measure they want agreed on Third Reading and that they intend to table amendments in Committee. It is usual for the rest of the House, not the promoter, to want to amend a Bill.

Andrew George: I am particularly grateful to the hon. Gentleman for following this process very closely. I am sure that my constituents will be interested in his remarks. As well as those who responded, many other people certainly commented to me, but the hon. Gentleman needs to understand that arriving at the published Bill is, of course, a process of considering what is likely to succeed and that I or, indeed, anyone else who tables amendments, would take into account what is and is not orderly to propose in Committee. That is self-evident.

Mr Nuttall: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for trying to clarify matters. I am not sure whether I am any clearer about why, if he thinks it is a good idea to include other matters, they are not in the Bill this morning. It is not clear to me that there is any reason other than that he thinks that a slimmed-down Bill stands a better chance of getting a Second Reading. On that basis, it is fair for hon. Members, in reaching a decision this morning, to have in the back of our minds the fact that the Bill is a Trojan horse.

Philip Davies: Given that the Bill's promoter is saying that this is not the Bill he would have wanted and that it should be a lot better, and given that Labour Members

have said, “This Bill isn't really much good, but it'll do as a starter,” which means that no one is particularly keen on the Bill, does my hon. Friend not wonder why on earth the battalions have come here today to support it? Does he think that, rather than supporting the merit of the Bill, they are merely trying to get any old Bill into Committee so that they can achieve their real objective: to stop an EU referendum Bill going through the House?

Hon. Members: Ah!

Mr Nuttall: My hon. Friend goes to the nub of the matter. That may well be what is happening today, and the fact is that those who want to stop the people of this country having a say on Europe think that the best way to do so is by getting a slimmed-down version of the draft Bill into Committee.

Ian Lavery (Wansbeck) (Lab): I am slightly confused about why the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the Bill is a Trojan horse because it might be amended in Committee. Is that different from any other Bill? How many amendments did the Government table to the Care Bill, for example? Hundreds and hundreds, but has anyone ever described that as a Trojan horse?

Mr Nuttall: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me a chance to expand and clarify that point, because there is a fundamental difference: when the Government or anyone else table amendments, they do so in response to comments made as the Bill goes through the legislative procedure. In my experience, it is very unusual for the Member introducing a Bill to openly admit and declare at the outset, on Second Reading, that the Bill is not actually what they want.

Andrew George: To be clear, and to help the hon. Gentleman, I point out that in its early stages the Bill proposed a range of measures. He has read my words and, yes, of course I would like to beef up the Bill, in particular the purpose of certain clauses and the subject matter that they cover, on the basis of evidence. There is a clear need in constituencies such as mine to place a cap on the number of second homes, which is clearly opposed by the Conservatives, and although there is no chance of achieving that in this Bill, we are able to advance the proposal through the Sustainable Communities Act 2007. South Lakeland council proposes a new measure that the Government will have to consider. That measure is supported by my constituents, and the 2007 Act is the legislative route for it.

Mr Nuttall: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has had an opportunity to put that point on the record.

Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab): I rise only to put the hon. Gentleman's mind at rest. I have had an inordinate amount of correspondence from my constituents asking me to come and support this private Member's Bill. I have not had a single item of correspondence asking me to come and stifle a European referendum bill. I am here for the bedroom tax Bill.

Mr Nuttall: I am not trying to suggest that every Member in the House today has ulterior motives and is not here entirely because of the content of the Bill. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman's motives are entirely honourable and that he is purely concerned about the content of the Bill before us.

Sheryll Murray: I am confused because I thought that this Bill was the Affordable Homes Bill, but all I have heard is “bedroom tax, bedroom tax, bedroom tax”. It is actually a spare room subsidy. Does my hon. Friend agree?

Mr Nuttall: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and we have not heard much this morning about the second part of the Bill. One or two Members have touched on it, but we have heard little about the part that deals with the review of affordable housing. I shall certainly be touching on it, after I have dealt with the first part of the Bill, which contains the proposed changes to housing benefit.

I accept, as does anyone who has looked at the issue, that the changes to housing benefit resulting from the removal of the spare room subsidy have been controversial. There is no doubt about that. We have to ask ourselves why the Government had to take tough, difficult decisions to try to control the level of public spending. The answer is quite simple. We as a country simply could not continue spending money that we did not have. The coalition Government inherited a situation in which £1 in every £4 had to be borrowed. In other words, the books were not being balanced. The scale of the problem is demonstrated by the fact that, even now, after four years of a Government who have been doing all they can to try to rein in public spending, we as a country are still years from having completely dealt with the deficit and being in a position to balance the books. That position required the Government to look at areas of expenditure like the welfare budget.

John Hemming: On the question whether this is about extra money being spent, there was a court case this year, number EWCA Civ 13, in which the Secretary of State, when challenged on the lawfulness of the discriminatory elements in the regulations relating to disabled people, said that he would continue to closely monitor and adjust the implementation of the policy “to ensure that the needs of these groups are effectively addressed in the longer term”.

The Bill is, in essence, about moving from discretionary housing payments to exemptions. It is not about additional cost to the public purse.

Mr Nuttall: My hon. Friend might think that, but I think it is better for the discretionary housing payment to be looked at on a case-by-case basis, as at present.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: Has not the Minister himself told us that these proposals will cost £1 billion? That is more than the cost of the discretionary powers, so this Bill has a clear financial effect.

Mr Nuttall: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for reminding the House that we now know from the Minister’s comments that we are talking about a figure of £1 billion a year, whichever way we look at it.

John Hemming: The Minister made it very clear that this is not about the elements relating to spare rooms but an argument that is contested in respect of non-dependant deductions.

Mr Nuttall: I am grateful for that point, which I will deal with in more detail later. We do not want to get bogged down in arguments about this, that or the other.

The fundamental point is that the coalition Government had to make savings in the welfare budget, and this policy has reduced the welfare budget, as I will explain. I think that deals with my hon. Friend’s point.

The widespread view before the last election was that the previous Labour Government had allowed the welfare budget to spiral out of control. The housing benefit budget typified this, as its cost had increased from £11.2 billion in 1997-98 to £20 billion in 2009-10. This meant that every household in my constituency, where hard-working taxpayers were themselves struggling to make ends meet, were paying £900 a year towards a benefit that, in some cases, was enabling others to live in accommodation that they could not afford to live in. That is the key point.

Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con): My hon. Friend has talked about the importance of the availability of affordable housing and the fact that this Bill does very little to address that. Does he agree that one of the greatest problems with the failure of the Labour Government to deliver affordable housing was that so many working people were squeezed out of the socially rented sector? Council housing was originally designed for working people, but there are now very few areas of council housing that are available to them. Constituents come to see me about this in Worcester and say they think it is appalling that as working people they cannot access the social rented estate. Does he agree that Labour’s failure to deliver housing left us with a real problem in this country?

Mr Nuttall: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, who makes the right point. Many people who are priced out of the private rented sector would like to get into the social rented sector but are unable to do so. That boils down to the supply of affordable housing—there is no doubt about that.

To be fair, even the Labour Government realised that something had to be done about this increase in the cost of housing benefit. They introduced rules, which we have heard a little about this morning, that restricted the amount of housing benefit depending on the number of bedrooms a claimant needed. What is more, as the Minister said earlier, they also knew that it would be necessary to extend the plans to the social rented sector. When my hon. Friend the Member for The Cotswolds (Geoffrey Clifton-Brown) asked the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in the previous Labour Government “for what reasons the local housing allowance applies only to the de-regulated private sector”,

the Secretary of State replied:

“We hope to implement a flat rate housing benefit system in the social sector, similar to that anticipated in the private rented sector to enable people in that sector to benefit from the choice and flexibility that the reforms can provide. We aim to extend our reforms to the social rented sector as soon as rent restructuring and increased choice have created an improved market.”—[*Official Report*, 19 January 2004; Vol. 416, c. 1075W.]

Thousands of my constituents regard it as perfectly reasonable for tenants in the social rented sector to be treated in the same way as those in the private rented sector. It cannot be right for taxpayers in my constituency, who might love to live in accommodation with a spare bedroom, to be required to pay tax so that others in receipt of housing benefit can live in a property that they could not afford to live in.

John Hemming: Does my hon. Friend not accept that the debate today is not about the principle of the spare room subsidy, spare room rent subsidy, bedroom tax or whatever we wish to call it, but about whether the exceptions set out in guidance—in effect, there are legitimate expectations about those exceptions, subject to judicial review—should be transferred into legislation to give people greater certainty?

Mr Nuttall: That is indeed what clause 2 proposes. I take the view that what one might call cases outside the normal set of exemptions, which I will come on to, are best dealt with through the current system of discretionary housing payments.

The present size criteria allow one bedroom for each person or couple living as part of a household, with children under 16 of the same gender expected to share and all children under 10 expected to share. Tenants' housing benefit is reduced by 14% for those with one bedroom more than that formula allows, and by 25% for those with two or more spare bedrooms.

With estimates putting the total number of spare bedrooms at approaching 1 million, it is absolutely no wonder that Ministers should look at that matter. Considering that, according to the Office for National Statistics, 360,000 households live in crowded accommodation in the social rented sector in England, all of whom would I am sure dearly love to move into bigger accommodation, Ministers had to take action. With nearly 2 million families on social housing waiting lists in England, it makes absolute sense for the nation's social housing stock to be utilised as efficiently as possible.

Philip Davies: Is not the nub of the issue that housing associations basically built houses that were far too big for what the population needed? They knew full well that they could build as many three-bedroom houses as they liked, because the Government would pay them for a three-bedroom house even if only one person was put in it, and they got £500 million a year in subsidy for unnecessary places. Labour Members go on about the cost of living, but they in effect made people heat a three-bedroom house when they only needed a one-bedroom property. If they really cared about the cost of living, they would want people to be in accommodation of an appropriate size to bring down their bills.

Mr Nuttall: My hon. Friend makes a good point. Lots of people openly admit that their property is larger than they need, and that they would benefit from living in smaller accommodation.

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): We have heard a great deal about under-occupation, but what about the 360,000 families living in houses that are far too small for growing families? Does my hon. Friend agree that we have not heard enough in this debate about that particular group, which will benefit from the changes?

Mr Nuttall: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point, which he will hear a little more about in my speech.

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): I want to ask about the downsizing and housing allocation point. The hon. Gentleman and I represent relatively similar constituencies, which are both parts of Greater

Manchester. In my area, 1,636 people were affected by the bedroom tax in March 2013. A year later, the figure was 300 less, but only 59 of those 300 people have been able to downsize. That suggests that it is simply not possible for downsizing to happen in the real world in the way that Conservative MPs believe it will. What is the figure for Bury? If it is a similar figure, surely that should ring alarm bells for the hon. Gentleman about the policy not working as he believes it should.

Mr Nuttall: I think that the policy is working in all parts of the country. The facts show that, as time goes on, people are dealing with it in different ways.

Jonathan Reynolds: Does the hon. Gentleman know the figure for Bury North if he is making that claim? I think that the figures are remarkable.

Mr Nuttall: I do not have that set of figures in front of me, but the hon. Gentleman probably has them. The point is that in all parts of the country, the people who are affected by this measure are dealing with it in different ways. Many of them are finding smaller accommodation to live in. Some of them are choosing to continue living in the accommodation that they are in and to make up the shortfall caused by the deduction from their housing benefit from other resources.

Stephen Lloyd (Eastbourne) (LD): Does what my hon. Friend is saying not emphasise the point of the Bill? The Bill does not say that the spare room subsidy is wrong, but that we should protect people from the system if it means that they cannot move out to an appropriate-sized building. The Bill does not say that the spare room subsidy is wrong, but that it needs adjustment to ensure that it is fair. Surely that is the most sensible way forward.

Mr Nuttall: The removal of the spare room subsidy encourages housing providers to build more of the accommodation that people want. That is the key point.

I want to make progress with my remarks. As I mentioned earlier, 360,000 households in the social rented sector are living in crowded accommodation, all of which would love to move into bigger accommodation. With nearly 2 million families on social housing waiting lists in England, it makes sense for the stock of our nation's social housing to be utilised as efficiently as possible. Tenants in the sector are moving to accommodation that is more suited to their needs. In the seven months to December 2013, nearly 19,000 households that were affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy downsized into more appropriate accommodation.

Heather Wheeler (South Derbyshire) (Con): My hon. Friend is getting to the nub of the problem, which is overcrowding. We must bear it in mind that the policy was forecast for about two years, so councils had an opportunity to build the right social housing properties. South Derbyshire district council brought forward another 170 one or two-bedroom units because it knew that it would need them. I wonder why other councils did not do that sort of thing.

Mr Nuttall: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I am sure that other councils have a lot to learn from South Derbyshire district council.

To put my point about the 19,000 households that downsized because of the removal of the spare room subsidy another way, the other side of the coin is that 19,000 households that were living in cramped and overcrowded conditions were given the opportunity to improve their living conditions.

The Government proposals will bring a total saving of some £2 billion. Over the course of this Parliament, the bill for housing benefit was forecast to rise from £21 billion to £26 billion. Because of the various reforms to housing benefit that have been introduced, it will increase only to £24 billion.

The Government have put in place an array of measures to ensure that the new criteria are introduced in such a way as to protect those who have a genuine need for additional space. For example, disabled tenants who need overnight carers are exempt, all pensioners are exempt and, at the discretion of local authorities, families who have a child whose disability means that they cannot share a bedroom can be allowed an extra bedroom.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I am delighted to note, given my military background, that soldiers, sailors and airmen and women who are away on operations are not penalised and can go home when they return. That is an important part of the policy.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Dawn Primarolo): Order. Mr Nuttall, you have been speaking for 35 minutes and you have said on numerous occasions how important it is to make progress through your speech. You are being incredibly generous in taking interventions, but perhaps you could be a little more selfish and get on with making your speech so that other Members can speak. Taking fewer interventions might help.

Mr Nuttall: I will be more selfish with the interventions I accept, Madam Deputy Speaker, but the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart) was not one I have in my speech, so I am grateful to him for making it.

The Government trebled support for discretionary housing payments so that funding for this year is £165 million. In 2013-14, £21 million of central Government funding was unspent by the end of the year. Almost two thirds—63%—of local authorities paid out less than their total discretionary housing payment allocation, and fewer than a quarter applied for a share of the £20 million that the Department for Work and Pensions held back in reserve. Discretionary housing payments exist to provide a safety net for vulnerable tenants, and they offer the best mechanism for local authorities to provide additional support as welfare payments are reformed, enabling them to respond on a case-by-case basis to those who need more assistance.

I appreciate that the hon. Member for St Ives ideally wants the spare room subsidy to be removed. He would like a return to the time before the measure was introduced, when taxpayers in my constituency had to contribute towards those living on benefits and enjoying accommodation that they themselves could only dream about. Clause 1 is seen by those who want to return to those days as a mere stepping stone towards the day when tenants can once more have the benefit of spare

rooms at the expense of other hard-working taxpayers. We must strike a balance between the interests of taxpayers and the legitimate needs of welfare claimants, and I do not see the need to introduce the measures in clause 1 to achieve that balance.

Let me turn to clause 3, which has not received the attention it needs so far. Subsection (1) requires the Secretary of State to

“carry out a review of the availability of affordable homes and intermediate housing and produce and lay before Parliament a report which must set out the conclusions of the review.”

within 12 months of the Bill being enacted. We know from clause 7(2) that the Act would come into force

“at the end of the period of 3 months beginning with the day on which it is passed.”

Anyone reading clause 3 would assume that there must be an urgent need for a review, and that for some reason no information is available about the housing stock in this country, and certainly nothing on affordable housing. However, even the most cursory investigation of the subject reveals that our library shelves are simply groaning under the weight of reports and statistics on this matter. In fact, there are so many that—you will be pleased to know this, Madam Deputy Speaker—I will not even begin to list them, never mind quote from them all.

Jacob Rees-Mogg: Although one of life's great pleasures is to ensure that Madam Deputy Speaker is happy, the rest of the House will be desperately disappointed if my hon. Friend does not elaborate on all those points.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Dawn Primarolo): Order. I am sure that the House can contain its disappointment and anxiety to progress this debate. I hope, Mr Nuttall, that you are making reasonable progress, and taking your own advice about making the remaining points in your speech so that others can participate in the debate.

Mr Nuttall: I will, indeed, Madam Deputy Speaker, restrict my comments.

The Department for Communities and Local Government publication, “Affordable Housing Supply: April 2012 to March 2013”, issued on 21 November 2013, contains a wealth of statistics and information about the availability of affordable homes in England. It contains that much material that it is difficult to imagine what more could be wanted on the subject.

The principal body for delivery in the field is the Homes and Communities Agency. We are fortunate indeed that, only on Tuesday of this week, it issued its latest update—a statistical analysis with a wealth of facts and figures on affordable housing. Jonathan Walters, the HCA deputy director of strategy and performance, has said:

“The Statistical Data Return plays an important role in the HCA's work as regulator, helping to identify the key issues for the sector and individual providers and to prioritise our regulatory engagement. The 2014 return shows that the sector has continued to grow, and sheds light on some important trends in a changing operating environment, including the growth of Affordable Rent”.

That is just a couple of the reports available on the topic—there are loads of others from charities, academics and pressure groups throughout the country—and I find it difficult to believe that there is any need whatever to carry out another piece of research.

I accept that the hon. Member for St Ives is entirely well meaning. No one would deny that his aims are entirely honourable. No one wants disabled people to be disadvantaged by legislation, but as I hope I have demonstrated, the Government have put in place the means to ensure that those most affected by the removal of the spare room subsidy are properly protected. I see no reason for a further report on affordable homes—there is no shortage of reports or statistics on the subject. The Government provide a wide array of schemes to help to stimulate the housing market. It is difficult to see what could come out of such a review, other than yet more schemes. For all those reasons, I oppose the Bill, and urge the House to vote against it on Second Reading.

12.43 pm

Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab): I am pleased to be able to speak in the debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) on introducing the Bill and making the case for it. He is sincere in his personal opposition to the bedroom tax. I am therefore pleased to support him in trying to do something about it.

Like the hon. Gentleman, and like all hon. Members—I am sure this applies not only to Opposition Members—many dozens of constituents have come to see me or have written to me about the policy. That is hardly surprising. Gentoo, the largest social housing provider in Sunderland, tells me that more than 4,000 households across the city's three parliamentary seats are affected by it. I do not know what supporters of the bedroom tax among Government Members tell their constituents who come to their surgery or who write to them, distraught about the impact the measure is having on their already stretched and limited incomes. Perhaps supporters of the bedroom tax do not see those people. Perhaps they ignore the letters and e-mails. That must be the explanation—it is the only one I can think of for why Government Members stand up and speak in support of a policy that is causing their constituents such hardship. Which of those Government Members' constituents are most likely to be affected? According to their own impact assessment, it is overwhelmingly disabled constituents—people for whom an extra room is often not a luxury, as we have heard, but a necessity. It is not a spare room; it is a room for their partner to sleep in because their disability means it is impossible for them to sleep together any more; a place for their carer to sleep in; a storeroom for the equipment they need to manage their condition; or, in the case of one of my constituents, a sensory room for a disabled child.

What do Conservative Members say to constituents who tell them these stories or to those who could do without the extra room, but for whom no suitable smaller properties are available? Yes, the Government have had to introduce the discretionary housing payments to avoid mass evictions across the country, but they are limited not just by a budget, but by strict criteria, as we have heard, that have led to cases such as the terrible tragedy mentioned by the right hon. Member for Mid Dorset and North Poole (Annette Brooke) of a disabled person committing suicide. There have been numbers of such cases across the country and it is an absolute disgrace.

Ian Swales (Redcar) (LD): Does the hon. Lady share my concern that although when one writes to a Minister one is told that discretionary housing payments are the

solution, disabled adults have to apply every three months on forms that are dozens of pages long? Is this not a demeaning process?

Mrs Hodgson: It is extremely demeaning. Once someone has applied and been approved, it should be on the understanding that their condition will not change. Why should something that made someone eligible change three months later? It leads to the added anxiety and mental health stress we have heard about.

Ministers argue that their policies will lead to a rationalisation in the allocation of social housing and to those in overcrowded conditions suddenly having access to hundreds of thousands of homes they believe are being under-occupied, but as we have heard from several Members, a negligible number of households have been able to do that. Fewer than one in 20 across the country have managed to downsize within the social rented sector, and just 1.4% have moved to the private rented sector. In some of the worst areas for under-occupation in my constituency, the numbers have actually gone up in the past year. What do Conservative Members advise constituents who come to them in this Catch-22 situation of not being able to afford to pay the bedroom tax but not being able to downsize to avoid it either?

What do they say when they hear the effect of having to pay the tax on the already-stretched household budgets of those with the lowest incomes to start with? The consequences of losing £700 a year might be negligible to Conservative Members, some of whom might earn that in a few hours of work outside this place, but to the vast majority of people in my constituency, especially those affected by the bedroom tax, it is a significant sum of money and losing it forces them to make choices many Conservative Members could never imagine having to make. It is the difference between having the heating on or not; between eating enough food or not; between being able to afford a child's school uniform or not.

Conservative Members need not take my word for it. The DWP makes it clear that families and households are going without essentials thanks to the decisions it took and a policy it continues to defend. It has to be said it has a lot of competition, but it is one of the most disgraceful policies to have darkened this House over the past few years. It typifies the DWP under this Secretary of State: vindictive and incompetent in equal measure. And it highlights the priorities of this Tory-led Government: pay-offs for those at the top, penalties for those at the bottom. The faces on those Benches might change, but the true face of the Tory party never does. I am therefore pleased to support the hon. Member for St Ives in at least trying to undo some of the most pernicious elements of this policy, and although I do not think it goes far enough, I sincerely hope the Bill will be allowed to progress to Committee so that we can make amendments there or later on the Floor of the House.

People across the nation know that it is, of course, the Labour party that has fought against the bedroom tax from day one. It is the Labour party that continues to lead the fight now, and it is only a one-nation Labour Government who will scrap this wretched policy, electorate willing, next year.

12.49 pm

Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con): I thank the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George), whose constituency encompasses west Cornwall and the Isles

[Sheryll Murray]

of Scilly, for bringing forward the Bill, which allows me to raise a number of points that are important to my constituents in the east of the county.

Having a roof over one's head is so important, especially in our climate. Making sure that some housing is available for those who cannot afford to buy their own dates back over 1,000 years, but I am not going to go into the history of the almshouses, the first of which were built in York.

The first legislation of its kind was the Public Health Act 1875, which was introduced by a Conservative Minister. It was a milestone in the provision of affordable homes. Then, of course, if we move on to the 1980s, we find that under the premiership of Margaret Thatcher—I can listen to all the groans from Opposition Members—it became possible for many people who aspired to own their homes to do so. I know many of my constituents who are very grateful for the right-to-buy scheme.

With that background, we look at affordable homes today. The goal of so many people to own their own home, which is often so difficult, is reflected in society today. Although it is called the Affordable Homes Bill and although we have heard an awful lot about the spare room subsidy, I want to concentrate first on the aspiration of young people, like many in my constituency, to own their own home.

Let me outline two recent housing developments built in my constituency of South East Cornwall to show that the Government are putting forward really aspirational proposals for many of my young constituents. The first is in the beautiful Tamar valley of my constituency in a place called St Ann's Chapel. It was built under the last Labour Government and was visited by my right hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Grant Shapps), who was then our housing spokesman. Work was still very much under way, but most people, including me, welcomed this new housing, which was providing young people with a step on to the housing ladder.

Unfortunately, I have to report that I have since been contacted by many residents of the new development who have had a few issues with the build. Much of that is probably down to the economic situation that was hitting the building industry at the time. This emphasises to me—and, I hope, to everyone here today—the importance of quality buildings, if they are to last.

The second development certainly looked to be a much better build, and it has won an award. I was pleased to be joined by one of my local councillors Benedicte Bay to welcome the housing Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Kris Hopkins) to the housing development in Lostwithiel. The streets consist of 32 homes, and following a competition in a local Cornish newspaper it was named Gilbury Hill. The 50% affordable development element was allocated by working closely with Lostwithiel town council to ensure that it was provided to local people. The developers, Wycliffe Estates explained that much care was taken with the design of both the open-market and affordable elements to ensure that there was no difference in the quality allocated to the affordable elements. In May 2014, this project was awarded residential project of the year for 40 units and under in the Michelmores and *Western Morning News* property awards, the region's premier property competition, showcasing the very best

properties, buildings and firms in the west country. I want to stress the importance not only of producing affordable housing, but of the need for good quality housing, because history shows that poor quality housing, like those tower blocks we have seen pulled down in the recent past, increases the burden on future generations.

I also want to raise another important aspect of affordable housing: how affordable it actually is. We have heard about many people in the north suffering because they do not earn enough money and they are being hit by the spare room subsidy, but average wages in my constituency are much lower than in many parts of the UK, and that makes it very difficult for my constituents to get on the housing ladder near their friends and families. This is particularly so in some of the most beautiful coastal towns in Cornwall. I did want to concentrate on the affordable homes element of this Bill, because it does seem to have been neglected in earlier speeches.

Turning to the proposed changes to benefits and the spare room subsidy, under which those on housing benefit with spare rooms do not get so much benefit, I want to mention a couple of situations in my constituency. In my village we have some bungalows that have been adapted for people with physical disabilities. Sadly, a few years ago, when I was a local councillor, one of the occupants of one of the bungalows passed away. His wife wanted to move into another home in part because she did not want the memories of a happy marriage all around her, but also because she realised that bungalow could be made available to somebody else, and that is precisely what happened. The second situation concerns a new development in my village that I opened as a local councillor. Those houses were built with wider doorways and wider stairways so they can accommodate people who do not have disabilities but also those who do. This area has been missed from today's debate.

I congratulate my coalition colleague, the hon. Member for St Ives, but he has confirmed that he has not consulted the Department on costs. I remind him of the words of Uncle Ben from "Spider-Man":

"With great power comes great responsibility."

The hon. Gentleman is in a coalition Government now, and the long-term economic plan is working. It would be irresponsible of me to support this Bill today without knowing the full cost to the taxpayer and how that would impact on economic recovery, because I believe we should never return to the situation we inherited in 2010.

I close by reminding Members that when Labour's last Chief Secretary to the Treasury was sent away by the electorate in 2010, his words were, "there's no money left." I think we should all bear that in mind when voting today.

12.59 pm

Stephen Pound (Ealing North) (Lab): We have been educated today, and I pay tribute to the hon. Member for St Ives (Andrew George) for bringing this extraordinarily interesting Bill before the House, but if there is one thing that has run through our discussions for the past three hours—it seems longer—it is not so much a golden thread as a string of tarnished brass: that it is all very well to have a theoretical construct that encourages people to leave their homes, but there has to be somewhere for them to go. It is so flipping obvious to anyone who

lives in the real world and who knows the experiences of ordinary human beings who do not consider this a spare ballroom tax—

Mark Hunter (Cheadle) (LD) *claimed to move the closure (Standing Order No. 36).*

Question put forthwith, That the Question be now put.

The House divided: Ayes 304, Noes 237.

Division No. 46]

[1 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ainsworth, rh Mr Bob
 Alexander, rh Danny
 Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
 Alexander, Heidi
 Ali, Rushanara
 Allen, Mr Graham
 Anderson, Mr David
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Austin, Ian
 Bailey, Mr Adrian
 Bain, Mr William
 Balls, rh Ed
 Banks, Gordon
 Barron, rh Kevin
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begg, Dame Anne
 Beith, rh Sir Alan
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Birtwistle, Gordon
 Blackman-Woods, Roberta
 Blears, rh Hazel
 Blenkinsop, Tom
 Blomfield, Paul
 Blunkett, rh Mr David
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brake, rh Tom
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brooke, rh Annette
 Brown, rh Mr Gordon
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Brown, Mr Russell
 Browne, Mr Jeremy
 Bruce, rh Sir Malcolm
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burnham, rh Andy
 Burstow, rh Paul
 Burt, Lorely
 Byrne, rh Mr Liam
 Cable, rh Vince
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan
 Campbell, rh Sir Menzies
 Campbell, Mr Ronnie
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Caton, Martin
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Jenny
 Clark, Katy
 Clarke, rh Mr Tom
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Connarty, Michael

Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, Jeremy
 Crausby, Mr David
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Crockart, Mike
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Cunningham, Sir Tony
 Curran, Margaret
 Dakin, Nic
 Danczuk, Simon
 Darling, rh Mr Alistair
 Davey, rh Mr Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davidson, Mr Ian
 Davies, Geraint
 De Piero, Gloria
 Denham, rh Mr John
 Dobbin, Jim
 Dobson, rh Frank
 Docherty, Thomas
 Donohoe, Mr Brian H.
 Doran, Mr Frank
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Jim
 Doyle, Gemma
 Dromey, Jack
 Dugher, Michael
 Durkan, Mark
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Mrs Louise
 Engel, Natascha
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Featherstone, rh Lynne
 Field, rh Mr Frank
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Ffello, Robert
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Flynn, Paul
 Foster, rh Mr Don
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Francis, Dr Hywel
 Galloway, George
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Andrew
 Gilmore, Sheila
 Glass, Pat

Glendon, Mrs Mary
 Goodman, Helen
 Greatrex, Tom
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Hain, rh Mr Peter
 Hames, Duncan
 Hamilton, Mr David
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hancock, Mr Mike
 Hanson, rh Mr David
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Mr Tom
 Harvey, Sir Nick
 Havard, Mr Dai
 Healey, rh John
 Heath, Mr David
 Hemming, John
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hillier, Meg
 Hilling, Julie
 Hodge, rh Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hood, Mr Jim
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Horwood, Martin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Hughes, rh Simon
 Hunt, Tristram
 Hunter, Mark
 Huppert, Dr Julian
 Irranca-Davies, Huw
 Jackson, Glenda
 Jamieson, Cathy
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Alan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, Mr Kevan
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Jowell, rh Dame Tessa
 Joyce, Eric
 Kane, Mike
 Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kennedy, rh Mr Charles
 Khan, rh Sadiq
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Laws, rh Mr David
 Lazarowicz, Mark
 Leech, Mr John
 Leslie, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Love, Mr Andrew
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian
 Mactaggart, Fiona
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John
 Marsden, Mr Gordon
 McCabe, Steve
 McCann, Mr Michael
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McClymont, Gregg
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
 McDonnell, John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McGovern, Jim
 McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
 McKechin, Ann
 McKenzie, Mr Iain
 McKinnell, Catherine
 Meacher, rh Mr Michael
 Meale, Sir Alan
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Miller, Andrew
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine
 Moore, rh Michael
 Morden, Jessica
 Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
 Morris, Graeme M.
 (*Easington*)
 Mudie, Mr George
 Mulholland, Greg
 Munn, Meg
 Munt, Tessa
 Murphy, rh Mr Jim
 Murphy, rh Paul
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Nash, Pamela
 O'Donnell, Fiona
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osborne, Sandra
 Pearce, Teresa
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Pugh, John
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Raynsford, rh Mr Nick
 Reed, Mr Jamie
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reid, Mr Alan
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Riordan, Mrs Linda
 Ritchie, Ms Margaret
 Robertson, John
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rogerson, Dan
 Rotheram, Steve
 Roy, Mr Frank
 Roy, Lindsay
 Ruane, Chris
 Ruddock, rh Dame Joan
 Sarwar, Anas
 Sawford, Andy
 Seabeck, Alison
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheridan, Jim
 Shuker, Gavin
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Mr Andy
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen

Smith, Sir Robert
 Spellar, rh Mr John
 Straw, rh Mr Jack
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Ms Gisela
 Stunell, rh Sir Andrew
 Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
 Swales, Ian
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, Mark
 Teather, Sarah
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thornberry, Emily
 Thornton, Mike
 Thurso, rh John
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Umunna, Mr Chuka
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walley, Joan

Ward, Mr David
 Watson, Mr Tom
 Watts, Mr Dave
 Webb, rh Steve
 Weir, Mr Mike
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Williams, Mr Mark
 Williams, Roger
 Williams, Stephen
 Williamson, Chris
 Willott, Jenny
 Wilson, Phil
 Winnick, Mr David
 Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
 Woodcock, John
 Woodward, rh Mr Shaun
 Wright, David
 Wright, Mr Iain
 Wright, Simon

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Bob Russell and
Graham Jones

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Amess, Mr David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Arbuthnot, rh Mr James
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Baker, Steve
 Baldry, rh Sir Tony
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barker, rh Gregory
 Baron, Mr John
 Bellingham, Mr Henry
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Bingham, Andrew
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackwood, Nicola
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bradley, Karen
 Bray, Angie
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Mr Robert
 Burns, Conor
 Burns, rh Mr Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Byles, Dan
 Cairns, Alun
 Carmichael, Neil
 Cash, Sir William
 Chishti, Rehman
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colvile, Oliver
 Davies, David T. C.
 (Monmouth)
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David

de Bois, Nick
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Dorries, Nadine
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Duddridge, James
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 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
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fullbrook, Lorraine
 Fuller, Richard
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Garnier, Sir Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, Mr James
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gummer, Ben
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hague, rh Mr William
 Halfon, Robert
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matthew

Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, Sir Oliver
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian
 Hoban, Mr Mark
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Mr Adam
 Hopkins, Kris
 Howell, John
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kelly, Chris
 Kirby, Simon
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lancaster, Mark
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Jessica
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Lewis, Dr Julian
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lumley, Karen
 Macleod, Mary
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
 McVey, rh Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, Anne
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Murray, Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newmark, Mr Brooks
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Nuttall, Mr David

Offord, Dr Matthew
 Ollerenshaw, Eric
 Opperman, Guy
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Ottaway, rh Sir Richard
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Mike
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Pincher, Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Sir John
 Reckless, Mark
 Redwood, rh Mr John
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandys, Laura
 Scott, Mr Lee
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Shepherd, Sir Richard
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Soubry, Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 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
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Mrs Theresa
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Weatherley, Mike
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yeo, Mr Tim

Young, rh Sir George
Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Gavin Barwell and
John Penrose

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second Time.

The House divided: Ayes 306, Noes 231.

Division No. 47]

[1.17 pm

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ainsworth, rh Mr Bob
Alexander, rh Danny
Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
Alexander, Heidi
Ali, Rushanara
Allen, Mr Graham
Anderson, Mr David
Ashworth, Jonathan
Austin, Ian
Bailey, Mr Adrian
Bain, Mr William
Baker, rh Norman
Balls, rh Ed
Banks, Gordon
Barron, rh Kevin
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begg, Dame Anne
Beith, rh Sir Alan
Benn, rh Hilary
Berger, Luciana
Betts, Mr Clive
Birtwistle, Gordon
Blackman-Woods, Roberta
Blears, rh Hazel
Blenkinsop, Tom
Blomfield, Paul
Blunkett, rh Mr David
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brake, rh Tom
Bray, Angie
Brennan, Kevin
Brooke, rh Annette
Brown, rh Mr Gordon
Brown, Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Brown, Mr Russell
Browne, Mr Jeremy
Bruce, rh Sir Malcolm
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burden, Richard
Burnham, rh Andy
Burstow, rh Paul
Burt, Lorely
Byrne, rh Mr Liam
Cable, rh Vince
Campbell, rh Mr Alan
Campbell, rh Sir Menzies
Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Caton, Martin
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Jenny
Clark, Katy
Clarke, rh Mr Tom
Clwyd, rh Ann
Coaker, Vernon

Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cooper, Rosie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crausby, Mr David
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Stella
Crockart, Mike
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cunningham, Alex
Cunningham, Mr Jim
Cunningham, Sir Tony
Curran, Margaret
Dakin, Nic
Danczuk, Simon
Darling, rh Mr Alistair
Davey, rh Mr Edward
David, Wayne
Davidson, Mr Ian
Davies, Geraint
De Piero, Gloria
Denham, rh Mr John
Dobbin, Jim
Dobson, rh Frank
Docherty, Thomas
Donohoe, Mr Brian H.
Doran, Mr Frank
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Jim
Doyle, Gemma
Dromey, Jack
Dugher, Michael
Durkan, Mark
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eagle, Maria
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Ellman, Mrs Louise
Engel, Natascha
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farrelly, Paul
Farron, Tim
Featherstone, rh Lynne
Field, rh Mr Frank
Fitzpatrick, Jim
Flello, Robert
Flint, rh Caroline
Flynn, Paul
Foster, rh Mr Don
Fovargue, Yvonne
Francis, Dr Hywel
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Gardiner, Barry
George, Andrew

Gilmore, Sheila
Glass, Pat
Glendon, Mrs Mary
Goodman, Helen
Greatrex, Tom
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lillian
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Hain, rh Mr Peter
Hames, Duncan
Hamilton, Mr David
Hamilton, Fabian
Hancock, Mr Mike
Hanson, rh Mr David
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Mr Tom
Harvey, Sir Nick
Havard, Mr Dai
Healey, rh John
Heath, Mr David
Hemming, John
Hepburn, Mr Stephen
Hillier, Meg
Hilling, Julie
Hodge, rh Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hood, Mr Jim
Hopkins, Kelvin
Horwood, Martin
Howarth, rh Mr George
Hughes, rh Simon
Hunt, Tristram
Hunter, Mark
Huppert, Dr Julian
Irranca-Davies, Huw
Jackson, Glenda
Jamieson, Cathy
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, rh Alan
Johnson, Diana
Jones, Helen
Jones, Mr Kevan
Jones, Susan Elan
Jowell, rh Dame Tessa
Joyce, Eric
Kane, Mike
Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Kennedy, rh Mr Charles
Khan, rh Sadiq
Lamb, rh Norman
Lammy, rh Mr David
Lavery, Ian
Laws, rh Mr David
Lazarowicz, Mark
Leech, Mr John
Leslie, Chris
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Mr Ivan
Lloyd, Stephen
Love, Mr Andrew
Lucas, Caroline
Lucas, Ian
Mactaggart, Fiona
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Mann, John
Marsden, Mr Gordon
McCabe, Steve

McCann, Mr Michael
McCarthy, Kerry
McClymont, Gregg
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonnell, Dr Alasdair
McDonnell, John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McGovern, Jim
McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
McKechin, Ann
McKenzie, Mr Iain
McKinnell, Catherine
Meacher, rh Mr Michael
Meale, Sir Alan
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Miller, Andrew
Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Moore, rh Michael
Morden, Jessica
Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
Morris, Grahame M.
(*Easington*)
Mudie, Mr George
Mulholland, Greg
Munn, Meg
Munt, Tessa
Murphy, rh Mr Jim
Murphy, rh Paul
Murray, Ian
Nandy, Lisa
Nash, Pamela
O'Donnell, Fiona
Onwurah, Chi
Osborne, Sandra
Pearce, Teresa
Perkins, Toby
Phillipson, Bridget
Pound, Stephen
Powell, Lucy
Pugh, John
Qureshi, Yasmin
Raynsford, rh Mr Nick
Reed, Mr Jamie
Reed, Mr Steve
Reeves, Rachel
Reid, Mr Alan
Reynolds, Emma
Reynolds, Jonathan
Riordan, Mrs Linda
Ritchie, Ms Margaret
Robertson, John
Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Rogerson, Dan
Rotheram, Steve
Roy, Mr Frank
Roy, Lindsay
Ruane, Chris
Ruddock, rh Dame Joan
Sarwar, Anas
Sawford, Andy
Seabeck, Alison
Sharma, Mr Virendra
Sheerman, Mr Barry
Sheridan, Jim
Shuker, Gavin
Skinner, Mr Dennis
Slaughter, Mr Andy
Smith, rh Mr Andrew
Smith, Angela

Smith, Nick
 Smith, Owen
 Smith, Sir Robert
 Spellar, rh Mr John
 Straw, rh Mr Jack
 Stringer, Graham
 Stuart, Ms Gisela
 Stunell, rh Sir Andrew
 Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
 Swales, Ian
 Swinson, Jo
 Tami, Mark
 Teather, Sarah
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thornberry, Emily
 Thornton, Mike
 Thurso, rh John
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Umunna, Mr Chuka
 Vaz, Valerie

Walley, Joan
 Ward, Mr David
 Watson, Mr Tom
 Watts, Mr Dave
 Webb, rh Steve
 Weir, Mr Mike
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Williams, Mr Mark
 Williams, Roger
 Williams, Stephen
 Williamson, Chris
 Willott, Jenny
 Wilson, Phil
 Winnick, Mr David
 Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
 Woodcock, John
 Woodward, rh Mr Shaun
 Wright, David
 Wright, Mr Iain
 Wright, Simon
Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Bob Russell and
Graham Jones

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Amess, Mr David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Arbuthnot, rh Mr James
 Baker, Steve
 Baldry, rh Sir Tony
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barker, rh Gregory
 Baron, Mr John
 Bellingham, Mr Henry
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Bingham, Andrew
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackwood, Nicola
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bradley, Karen
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Mr Robert
 Burns, Conor
 Burns, rh Mr Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Byles, Dan
 Cairns, Alun
 Carmichael, Neil
 Cash, Sir William
 Chope, Mr Christopher
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colvile, Oliver
 Davies, David T. C.
 (*Monmouth*)
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 de Bois, Nick
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Dorries, Nadine
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Duddridge, James
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 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
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fullbrook, Lorraine
 Fuller, Richard
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Garnier, Sir Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, Mr James
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gummer, Ben
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hague, rh Mr William
 Halfon, Robert
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matthew
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, Sir Oliver
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian
 Hoban, Mr Mark
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Hopkins, Kris
 Howell, John
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, Mr Nick

James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kelly, Chris
 Kirby, Simon
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lancaster, Mark
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Jessica
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Lewis, Dr Julian
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lumley, Karen
 Macleod, Mary
 Maude, rh Mr Francis
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Karl
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
 McVey, rh Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, Anne
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Murray, Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newmark, Mr Brooks
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Nuttall, Mr David
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Osborne, rh Mr George
 Ottaway, rh Sir Richard
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Mike
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Pincher, Christopher

Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Sir John
 Reckless, Mark
 Redwood, rh Mr John
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob
 Robathan, rh Mr Andrew
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandys, Laura
 Scott, Mr Lee
 Seolus, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Shepherd, Sir Richard
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Soubry, Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 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
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Mrs Theresa
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Weatherley, Mike
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yeo, Mr Tim
 Young, rh Sir George
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Gavin Barwell and
John Penrose

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Jacob Rees-Mogg (North East Somerset) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. During the debate, many points of great interest have been raised and it has been suggested that further amendments will be made. I therefore think it would be highly beneficial if the Bill were referred to a Select Committee.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Dawn Primarolo): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me notice of his intention to apply Standing Order No. 63.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 63(2), That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee.—(Jacob Rees-Mogg.)

The House divided: Ayes 236, Noes 264.

Division No. 48]

[1.30 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Amess, Mr David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Arbutnot, rh Mr James
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Baker, Steve
 Baldry, rh Sir Tony
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barker, rh Gregory
 Baron, Mr John
 Bellingham, Mr Henry
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Bingham, Andrew
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackwood, Nicola
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bradley, Karen
 Bray, Angie
 Brazier, Mr Julian
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Mr Robert
 Burns, Conor
 Burns, rh Mr Simon
 Burrowes, Mr David
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Byles, Dan
 Cairns, Alun
 Carmichael, Neil
 Cash, Sir William
 Chishti, Rehman
 Chope, Mr Christopher
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Colvile, Oliver
 Davies, David T. C.
 (*Monmouth*)
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 de Bois, Nick
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Dorries, Nadine
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Duddridge, James
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellison, Jane
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Graham
 Evans, Jonathan
 Evans, Mr Nigel

Evennett, Mr David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fullbrook, Lorraine
 Fuller, Richard
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Garnier, Sir Edward
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, Mr David
 Gibb, Mr Nick
 Glen, John
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, Mr James
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gummer, Ben
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hague, rh Mr William
 Halfon, Robert
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matthew
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Haselhurst, rh Sir Alan
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, Sir Oliver
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, Damian
 Hoban, Mr Mark
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Hopkins, Kris
 Howell, John
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 Hurd, Mr Nick
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jenkin, Mr Bernard
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kelly, Chris
 Kirby, Simon
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lancaster, Mark
 Lansley, rh Mr Andrew
 Leadsom, Andrea
 Lee, Jessica

Lee, Dr Phillip
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Leslie, Charlotte
 Letwin, rh Mr Oliver
 Lewis, Brandon
 Lewis, Dr Julian
 Lilley, rh Mr Peter
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lumley, Karen
 Macleod, Mary
 Maude, rh Mr Francis
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McIntosh, Miss Anne
 McLoughlin, rh Mr Patrick
 McVey, rh Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, Anne
 Mordaunt, Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Mosley, Stephen
 Mowat, David
 Murray, Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newmark, Mr Brooks
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, Caroline
 Nuttall, Mr David
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Ollerenshaw, Eric
 Opperman, Guy
 Ottaway, rh Sir Richard
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Mike
 Perry, Claire
 Phillips, Stephen
 Pickles, rh Mr Eric
 Pincher, Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Daniel
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pritchard, Mark
 Raab, Mr Dominic
 Randall, rh Sir John
 Reckless, Mark
 Redwood, rh Mr John
 Rees-Mogg, Jacob
 Robathan, rh Mr Andrew

Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rudd, Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandys, Laura
 Scott, Mr Lee
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok
 Shelbrooke, Alec
 Shepherd, Sir Richard
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, Julian
 Soubry, Anna
 Spelman, rh Mrs Caroline
 Spencer, Mr Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 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
 Turner, Mr Andrew
 Tyrie, Mr Andrew
 Uppal, Paul
 Vaizey, Mr Edward
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Mrs Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, Mr Ben
 Watkinson, Dame Angela
 Weatherley, Mike
 Wharton, James
 Wheeler, Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, Gavin
 Wilson, Mr Rob
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Yeo, Mr Tim
 Young, rh Sir George
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Gavin Barwell and
 John Penrose**

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Alexander, rh Danny
 Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
 Alexander, Heidi
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Austin, Iain
 Bain, Mr William
 Balls, rh Ed
 Banks, Gordon

Barron, rh Kevin
 Begg, Dame Anne
 Beith, rh Sir Alan
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berger, Luciana
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Birtwistle, Gordon
 Blackman-Woods, Roberta
 Blenkinsop, Tom
 Blomfield, Paul
 Brake, rh Tom

Brennan, Kevin
 Brooke, rh Annette
 Brown, rh Mr Gordon
 Brown, Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Brown, Mr Russell
 Browne, Mr Jeremy
 Bruce, rh Sir Malcolm
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burden, Richard
 Burstow, rh Paul
 Burt, Lorely
 Cable, rh Vince
 Campbell, rh Mr Alan
 Campbell, rh Sir Menzies
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Champion, Sarah
 Clark, Katy
 Clarke, rh Mr Tom
 Clwyd, rh Ann
 Coaker, Vernon
 Coffey, Ann
 Connarty, Michael
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, Jeremy
 Crausby, Mr David
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Crockett, Mike
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Cunningham, Sir Tony
 Curran, Margaret
 Dakin, Nic
 Darling, rh Mr Alistair
 Davey, rh Mr Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davidson, Mr Ian
 Davies, Geraint
 De Piero, Gloria
 Denham, rh Mr John
 Dobbin, Jim
 Dobson, rh Frank
 Docherty, Thomas
 Doran, Mr Frank
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Jim
 Doyle, Gemma
 Dromey, Jack
 Dugher, Michael
 Durkan, Mark
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Mrs Louise
 Engel, Natascha
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Farron, Tim
 Featherstone, rh Lynne
 Field, rh Mr Frank
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Ffello, Robert
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Flynn, Paul
 Foster, rh Mr Don
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Francis, Dr Hywel

Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Andrew
 Gilmore, Sheila
 Glass, Pat
 Glindon, Mrs Mary
 Goodman, Helen
 Greatrex, Tom
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Hames, Duncan
 Hamilton, Mr David
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hancock, Mr Mike
 Hanson, rh Mr David
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Mr Tom
 Harvey, Sir Nick
 Havard, Mr Dai
 Healey, rh John
 Heath, Mr David
 Hemming, John
 Hilling, Julie
 Hodge, rh Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hood, Mr Jim
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Horwood, Martin
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Hughes, rh Simon
 Hunt, Tristram
 Huppert, Dr Julian
 Irranca-Davies, Huw
 Jackson, Glenda
 Jamieson, Cathy
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Alan
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Mr Kevan
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Jowell, rh Dame Tessa
 Kane, Mike
 Kaufman, rh Sir Gerald
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Kennedy, rh Mr Charles
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Laws, rh Mr David
 Lazarowicz, Mark
 Leech, Mr John
 Leslie, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Mr Ivan
 Lloyd, Stephen
 Love, Mr Andrew
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian
 Mactaggart, Fiona
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Marsden, Mr Gordon
 McCann, Mr Michael
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McClymont, Gregg
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, Dr Alasdair

McDonnell, John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McGovern, Jim
 McGuire, rh Mrs Anne
 McKechin, Ann
 McKenzie, Mr Iain
 Meale, Sir Alan
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliiband, rh Edward
 Miller, Andrew
 Moore, rh Michael
 Morden, Jessica
 Morrice, Graeme (*Livingston*)
 Morris, Grahame M.
 (*Easington*)
 Mulholland, Greg
 Munn, Meg
 Munt, Tessa
 Murphy, rh Mr Jim
 Murphy, rh Paul
 Murray, Ian
 Nandy, Lisa
 Nash, Pamela
 O'Donnell, Fiona
 Onwurah, Chi
 Pearce, Teresa
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pound, Stephen
 Powell, Lucy
 Pugh, John
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Raynsford, rh Mr Nick
 Reed, Mr Jamie
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reid, Mr Alan
 Reynolds, Emma
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Riordan, Mrs Linda
 Ritchie, Ms Margaret
 Robertson, John
 Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
 Rogerson, Dan
 Roy, Mr Frank
 Roy, Lindsay
 Ruane, Chris
 Ruddock, rh Dame Joan
 Russell, Sir Bob
 Sarwar, Anas
 Sawford, Andy

Seabeck, Alison
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheridan, Jim
 Shuker, Gavin
 Slaughter, Mr Andy
 Smith, rh Mr Andrew
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Owen
 Smith, Sir Robert
 Spellar, rh Mr John
 Straw, rh Mr Jack
 Stuart, Ms Gisela
 Stunell, rh Sir Andrew
 Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
 Swales, Ian
 Swinson, Jo
 Theather, Sarah
 Thomas, Mr Gareth
 Thornberry, Emily
 Thornton, Mike
 Thurso, rh John
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twigg, Stephen
 Umunna, Mr Chuka
 Vaz, Valerie
 Ward, Mr David
 Watson, Mr Tom
 Watts, Mr Dave
 Webb, rh Steve
 Weir, Mr Mike
 Whiteford, Dr Eilidh
 Williams, Mr Mark
 Williams, Roger
 Williams, Stephen
 Williamson, Chris
 Willott, Jenny
 Wilson, Phil
 Winnick, Mr David
 Winterton, rh Ms Rosie
 Woodcock, John
 Woodward, rh Mr Shaun
 Wright, David
 Wright, Mr Iain
 Wright, Simon

Tellers for the Noes:
Mark Hunter and
Graham Jones

Question accordingly negated.

Bill to stand committed to a Public Bill Committee (Standing Order No. 63).

Mr Andrew Robathan (South Leicestershire) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Given the importance of this measure and the fact that there is obviously very great interest in it, I beg to move that the Bill be committed to a Committee of the whole House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Dawn Primarolo): That is not in order. The relevant Standing Order has been used, and the House has given its view, so I do not accept that.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: It must be a different point of order, because I have ruled on the previous one.

Philip Davies: I am grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker. Given that those of us who were against the setting up of the coalition in the first place always knew that the Lib Dems were devious and untrustworthy, and given that the vote on the Affordable Homes Bill shows that the coalition Government have come to an end and that we will clearly have a free-for-all for the rest of the Parliament, has the Leader of the House given any indication that he wishes to make a statement to the House to say that the coalition has officially come to an end?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for the Chair, however much Members may speculate on it. We will move on to the next business. Will Members please leave the Chamber quickly and quietly because we need to proceed to the next Bill?

Responsible Parking (Scotland) Bill

Second Reading

1.46 pm

Mark Lazarowicz (Edinburgh North and Leith) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

After the momentous events that we have just seen, I invite the House to turn its attention to responsible parking in Scotland.

Mr Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mark Lazarowicz: Time is limited, I am afraid. I might give way later, depending on how much progress I make.

Although the Bill is limited in scope compared with other issues that Scotland will have to discuss and decide on shortly, it deals with an issue that many constituents feel strongly about and that affects their daily lives, as I shall explain briefly later.

Before doing so, I will explain to the House why I thought it necessary and appropriate to introduce the Bill in the House of Commons. Under the Scotland Act 1998, transport in Scotland is generally the responsibility of the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament, but some aspects are reserved, such as the subjects covered by the Road Traffic Act 1988 and the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988.

In most respects, that reservation makes sense. It ensures, for example, that the same rules of the road apply across Great Britain. However, it also includes some provisions on parking. There are conflicting views and opinions on whether the Scottish Parliament can legislate on irresponsible or obstructive parking. Some legal advice has suggested that the Scottish Parliament does not have the power to legislate in that area.

Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con): I speak as a former lawyer. Why is this matter not being dealt with under the Scotland Act 1998? Surely that has the majority of the provisions and is the mechanism by which one could achieve the change that the hon. Gentleman so obviously wants.

Mark Lazarowicz: As I just said, there is a strong argument in favour of the position that the hon. Gentleman has set out, but legal advice from the non-Government Bills unit in the Scottish Parliament suggests that the Scottish Parliament does not have the power to legislate in this area. As a result, attempts by Back-Bench Members of the Scottish Parliament to introduce the equivalent of private Members' Bills on this topic have so far been unable to make progress.

Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con): Is the hon. Gentleman not putting the cart before the horse? Rather than clogging up the legislative timetable in this place, why does he not wait for the independence referendum, because this Bill may well become redundant very quickly?

Mark Lazarowicz: My Bill is an attempt to deal with a simple issue in a very restricted way. Even if, by some mischance, the independence vote was carried in favour

[Mark Lazarowicz]

of independence, these provisions could be passed very quickly and would not have to wait for two years or more to be attended to.

Guy Opperman: On that point, will the hon. Gentleman explain what the procedure would be? He is introducing a Bill to this House, but in 11 days' time we have an independence referendum. If the referendum was carried, the Bill would have begun in this House, but Scotland would have become independent. The reality would surely be that his Bill would struggle, given that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Yorkshire made clear—

Philip Davies: Not the whole of Yorkshire—not yet, anyway!

Guy Opperman: It is a very small and insignificant part of Yorkshire, as I am sure our other colleagues from Yorkshire would say. My point is that surely the Bill would be hamstrung by the procedures of this House.

Mark Lazarowicz: There is no reason why the Bill should be delayed if people approach it constructively. A Bill is currently being proposed in the Scottish Parliament by a Scottish National party MSP, Sandra White, and has support across the spectrum, including from Conservative MSPs. It has reached a point of being unable to proceed further because of conflicting legal opinion. Because of his legal background, the hon. Member for Hexham (Guy Opperman) will be aware that with issues such as parking fines, even of the smallest nature, or some other infraction of the Road Traffic Act 1991, some people will go to any length to appeal. No one would want there to be a challenge some years down the road because of some dubiety about the legislation.

I believe that there will be a no vote in a couple of weeks' time. I am proceeding on that basis and hope that Government Members will do so as well. The Bill in the Scottish Parliament has all-party support and support from a wide range of non-governmental organisations, but at the moment it is basically stuck because of conflicting legal opinions in the Scottish Parliament.

Mr David Nuttall (Bury North) (Con): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mark Lazarowicz: With respect to the hon. Gentleman, I will make a bit more progress. Perhaps I will take interventions at the end of my remarks if I have time.

My Bill aims to cut through the thicket of legal argument by making it clear that the Scottish Parliament has legislative competence in this area. It would devolve to the Scottish Parliament, should it so wish, the power to introduce regulations to make irresponsible parking a criminal offence by amending schedule 5 to the Scotland Act 1998, and to exclude from the reservations to the UK Parliament provisions relating to parking on pavements and related issues. If the Scottish Parliament chooses to do so, that would include the power to impose fixed penalties.

I emphasise again that the Bill does not change the law on irresponsible or obstructive parking in Scotland, but it makes it clear that the Scottish Parliament can do so if it wishes. I want it to be able to do that without any

risk of legal challenge, because many of our constituents feel strongly about this issue and I expect it has been raised with many Members in their constituencies.

Let me be clear: I am talking not about off-road parking that causes no inconvenience to anyone, but parking that blocks entire pavements or impedes wheelchair users from using ramps, which is frankly a public nuisance. Even worse, such behaviour can be a potential cause of danger to pedestrians, particularly those who are visually impaired or disabled in some way. If blind or partially sighted people are forced into the road to get by, they cannot see oncoming traffic. Equally, parking at dropped kerbs blocks the place where wheelchair users can cross the road most easily. It is not just the disabled who are affected by disruptive parking, but the elderly, parents with pushchairs, and children and pedestrians more generally.

Mr Chope: Are not all the offences that the hon. Gentleman has identified already offences because they are obstruction of the highway? That is an offence under the Highways Act 1980, which applies to Scotland.

Mark Lazarowicz: In practice, there is difficulty implementing and enforcing different interpretations of the legislation. That is why the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Martin Horwood) will promote a similar private Member's Bill for England and Wales in the next couple of weeks. If my Bill progresses, it will go into Committee, which will investigate the points in more detail. That will allow the Scottish Parliament to go through the same procedure at an appropriate stage, which could be fairly quickly in its processes since the nature of its constitution enables it to make legislation more quickly. Irresponsible parking is not in the interests of motorists as it can make roads more congested and choke traffic. As I said, this issue affects many parts of the UK, and the hon. Member for Cheltenham will promote a Bill for the rest of Great Britain. My Bill seeks to allow progress to be made in Scotland, for the reasons I have given.

The hon. Member for Hexham asked about the legal position. I tend to agree with the view that this issue does not fall outside devolved competences, but there are opinions to the contrary and I want to ensure once and for all that there is no doubt about the Scottish Parliament's ability to bring forward legislation of this nature.

As I have said, the Bill is supported by various non-governmental organisations in Scotland including, Guide Dogs, Living Streets and Sustrans. My initiative also has the support of the MSP who has introduced a Bill in the Scottish Parliament. Although we have diametrically opposed views on independence, we agree that, whatever Scotland decides on 18 September, the proposal is for a simple, straightforward change to make our streets and pavements safe and more accessible, which is long overdue.

The Bill should be a non-party issue. I have therefore been in touch with the UK and Scottish Governments. I am grateful for the contact that I have had with them. I understand that the Government's position is that primary legislation is not necessary to achieve the objectives I have set out, and the Scottish Government might believe that the powers are a devolved competence. That is a matter of some disagreement, but the reality is that,

whatever is said in the House, MSPs of different parties have, in different ways, tried to introduce such legislation for more than seven years. They never get anywhere because of the difference of opinion on the competence of the Scottish Parliament to legislate on such matters.

I want action to be taken to tackle this problem in our communities. If the Minister can offer a better way forward than my Bill, I will be content with it. I recognise that, in practice, the changes I seek can be made only with the active co-operation and support of both the UK Government and the Scottish Government. However, I want action, so I wait with interest to see what the Minister says later in the debate.

1.56 pm

Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con): I rise to speak briefly on three fundamental issues. First, I am a lawyer. Secondly, I am concerned about the Scottish referendum. My constituency borders Scotland and I have spent an awful lot of time there over the past nine months trying to make the case for the Union. I will be going back there on 18 September, as many colleagues will, to continue to fight for the Union. Thirdly, in a former life as a barrister, for my sins, I was adviser to the Automobile Association on all matters parking. I had input into the Government's consideration of wheel clamping and various other grave and weighty matters, which shows what an eminent and stellar legal practice I had before the good burghers of Hexham elevated me to a proper place for the conduct of legal studies.

My previous experience dates back to *Vine v. London borough of Waltham Forest*, the test case on parking that was conducted all the way up to the Court of Appeal. The hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Mark Lazarowicz) has made great efforts to introduce the Bill. He spoke of the ability of those who are concerned with parking matters to take litigation to the nth degree. I went all the way to the Court of Appeal on a disputed judgment and received a 2:1 decision from their lordships over the princely sum of, I believe, £40, so I do not underestimate the power of the courts and litigants to take such matters to the nth degree.

That is why I have concerns about the hon. Gentleman's proposal. I speak for myself and cannot speak for those who represent various bits of Yorkshire and other places besides—

Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): Unimportant bits of Yorkshire.

Guy Opperman: Obviously.

My concern is that the hon. Gentleman is seeking to take a course of action in the House 10 days before the referendum. The powers we have given in the Scotland Act 2012 are supposed to have devolved the very same powers that he seeks to pass in the Bill. In addition, even more powers will go to Scotland if the referendum is successful. With great respect to him, that is a recipe for disaster.

If I can speak up for my former profession, if there is ever such a thing as a lawyers' charter, it is passing a Bill in one House of Parliament when another House of Parliament seeks to claim that it has priority. The laudable objective of outlawing the sort of parking that seems wrong to many people would be mired in the

courts on an issue of constitutional law—it is hard to believe that parking matters could go to the higher courts, but I am living proof that it has happened on many occasions—and so the Bill might hamper the very objective it seeks. I have serious questions, therefore, about the legal and constitutional basis going forward.

Mr Davis: Given my hon. Friend's previous profession, will he tell the House who would arbitrate when the two laws are in dispute?

Guy Opperman: That is the problem. In theory, if it concerned a Bill passed by this House, it would be determined by the High Court in this country, then the Court of Appeal and then the Supreme Court. However, were one to be litigious and difficult—and Lord knows there are plenty of organisations that are—one could say, "No, this is a matter for the Scottish House and Scottish courts". There might then be judicial review of the power of this House to introduce the legislation, and we would have the bizarre situation where a court might assess the legal merits on two particular bases under two different bits of legislation. If some of the legal arguments are correct—the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith accepts that there are legal arguments against his proposal—they would undermine the legal and statutory basis of his Bill.

Mark Lazarowicz: I invite the hon. Gentleman to read the Bill carefully. Currently, if legislation is passed by the Scottish Parliament, there is the possibility of a legal challenge in the Supreme Court, as he knows. The point of the Bill is to remove that possibility by specifically giving the Scottish Parliament the devolved competence so that there can be no dispute. The whole point is to reduce the possibilities he talks about.

Guy Opperman: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but as we all discover when we get into Parliament, the law of unintended consequences is, without a shadow of a doubt, the most powerful law passed by any Government or lawmakers.

I am not aware of the scale and measure of the legal advice, but Ministers far above my pay grade are always being asked to reveal their advice. The hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith is far more experienced than me and will know that, as is always the case, the Minister cannot reveal it. Surely, however, the legal advice from the Scottish Attorney-General and the lawyers who have disputed this matter over the past few years must be in the public domain and should be taken into consideration. I struggle to accept the Bill given that seven years into proceedings on this matter, lawyers have still not agreed on the appropriate legal and constitutional way forward. In that respect, I am greatly concerned that we might pass a Bill that would be enmeshed in legal process.

I merely wanted to make those observations. I fully understand the purpose of the Bill, as clearly one would wish to stop the things it aims to stop, but the bitter experience of my previous legal career and those of others—many lawyers have considered this particular point—leads me to question whether this is the right way forward.

2.3 pm

Mr Russell Brown (Dumfries and Galloway) (Lab): As a layperson, not someone with a legal background, I fully recognise some of the arguments the hon. Member for Hexham (Guy Opperman) makes, but my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Mark Lazarowicz) is exactly right: for the last several years, there has been constitutional bickering and wrangling over who is responsible for this matter. I ask the few of us left in the Chamber: how many of us have not come across an awkward individual who, inadvertently or otherwise, has parked their vehicle in a way that prevents someone with a child in a pram or a pushchair or a disabled person in a wheelchair from getting along the footway? I fully appreciate the point made over the last 10 or 15 minutes, but it is surely an obstruction. Of course it is, but in Scotland, the wrangling goes on.

The Bill, introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith, is all about determining where competence lies. It is abundantly clear that the Scottish Parliament want to do this, but the problem is in gaining the clarity, which I hope today's debate will allow to happen.

Only last week, I was out one evening on the referendum trail—as I have been on most evenings, most afternoons and most mornings of late—when I came across a property that had a boundary wall, a footway and a grass verge. A guy had pulled his vehicle across that grass verge. By pure chance, a lady coming along the footway in the opposite direction to me was in one of these small, not very wide mobility chairs—so she got through. She said, however, “I've been lucky, haven't I? If I'd been in a normal-sized one, I would have had to go on to the road”. That is pure inconsiderate driving—in fact, downright bad driving. We are living in a era, however, where this guy could not pull his vehicle into his driveway because there were another two vehicles there. This is happening more and more often. The issue is to a certain extent about road users being inconsiderate.

Mr David Davis: Forgive me, but I speak as an English, rather than as a Scottish, Member of Parliament. The issue is not—for many of us, I think—whether or not the legislation is generally a good idea; it is the confusion over why the Scottish Parliament cannot carry this out itself. What is stopping the Scottish Parliament; what is the confusion?

Mr Brown: I think my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith explained that. There is some bickering about how this can best be dealt with.

Guy Opperman: Briefly, can the hon. Gentleman clarify this for me? If, as I understand it, this measure has cross-party support, and if the issue has been a matter of consideration by the Scottish Government for seven years, why have that Scottish Government not passed this Bill?

Mr Brown: I would not say indiscretions, but certain little loopholes might have arisen. Even when my party was in coalition with the Liberal Democrats in Scotland for a number of years—

Mr David Davis: We feel for you!

Mr Brown: We won't go there. It seems to have been an inability to move the Scottish Parliament forward. I recognise, particularly when the three wise men are in their places right at the back on the Government Benches—

Mr Nuttall: There are only two.

Mr Brown: Only two, is that right? Okay, in that case I will let the two argue it out with the other one.

The issue is not about clogging up the whole legislative programme; it is simply about deciding that this power could be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. I am speaking at the Dispatch Box for the Opposition today, while the Government have a Transport Minister here. If the Bill were given a quick, clean bill of health, it would not fall to the Department for Transport to deal with, because the power would fall back through the Scotland Office. The Bill will not snarl up the programme of legislation for the Department for Transport.

If it comes down to money, we should look at the amount being spent by local authorities for dropped kerbs for people in wheelchairs and the like, and recognise that we still see inconsiderate behaviour by drivers who still block those kerbs. I emphasise again to Government Members that this is not a massive piece of legislation.

Mr Nuttall: I appreciate that this is not a massive piece of legislation, but could the shadow Minister give the House an idea of the extent of the problem in his constituency, representing, as he does, a Scottish constituency? Does he get a lot of complaints about this at his surgery, for example?

Mr Brown: I appreciate that my constituency is 300 miles away from here, but I think the experiences of my constituents who may use wheelchairs and such like is the same as that of people the length and breadth of the UK. It is not as if this is a specific problem there, but I would be very surprised if Members on the Government Benches had not encountered problems, and even seen it with their own eyes and thought, “That's a bit of bad parking.”

If this Bill is going to be talked out, I do not want that to come from me, however, so let me just say that this is about doing nothing more than devolving power to the Scottish Parliament to deal with this once and for all.

2.10 pm

Mr Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): I am certainly not going to talk this Bill out, because I hope we will have a chance to get on to my Bill, which would ensure we had to spend a minimum of 2% of GDP on defence. That is a very topical Bill, and even if we do not have a chance to debate it extensively, I hope it will get a Second Reading on the nod.

My first problem with the Responsible Parking (Scotland) Bill is its title, as everything the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Mark Lazarowicz) said in introducing it suggested he was trying to address the issue of irresponsible parking, so I think he has got the wrong title to his Bill.

Mark Lazarowicz: I was advised by the Clerks that “Irresponsible Parking” would not have been acceptable but “Responsible Parking” would be.

Mr Chope: Clause 1, however, refers to “Obstructive parking”. If that phrase is all right in clause 1, surely it would have been all right in the title of the Bill?

I have more serious reservations about this Bill, however. As has been said already, it is premature because of the proximity of the referendum. However, it does not matter which way the people of Scotland: if they vote for independence, which I sincerely hope they will not, they will take over the responsibilities set out in this Bill; and, as I understand it, a deal has been done—I am not saying it has been approved by this House—by all the leaders of the main political parties to the effect that if the people of Scotland vote against independence, they will be allowed what is called devo-max. I do not know exactly what devo-max involves, but I think it probably includes allowing the Scottish Government to decide on such issues as obstructive parking, rather than having them dealt with by the United Kingdom Government.

Philip Davies: Does my hon. Friend agree that there is a slight irony in the fact that Opposition Members are on the one hand arguing that we should not have independence for Scotland and that we are better together, while on the other hand they are acknowledging that this is an issue that is the same right across the UK but that it should be dealt with by more independence for Scotland? Is there not some slight irony and contradiction in the arguments they are putting forward?

Mr Chope: Well, there is nothing new in that, as my hon. Friend knows.

I was surprised, however, that the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Mark Lazarowicz) did not deploy the argument, in support of the no campaign in the referendum, that if Edinburgh was to become a diplomatic capital, the amount of obstructive parking by cars with diplomatic number plates would make the situation far worse than at present. If the people in his constituency and Edinburgh as a whole think there is a problem with obstructive parking, they should be very determined to vote no in the referendum to ensure it does not get any worse, with a whole lot more diplomatic vehicles there. That is a point that I make on behalf of the hon. Gentleman; it is a pity that he did not refer to it himself.

A further issue is that the Bill duplicates existing legislation. On too many occasions—not only on Fridays—the House tries to legislate on activities that are already against the law. The problem is that the existing law is not being properly enforced. I think the hon. Gentleman would accept that it is already against the law to obstruct the highway or to park on the pavement, thereby preventing disabled vehicles, buggies and people who are blind or have other handicaps from being able to move along the pavement. That is already against the law, and if that law is not being enforced, that should be a matter for the law enforcement authorities rather than for the lawmakers. People keep saying that we want more lawmaking, but let us think about whether we really want to litter the statute book with another piece of duplicate legislation.

There is a strong argument for applying the same road traffic laws across the length and breadth of the United Kingdom, and I am not quite sure why Scottish Ministers want to get involved in introducing separate offences for obstructing the highway.

Philip Davies: My hon. Friend is touching on some important points. Does he agree that Opposition Members have probably fallen into the Scottish nationalists’ trap? The nationalists are saying that they do not have the power to make these changes, simply in order to hide their own uselessness in governing Scotland. Rather than challenging them and telling them that they do indeed have that power and they need to pull their finger out and do something for the people they are supposed to be representing, Labour has fallen into the nationalists’ trap and accepted that more legislation is needed, thus giving the nationalists an excuse for not doing what they should be doing.

Mr Chope: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Why would we want to give the Scottish Parliament more powers when it seems to be agonising at great length over issues as trivial as the one we are discussing today? I do not think it has demonstrated that it can be decisive and in control of events.

Mr David Davis: There is another way in which the Bill is a gift to the Scottish nationalist argument. No one has argued that this problem is unique to Scotland. Indeed, it occurs across the whole country. If the Bill were passed, it ought to be called simply the Responsible Parking Bill, rather than the Responsible Parking (Scotland) Bill. Why should Scotland be different in this respect?

Mr Chope: I agree with my right hon. Friend. I believe in the United Kingdom. I was lucky enough to be educated at a Scottish university, and I would like to think that my degree will still be regarded as a United Kingdom degree, rather than one from a foreign country. I have given my reasons for not thinking that the Bill is in a fit state to go further in the House.

2.18 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Claire Perry): I sincerely thank the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Mark Lazarowicz) for the debate that we have had today. He clearly cares deeply about this important issue, and I commend him for the concern that he is showing. I should also thank my assiduous colleagues across the House for their interesting and thoughtful interventions. My hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Guy Opperman), who is no longer in his place, brought to the debate the benefit of his experience as a legal expert on all matters related to parking. He highlighted the point at the heart of the debate, which is the complexity of the legal and constitutional issues as they relate to this Parliament and to the one north of the border.

It was also interesting to hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr Chope). I wonder whether he shares my view that devo-max sounds more like a new form of bathroom cleaner. It is a very clunky term, but it does point up the need and the desire for this issue to be a matter for the Scottish Parliament. My hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Philip Davies) raised the matter of the inconsistency in the application of laws north and south of the border, and I hope to be able to clarify that point in a moment.

I want to talk about the spirit behind the Bill, which I suspect all Members share. I also want to discuss the criminalisation of parking offences, which I believe the

[*Claire Perry*]

Bill seeks effectively to provide the headroom to do in Scotland. I also want to say a few words about the legal and constitutional question, although as Members and the occupant of the Speaker's Chair will appreciate, this is not a time to be making policy announcements, given what is going to happen in less than two weeks' time.

The hon. Member for Dumfries and Galloway (Mr Brown) spoke eloquently about the problems that parking on pavements causes for pedestrians, whether or not visually impaired; older pedestrians, ladies such as my mother, who are pushing along a mobility device find it difficult to navigate, as do people with pushchairs. I well remember my experience as a mother of three bumping buggies up and down pavements, trying to find dropped kerbs. That is not easy and, as soon as children get older than six months old one cannot carry them in baby slings, and therefore they need to be on wheels.

I wonder whether other hon. Members recall going during last year's party conference season to some of the fantastic stands put up by the association, Guide Dogs, to help us understand what living streets should look like. I note that Guide Dogs has challenged the Prime Minister, not to the ice bucket challenge, although that cannot be far behind, but to a blindfolded walk—a chance for people from all walks of life, including Members, to get out there and experience the real impact of street clutter, including the challenge of vehicles parked on the pavement.

One thing the Bill and the debate has not touched on is the damage to pavements and the cost to local authorities of this irresponsible parking. It can be a serious problem in terms of maintaining road services and street services. I seek to reassure the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith and all Members across the House that I think everyone would agree with the spirit of what he is trying to achieve, which is to make parking more responsible, both north and south of the border, and to make the street journey of all sorts of pedestrians, including ladies and men with children, people in wheelchairs and people who are visually impaired, easier and safer.

Mr Nuttall: On this point about keeping pavements clear, is the Minister aware that following guidance from her Department on the removal of unnecessary signs on the pavement, more than 9,000 such signs have been removed, right across the United Kingdom?

Claire Perry: As always, my hon. Friend makes a detailed and well-made point. The Government strongly believe in removing all sorts of unnecessary street clutter, not only for pedestrians, but for drivers. The evidence base suggests that having more signs and confusing information reduces road safety, so I thank him for mentioning the work that is already being done.

As the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith has set out, his Bill seeks to devolve powers in relation to parking on pavements to the Scottish Parliament, enabling that body to legislate on this area and, specifically, to criminalise the act of parking on pavements—that is how I understand it. I will deal a little later with what happens in England. As he will know, that is complicated, as in some places there is a blanket ban on such parking and in other areas there is freedom to park on pavements, and we have a devolved approach on actually opting

out of that. In some areas there are criminal sanctions, whereas in others there are civil sanctions. It is not clear that there is a role model south of the border for what he is trying to achieve with the Bill north of the border. I think what the Bill is trying to achieve is to clarify the legal position in this area—the hon. Member for Dumfries and Galloway referred to the ping-pong that has gone on between Parliaments for many years on this issue—to clear the way for the passing of a Member's Bill in the Scottish Parliament on this matter.

Let me make brief reference to the Bill being presented by Sandra White, which intends to allow freedom of movement for all pedestrians by restricting parking at dropped kerbs, on pavements and double parking. The proposal was lodged on 24 January and although she has secured the right to introduce the Bill, it has not yet been introduced, despite having cross-party support. I suspect that, like me, the hon. Member for Edinburgh North and Leith shares some disappointment that it is not higher up the priority list for the Scottish Parliament, because that Bill could improve the passenger and pedestrian experiences for people north of the border.

As we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham, the legal situation as to who does what where in the parliamentary protocol is complicated. Under the Scotland Act 1998, transport in Scotland is, in general, the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government, although some aspects remain reserved to the UK Parliament, including subjects covered by the Road Traffic Act 1998 and the Road Traffic Offenders Act 1988. For example, section 19 of the 1998 Act contains a provision relating to heavy goods vehicles parking on verges, central reservations and footways, so that remains a reserved matter for the UK Government.

Other legislation makes specific provision on parking. Section 43 of the Road Traffic Act 1991 gave the Secretary of State the power to create

“permitted and special parking areas outside London”

on application by local authorities. In those areas, certain offences under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and other Acts do not apply. Instead a penalty charge is payable by the owner of the vehicle. That continues to be enforced in Scotland, but in England and Wales it has been largely replaced by the Traffic Management Act 2004, which contains provision for parking on dropped footways in England and Wales.

In Scotland, the powers of the Secretary of State for Transport to make the permitted and special parking areas are exercised by Scottish Ministers. The Scottish statutory instrument made under the power states that the power was passed on devolution to Scottish Ministers.

I promised to set out the Government's approach to parking policy in England, which may help to inform the debate. As I said in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley, we devolve responsibility to English local authorities for policy in respect of the provision of parking and parking facilities, such as the charge to park, the provision of bays, installing restrictions, and installing residents' parking bays. What is proposed today is consistent with that policy of devolving power down to those who sit closest to the local road and pavement users in a particular area.

Local authorities implement local restrictions by traffic regulation orders for which they are responsible. The delivery of these local schemes is entirely in keeping

with this Government's commitment to decision-making being taken at a local level. We are also committed to providing better scrutiny of those decisions.

Let me take a 30-second deviation to illustrate a local problem. In some areas of my constituency, including parking areas around Great Bedwyn station, there has been a long-running debate over residents' parking bays and the traffic overflow that arises from free parking at that station.

On 30 August, the Department for Communities and Local Government published a discussion paper on a mechanism for giving a new right to local residents or local firms to raise a petition that will require a council review of the use of yellow lines or other parking provisions. I am sure that all Members will welcome the announcement made on 21 June regarding a package of measures to rein in over-zealous local parking practices. Those include restricting the use of CCTV for parking enforcement to schools, bus lanes, bus stops and red routes; introducing a new right to allow local residents and local firms to demand a review of parking in their area; reforming operational parking guidance so that it is less heavy-handed with motorists and positively supports local shops—something to which we are all passionately committed—introducing mandatory 10-minute “grace periods” at the end of on-street paid-for and free parking; and possibly a widening of the powers of parking adjudicators.

Turning back to the issue of civil versus criminalisation of parking offences, it may be worth noting that more than 90% of local authorities now enforce parking civilly. The Traffic Management Act 2004 imposes an explicit duty on local authorities to manage their network so as to reduce congestion and disruption. There are many advantages of civil parking enforcement rather than criminal enforcement, including the fact that local authorities are responsible for their local road network and therefore know best where the clutter and congestion are and where the pavements need to be clear. Of course that then frees up the police to focus their resources on the more serious matters. I am sure that will be a popular with many Members of this House. We want the police to be focused on the most serious crimes. Where we have the capacity, we want local authorities and others to carry out civil enforcement in a way that most benefits the local communities.

There are some endorseable parking offences. Broadly, those involve dangerous or obstructive parking, although there is often a lack of clarity over those offences. A driver's licence can be endorsed with penalty points or withdrawn.

Turning to Scotland, I have mentioned that Scottish Ministers have powers to make permitted and special parking areas in Scotland and therefore under the decriminalised parking enforcement scheme in Scotland any local authority can apply to Scottish Ministers for orders decriminalising certain parking offences. Under those parking enforcement regimes, a local authority can go out and place penalty charge notices on vehicles contravening parking regulations. That now applies to about half of the local authorities that are operating the system—

2.30 pm

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

Ordered. That the debate be resumed on Friday 12 September.

Business without Debate

HEALTH SERVICE COMMISSIONER FOR ENGLAND (COMPLAINT HANDLING) 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 October.

DEFENCE EXPENDITURE (NATO TARGET) BILL

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

Hon. Members: Object.

Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 12 September.

WILD ANIMALS IN CIRCUSES 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 October.

Burial Space (London)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Dr Thérèse Coffey.*)

2.31 pm

Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con): Burial provision is not something that many people wish to discuss, but I believe that as a consequence of such reticence the need to create additional space in London will require hard decisions to be made.

Much of what I have to say this afternoon draws heavily on the work of Julie Rugg and Nicholas Pleace and their report produced for the Greater London authority. I make no apology for that, as I believe their conclusions need the widest possible circulation. Way back in 1997 it was estimated that there was only nine years' supply of burial space in inner London. In outer London supply was uneven: six boroughs would run out of space before 2016 but some had sufficient burial space for the next 100 years. The significant change introduced to address the lack of provision was the London Local Authorities Act 2007, under which burial authorities in the capital were given power to disturb human remains in a grave where burial rights had been extinguished and when the intention was to increase the space for interments in the grave.

The provision relates to graves that are at least 75 years old, and it was anticipated that the ability would facilitate what has been termed a "lift and deepen" approach to grave reuse, whereby any disinterred remains from a particular grave would be placed in another container and reinterred deeper in the same grave, freeing the desired depth for reuse. The change in the legislation therefore offers local authorities the option to reuse purchased graves when the right has been extinguished and the necessary faculty has been secured. The regulation does not apply to unpurchased or common graves as no rights exist in those graves.

Back in June, I asked the Secretary of State for Justice what estimates had been made of the number of local authorities that had adopted those powers and what the estimated number of grave spaces introduced as a result was. The Minister responded that no estimate of the number of grave spaces created or of the number of local authorities that have used powers under the Act to reuse graves has been made. He also said that he was keeping the issue of burial space under active review, including considering what legislative changes might be necessary to address a shortage of graves.

It appears that as yet no London borough has adopted these powers. In many respects, this was just a sticking plaster in addressing the underlying lack of burial space, but a combination of my asking the parliamentary question and securing this Adjournment debate seems to have hastened concern within the Department. I am grateful to the Minister for organising a meeting next week.

This brings me to my area of concern. The supply of burial spaces was already regarded as problematic in the mid-1990s, but how have local authorities overcome the problems as all burial authorities appear not to have adopted permitted grave reuse measures?

The Rugg and Pleace report asserts that supply has been underpinned by the creation of graves in areas of cemeteries where burials were not originally anticipated,

but, as we know from the old adage about God not creating any more land, that is not sustainable. The use of this initiative will also prevent future capacity as the 75-year expiration will be extended to additional parts of cemeteries, rendering them unusable.

One reason I have become interested in the availability of burial space resulted from pressures within my constituency. In recent months, Barnet council received an application for the construction of a mausoleum next to Westminster cemetery in Mill Hill. The application was dropped following opposition from many local people. I met the applicants and they explained the rationale behind the application. Although the application was dropped, I believe that a new application will be made, and I expect the planning committee on Barnet council to consider the possible merits.

To ensure that Barnet council considers the application appropriately, I asked the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what guidance the Department had published for local authorities in determining planning permission applications for the creation of cemeteries. The former Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham and Stamford (Nick Boles), replied that applications are considered on their own merits, and by law must be determined in accordance with the development plan for the area, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. But I ask, do we need more space?

The Office for National Statistics indicates a projected decline in deaths in London between 2010 and 2031. It is anticipated that total deaths in the city will fall from 57,400 in 2010 to 46,700 in 2031, with decline being fairly steady throughout that period. But mortality projections alone are insufficient data on which to calculate demand for burial space. London has a great deal of economic in-migration, and the outward migration of households following retirement. It is not possible to estimate the number of deaths in this city of migrants whose bodies are then repatriated, or where deaths may take place outside London but result in a cremation or burial in the capital.

The extent of demand for burial space will be influenced by the incidence of cremation. In 2008, ONS figures indicated that there were 50,476 deaths in London, which resulted in 37,700 cremations in London crematoria—a crude cremation rate of 75%. But data supplied by the Cremation Society of Great Britain indicate that in London cremation numbers have been falling. Between 1997 and 2009, the number of cremations in crematoria located in London dropped from 48,275 to 36,736—a fall of 24%. In the years between 2001 and 2009, the falling number of cremations was proportionately higher than the falling mortality rate, at 15.9% versus 10.7%.

It was not possible during the course of the research to interrogate that reduced incidence of cremation. There may have been a growing preference among Londoners for burial, but a more likely explanation could be the religious and ethnic groupings in London. Research has been produced on attitudes to grave reuse among different religious denominations. Using that research, it can be estimated that while almost three quarters of Christians can be expected to opt for cremation, and between 80% and 90% of Sikhs and Hindus would choose the same, just 4% of Jewish people and 1% of Muslims would choose cremation. That is of great significance to constituents in my seat of Hendon, as I have large Jewish and significant Muslim populations.

There are three burial authorities operating in Barnet—the London borough of Camden, the City of Westminster and the London borough of Barnet itself. The latter owns Hendon cemetery and crematorium. Twenty years ago, it was estimated that there were 1,343 graves remaining. In addition, there was half a hectare of space adjacent to the cemetery, purchased by the cemetery company but never brought into use. In 2009, the site itself still had unused areas, but had also completed an exercise to establish where space might be available between graves and where there were “half spaces” suitable for children’s interments. Overall, it was estimated that around 25 years’ use was left, but it is uncertain whether the extension was brought into use.

I think I have painted a picture of a problem that exists not only in my constituency but in other parts of London. To add to the mix are the predictions of the London Mayor’s London excessive deaths framework. That predicts the average death rate per week of 922 people in the capital. Based on a prediction of a 75% cremation rate, 230 people are buried each week in the capital. However, in the event of a situation that the document describes as “highly likely” to occur, such as a heatwave or cold weather, or a communicable disease, it is predicted that the death rate could leap to 1,980—an increase of 1,058 deaths per week. The most likely scenario for coping with such an eventuality is that local authorities would need massively to increase their mortuary space. Having visited the mortuary in Barnet, I can say that it would not take a huge number of additional deaths for the present capacity to be reached.

Consequently, I believe that the capital—and the country—is facing this problem. Back in May I was a member of the Delegated Legislation Committee that considered the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure. At that Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) stated that in one part of her constituency there were only 16 burial plots. In his response, the Second Church Estates Commissioner, my right hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Sir Tony Baldry), said,

“she has identified what I suspect is something of a lacuna in the legislation about who is responsible for making provision for new cemeteries and new burial ground places.”—[*Official Report, Fifth Delegated Legislation Committee*, 12 May 2014; c. 5.]

I should be grateful to the Minister if he advised on this point and explained the actions that need to be taken to address this vital issue.

2.39 pm

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Simon Hughes): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Dr Offord) on securing this debate on the provision of burial space in London and on his well-informed and up-to-date analysis of the position in his part of the capital city. This is self-evidently an important issue. I am aware that my coalition colleague and former Justice Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, the hon. Member for Maidstone and The Weald (Mrs Grant), responded to a debate on a slightly broader but similar topic—burial space and the treatment of death—in September 2012.

Government responsibility for burials is shared between two Departments—the Ministry of Justice and the Department for Communities and Local Government. My Department, as my hon. Friend knows, has responsibility

for burial law and policy; the DCLG has responsibility for local burial authorities. I am obviously responding today on behalf of the whole Government.

I shall make a few general points. Burials and funeral arrangements more widely are, of course, not just important in policy terms, but hugely important to individuals at various stages in their lives and to families. People are faced, sometimes unexpectedly, with the task of making practical arrangements, while dealing with a wealth of emotion—their own and that of other grieving friends, relatives and neighbours—and they may never have been through this process before.

Burial space has increasingly become an issue in some parts of England and Wales. One of the big questions is whether this is a national problem that needs to be addressed by central Government, or a local or regional problem—for example, a Greater London problem—best dealt with by existing or new local measures.

Back in 2005, when the Home Office was responsible for burial law and policy before the Ministry of Justice was created, it conducted a survey of burial provision that indicated that, at that time, the median remaining life of cemeteries was between 25 and 30 years. Since the Greater London authority report to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon referred was published in 2010, York university cemetery research group published an audit of burial space in 2013, which concluded that the situation in London was more critical than elsewhere, but that this was not true of all London burial authorities. Certainly, its analysis was that the position was not critical in Barnet—my hon. Friend’s local authority—because it is a borough in which the relevant authorities have planned ahead. My information is that there is enough burial space in general for what was then assessed to be at least the next 60 years. So Barnet is very well provided for.

Until early in the last century, burial was the only lawfully available option for disposing of the dead in this country. Parliament then responded to the growth of interest in and understanding of cremation. The Cremation Act 1902, which permitted cremation for the first time, was followed by the Roman Catholic Church lifting its own ban on cremation.

My hon. Friend gave the figures for London. The most recent national figures that I have available show that just over 70% of all disposals of bodies after death in England and Wales are now done by cremation. However, for many people, there are strongly held views behind their wish to be buried, or for burial for the family member for whom they are responsible. For many people in all our constituencies, the faith that they have and hold or the views that they have and hold mean that burial is the only acceptable option to deal with the bodies of the dead.

For example, in my constituency of Bermondsey and Old Southwark, which is made up of the northern two fifths of the London borough of Southwark, we have a very diverse and constantly changing community. We have a large Christian community of many denominations and a large Muslim community. They are the largest two faith communities. We have smaller communities of Buddhists and Baha’is and people from every other major world faith, as well as people of no religious faith. My hon. Friend’s constituency will have the same variety of faith views, although the numbers obviously differ in different parts of London.

[*Simon Hughes*]

In addition, relatives—often husbands and wives—wish to be buried together, no matter how long apart the deaths have occurred. The Ministry of Justice has responsibility for issuing the exhumation licences that can make that possible. None of us, I am sure, would underestimate the importance of those final arrangements and the wish of families to fulfil the dying wishes of whoever has died. There are important reasons for the fact that there continue to be 150,000 burials across the country every year.

I myself asked, what is the law on burials? Where can people be buried? It is worth putting the answer on the record for clarification. There are few regulations concerning where someone can be buried, although the landowner must give permission. The local authority will usually give guidance on any regulations that they expect to be observed. It would be wise of people also to contact the Environment Agency. However, there is nothing in law to prevent burial on private land such as a garden, as long as certain steps have been taken. The landowner has to authorise the burial, and the local environmental health officer has to be informed of the proposed burial and be content for it to take place there because, depending on the nature of the location, there may be public health implications. Woodland and green burials, which I understand to be more common, also require the permission of the landowner.

From my hon. Friend's contributions and his questions earlier this year, and from my own constituency and ministerial experience, I know that there are three separate issues to be considered. First, on projections of demand, I shall not repeat into the record the figures that my hon. Friend gave, which are commonly available. They are from the Office for National Statistics and the Greater London authority, and they must inform our debate. They predict a decline in death in London, as my hon. Friend said, but of course he is right to say that as faith groups in particular change as a proportion of the London community, the demand for burial will change.

The London cremation rate in 2008 was 75%. The best figures that I have are that 27% of Christians opted for burial, while 91% of Buddhists, 96% of Jews and 96% of Muslims chose that option. As my hon. Friend rightly said, Hindus and Sikhs have a strong preference for cremation. Some 50% of those with no religion opted for burial. The logic of those figures is that boroughs with larger proportions of certain faith communities are likely to face increased pressure for burial space and greater reluctance to reuse graves—a point I shall come to in a moment. In my hon. Friend's borough of Barnet, as I anticipated he would say, there is likely to be continued demand for burial space for the Jewish community, which is significant in that borough and some others in London.

Of the 33 London authorities, the GLA 2010 survey showed that current burial spaces then available were full in eight local authorities: Camden, City of London, City of Westminster, Hackney, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth and Tower Hamlets. Southwark figures were not given. The other boroughs said that capacity was critical or problematic, or adequate or sustainable. I think that my hon. Friend has seen the

figures, the map and the graph, but I am happy to share them and will make sure that they are published for others to see.

The second issue is whether and when existing graves should or could be reused. I have been approached by several hon. Members and by the burial and cremation sector with requests for the Government to give further consideration to the reuse of old graves. When the Home Office conducted its survey of burial provision in 2005, it also canvassed views on the principle of reusing old graves. At the time the response rate was very low, but the small number who did respond were against reuse. That said, I am clear that the issue of shortage of burial space in some areas is not one that can be ignored and therefore the question of reuse must be addressed.

My hon. Friend referred to, and other Members may be aware of, the reuse scheme available to London burial authorities by virtue of section 74 of the London Local Authorities Act 2007. That provides powers for burial authorities to extinguish the burial right in graves where—this is the crucial point—no interment has taken place for 75 years, and then to reuse the plots by redigging, lowering the existing burial, capping and putting in new bodies on top. Despite that facility having been available for several years now, take-up is almost non-existent. Although the City of London, one of the 33 local authorities in Greater London, reused just under 900 graves in the four years up to 2013, it did this in nearly every case using the powers not in the 2007 Act but those under ecclesiastical law where, on Christian consecrated land, reuse of graves is permitted if the Church authorities issue what is called a faculty. The York research group report that I mentioned earlier confirmed the limited use of these powers under the 2007 Act. It suggested that the reason for this is partly the difficulties involved in establishing who owns the monuments, and similar issues, and partly the administrative complexity of identifying grave ownership.

A number of those who are calling for something to be done have asked that access to the reuse scheme in the 2007 Act that applies in Greater London be extended to apply to the rest of England and Wales. There must clearly be reasons why London councils are not generally making more use of these powers, and before the Government consider legislation to extend the scheme more widely, we need to make sure that we understand the reasons why they have not been used significantly in London.

The third issue, which my hon. Friend did not touch on but may well have come across—I certainly have—is the potential for collaboration between local authorities or differing policy in local authorities, including adjacent local authorities. Given that the figures available show that there are some authorities that are next to each other where one is full and the other has spare capacity, it would clearly be helpful if those with spare capacity collaborated with those that do not have space.

There is another issue of justice that we need to look at seriously. Often differential charges are applied according to whether, at the time of death, a person is living within the boundaries of the area in which they wish to be buried—or their family wish them to be buried. Charges are often considerably, sometimes punitively, higher for those living outside the areas in which they had expressed a wish to be buried. Somebody who has lived almost all their life in one place and moves, for

example, to a nursing home, which then becomes their address, but wants to be buried in the borough—the community—in which they have lived in all their life, and perhaps where their husband, wife or parent is buried, may suddenly discover that the price is five times what it would have been if they had stayed where they were. That is clearly not just, and I am determined that, with local government, we deal with it.

I fully accept and understand the importance of this issue, as do the Government more widely. The most important factor is to be clear, with up-to-date information, as to why some councils, but not others, are finding themselves without sufficient burial space. As my hon. Friend knows, and was kind enough to indicate, I have already taken a number of steps since I took up this post to make sure that that is the case. I have met and heard the views of those interested and involved professionally in this area, including representatives of the National Association of Funeral Directors and some constituency funeral directors, particularly F. A. Albin and Sons, who are very experienced and very clear about some of the things that need to be done. I thank the association and Albins for their help and advice.

In June, I met the all-party parliamentary group on funerals and bereavement, who wanted to make sure that everything possible was being done to enable the prompt burial of those whose religion requires it—a matter of significant concern to Jewish, Muslim and some Christian communities as well as some other communities and people. I am working with the chief coroner, His Honour Judge Peter Thornton QC, who arranged a bereavement event in the summer and has provided guidance to coroners on dealing with out-of-hours requests to facilitate timely burials.

Next week I am meeting a group of hon. Members who have written to me or to my predecessors about their concerns over the availability of burial space in their constituencies. I have arranged for a general meeting

to gather evidence and take their views. I think my hon. Friend is able to come to that, and I welcome him. Let me use this opportunity to put out the invitation more widely to colleagues who may not have seen it either to come to the meeting next week or to let me know what their local concerns are, particularly whether the 2007 Act is working in London and ought to be extended. I should also like to announce that in the near future I intend to invite faith leaders to share their views with me as to what ought to be done.

The position I inherited was that the Government had said for some time that they wished to keep this subject under review. In the weeks ahead, encouraged by people such as my hon. Friend, I want to be in a position to move forward from that holding position. This debate and the coming meetings will help us properly to consider whether, for example, it would now be appropriate to discuss enabling legislation that would permit other local authorities outside Greater London to permit the reuse of graves in their areas. That would of course have to be after full consultation on the idea and on any proposed legislation with the communities affected, and democratic deliberation and decisions by the local councils in question. There may also be other things we need to do in Greater London, and beyond, that Government can either facilitate or enable.

I am determined not only that the Government should be active in anticipating the problem and dealing with it but that we act in the right way. I offer the House and colleagues, and all those professionally involved, a clear commitment to continue working on and engaging with this issue to make sure that we come to some conclusions on the way forward over the next few weeks and months.

Question put and agreed to.

2.55 pm

House adjourned.

Written Statements

Friday 5 September 2014

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Informal Meeting: EU Foreign Ministers

The Minister for Europe (Mr David Lidington): I attended the informal Foreign Ministers meeting on 29 and 30 August in Milan, Italy.

The informal format of the Gymnich allows EU Foreign Ministers to engage in a free-ranging discussion on a number of issues. In contrast to the formal Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), Ministers do not agree written conclusions. The next FAC is due to be held on 20 October.

The Gymnich was chaired by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Ashton of Upholland. Discussion centred on issues in the EU's eastern and southern neighbourhoods.

Elmar Brok MEP, Chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on Foreign Affairs, attended the discussion on Ukraine/Russia.

GYMNICH DISCUSSION

Ukraine/Russia

There was broad agreement that Russia had increased supplies of equipment and personnel to separatists in eastern Ukraine. Ministers agreed the diplomatic process should continue.

I said that the EU had to accept that President Putin had decided to treat Europe as an adversary rather than a partner. We needed to deter the scale of Putin's ambitions in Ukraine, increasing the economic and financial cost through intensified sanctions and diplomatic pressure. Longer-term we needed to reduce our energy dependence, enforce the third energy package rigorously, keep up NATO deterrence, and counter Russia's propaganda with our own communications effort. We needed to support Ukraine on the economy, energy, governance, and the elections.

There was broad agreement that pressure on Russia should be increased through a further package of sanctions, although a number of member states reserved their position on how far this should go.

Iraq

A number of Ministers agreed on the need for member states to provide weapons to the Kurdish and/or Iraqi Government forces fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and to increase and co-ordinate the humanitarian response. There was agreement to promote an inclusive political process in Iraq. Ministers also agreed on the need to engage with regional players to contribute to resolving the challenge of ISIL.

It was also agreed that there needed to be improved co-ordination on handling foreign fighters from member states.

Libya

Ministers agreed on the need to engage regional players to support political dialogue, underscored the democratic legitimacy of the House of Representatives and supported its efforts at working towards national

reconciliation. They also congratulated Bernardino Leon on his appointment as the UN Special Representative to Libya.

Baroness Ashton also said that EU Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) Libya would continue its mission and return to Tripoli as soon as possible.

MEPP/Gaza

Baroness Ashton argued that the EU had been an important player throughout her tenure, supporting John Kerry, engaging with Egypt, Israel and the Palestinians. She also informed Ministers that she would co-chair the 1 October donors' conference in Cairo.

Ministers agreed that the ceasefire—on which the Egyptian role had been pivotal—should develop into a durable agreement, and there was general consensus that this should combine demilitarisation and reconstruction with international oversight (where the EU could play an important role).

I underlined the important role that the UN Security Council should play and argued that the EU should support a durable agreement, including through the reactivation of EUBAM Rafah under the appropriate circumstances. I urged the European External Action Service (EEAS) to follow up on work to put forward EU options for supporting a ceasefire.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Child Sexual Abuse

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mrs Theresa May): Further to my statement to the House on 7 July and my written ministerial statement of 9 July 2014, *Official Report*, column 20WS, I am pleased to announce that I have appointed Fiona Woolf CBE, JP to be the chairman of the independent inquiry panel of experts in the law and child protection, to consider whether public bodies—and other, non-state, institutions—have taken seriously their duty of care to protect children from sexual abuse.

Fiona Woolf has had a long and distinguished career holding high-profile and challenging positions, including President of the Law Society and Chairman of the Association of Women Solicitors (AWS), and is only the second woman since 1189 to hold the position of Lord Mayor of London. As a lawyer, and latterly partner, at CMS Cameron McKenna for over 20 years, Fiona Woolf has worked in over 40 jurisdictions. She has advised over 25 Governments and multilateral agencies such as the World Bank. She has also served as a member of the Competition Commission for eight years.

I am confident that Fiona Woolf has the skills and experience needed to set the strategic direction of the inquiry, to lead the work of the panel, and to challenge individuals and institutions without fear or favour to get to the bottom of this issue, and stop it happening again.

To help her in this role, and to ensure that the inquiry delivers the thorough, robust and independent review that I have promised, she will be supported by a panel of distinguished experts, and will be able to call upon expert advisers as required.

It is vital that the panel has access to independent expert legal advice and I am pleased to be able to announce that Counsel to the Inquiry will be Ben Emmerson QC, founder of Matrix Chambers and one of the UK's most distinguished lawyers in the field of national and international human rights law. I can also confirm two panel members: Graham Wilmer MBE, founder of the Lantern Project, which was established in 2003 to provide help and support for survivors of sexual abuse and Barbara Hearn OBE, former deputy Chief Executive of the National Children's Bureau. Each of them has a track record of giving a voice to vulnerable people and will bring important expertise and experience to the inquiry.

I can also announce that Professor Alexis Jay has agreed to act as an expert adviser to the panel. Her recent report "Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Rotherham (1997—2013)" exposed a terrible example of child sexual abuse and exploitation; and her experience and insight will, I am sure, be of benefit to the inquiry.

The other panel members will be announced in due course once they have been appointed by the chairman.

Fiona Woolf will agree the terms of reference with the full panel, once they are appointed, to ensure that they are sufficient to deliver the robust inquiry which is required. I will report back to the House on this as soon as possible.

JUSTICE

Transforming the Services of the Office of the Public Guardian

The Minister of State, Ministry of Justice (Simon Hughes): On 21 August, the Government published the response to the consultation paper "Transforming the

Services of the Office of the Public Guardian: Enabling Digital by Default" which sought the views on the next phase of our proposals to transform the services provided by the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG). This reinforces our commitment to implementing the "digital by default" approach in public services.

The response announced:

The introduction of new simplified forms for lasting powers of attorney (LPA) which will make it easier for those customers wishing to use the paper-based service;

An expansion of the range of resubmitted LPA cases where a reduced application fee applies, to include those whose current LPA could only be registered after an application has been made to the Court of Protection;

Our thinking for the future supervision of deputies.

I would urge anyone with an interest in the Office of the Public Guardian to read the response.

I have deposited copies of the response paper in the Libraries of both Houses. Copies are also available in the Vote Office and Printed Paper Office. Copies are available on the internet at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/transforming-the-services-of-the-office-of-the-public-guardian-enabling-digital-by-default>.

PRIME MINISTER

Machinery of Government Change: Relationship Support

The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron): This written ministerial statement confirms that responsibility for Relationship Support policy will transfer from the Department for Education to the Department for Work and Pensions, effective immediately.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 5 September 2014

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Carol Mills

Mr Simon Burns: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the status is of the letter that Mr Speaker sent to the Prime Minister recommending Ms Mills' appointment as the new Clerk of the House and Chief Executive; [207884]

(2) whether the letter that Mr Speaker sent to the Prime Minister recommending Ms Mills' appointment as the next Clerk of the House and Chief Executive will be recalled. [207885]

John Thurso: Ms Mills' name has not yet been submitted as Under Clerk of the Parliaments (Clerk of the House of Commons and Chief Executive) to Her Majesty the Queen for approval. Mr Speaker has written to the Prime Minister asking that its submission be delayed until a clear way forward on this issue has been agreed.

Clerk of the House

Mr Simon Burns: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, if the Commission will make available to the right hon. Member for Chelmsford all the records of all the discussions of the panel considering the appointment of the new Clerk of the House and Chief Executive. [207883]

John Thurso: Records relating to the appointment of the new Clerk of the House and Chief Executive constitute the personal data of the applicants. It is not the Commission's practice to disclose confidential personal information of this nature.

Mr Simon Burns: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to the answer of 18 June 2014, *Official Report*, columns 607-8W, on Clerk of the House, what percentage of the first year's salary of any candidate recommended for appointment Saxton Bampfylde is contracted to receive. [207887]

John Thurso: Saxton Bampfylde was contracted for a flat fee of £18,000 to provide support for the recruitment of the next Clerk of the House and Chief Executive. There is no salary related element.

Palace of Westminster

Angus Robertson: To ask the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, representing the House of Commons Commission, what the total expenditure on essential maintenance of the Palace of Westminster was in (a) 2009-10 and (b) 2010-11; what

the Commons contribution was in each such year; and what estimate he has made of the likely increase in such costs in the next two financial years. [207731]

John Thurso: The total expenditure on essential maintenance of the Palace of Westminster and the Commons contribution was as follows:

2009-10: £8.9 million, Commons share: £5.5 million

2010-11: £9.6 million, Commons share: £6.0 million.

Essential maintenance has been interpreted to include planned and reactive day-to-day maintenance plus resource project works in excess of £25,000. It excludes staff costs and capital projects such as cast iron roofs repairs and the Medium Term Mechanical and Electrical project.

While the Medium Term Financial Plan, which covers the next two financial years has not yet been agreed, essential maintenance is expected to be in line with previous years subject to inflation.

CABINET OFFICE

Big Lottery Fund

Lisa Nandy: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office if he will take steps to revise the criteria for awarding grants to ensure that organisations less than two years old cannot apply for grants from the Big Lottery Fund. [207304]

Mr Newmark: The Big Lottery Fund is independent of government in its decision-making on funding and grant awards.

Big Society Network

Lisa Nandy: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) which Minister authorised the decision to refer the bids from the Big Lottery Fund and the Cabinet Office to the Big Society Network and the Society Network Foundation back to the Social Investment Business; [207293]

(2) which grade of officials in his Department made the decision to refer the bids for grants from the Big Lottery Fund and the Cabinet Office to the Big Society Network and the Society Network Foundation back to the Social Investment Business; [207294]

(3) which officials in his Department made the decision to refer the bids for grants from the Big Lottery Fund to the Big Society Network and the Society Network Foundation back to the Social Investment Business; [207295]

(4) which official in his Department authorised the Cabinet Office's payment to the Society Network Foundation for the Get In project in October 2012; [207323]

(5) which Minister authorised the Cabinet Office's payment to the Society Network Foundation for the Get In project in October 2012. [207324]

Mr Newmark: Decisions taken regarding the Cabinet Office's Social Action Fund grant to Society Network Foundation, made through the Social Investment Business, were made via the designated decision-making mechanism for this programme—the Minister for Civil Society, supported by the programme's Advisory Panel.

The Big Lottery Fund is independent from Government in its decision-making on specific funding and grant awards, and no Ministers or Cabinet Office officials had any involvement in any decisions taken by them regarding the grants made to the Society Network Foundation or Big Society Network.

Lisa Nandy: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) whether his Department has approached (a) NESTA and (b) Big Lottery to request them to fund the Big Society Network or the Social Network Foundation; [207320]

(2) how many discussions (a) Ministers and (b) officials in his Department had with the Big Lottery fund prior to that organisation approaching the Big Society Network to apply for a grant; [207303]

(3) what recent discussions his Department has had with NESTA on funding the Big Society Network. [207321]

Mr Newmark: The Cabinet Office has not had any discussions with NESTA regarding funding for the Big Society Network, and did not approach NESTA or Big Lottery Fund and ask them to fund the Big Society Network.

No discussions with Big Lottery Fund concerning the Society Network Foundation or Big Society Network were held by either Cabinet Office Ministers or Officials.

Cabinet Office holds regular sponsorship meetings with Big Lottery Fund, which cover governance, accounting and efficiency issues but not funding applications or decisions.

Lisa Nandy: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) for what reasons his Department made a second payment to the Society Network Foundation for the Get In project in October 2012; [207325]

(2) what steps he is taking to recover the money spent on the Get In project. [207322]

Mr Newmark: The Get In project experienced difficulties in its first quarter. The Cabinet Office worked with Society Network Foundation to assess whether these difficulties could be overcome. When it was concluded that they could not, the project was stopped and Cabinet Office paid only up to that point. This is standard practice when funding small charities to undertake innovative projects.

The Civil Society Compact states that funders should attempt to support organisations overcome difficulties and should give at least three months' notice before ending a financial relationship with a charitable organisation.

The Social Investment Business is currently following their standard procedure to investigate and take appropriate action where funds received by Social Network Foundation for the Get In project may not have been used for the purposes for which the grant was given.

Regarding grant funds spent on the Get In project, Cabinet Office would not normally seek to recover funds spent in line with a grant agreement.

EU Law

Mr Redwood: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how many new EU directives and regulations have been transposed into UK law by his Department since May 2010. [207253]

Mr Maude: The Cabinet Office has transposed two EU directives into UK law since 2010 and six directly applicable regulations have come into effect in the Cabinet Office's area of responsibility in the same period.

Television

Mr Bradshaw: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office how much (a) his Department, (b) the Prime Minister's Office and (c) the Deputy Prime Minister's Office spent on televisions in (i) 2013 and (ii) 2014 to date. [207131]

Mr Maude: The Prime Minister's Office and the Deputy Prime Minister's Office are an integral part of the Cabinet Office.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner (Mr Hurd) to the hon. Member for Barnsley East (Michael Dugher) on 8 October 2013, *Official Report*, column 170W.

Voluntary Work: Young People

Lyn Brown: To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office (1) what assessment he has made of regional variations in participation in the National Citizen Service; [207119]

(2) how much his Department has allocated to the National Citizen Service in the 2014-15 financial year; [207122]

(3) what estimate he has made of the number of people enrolled in the National Citizen Service. [207123]

Mr Newmark: Successive independent evaluations have shown that National Citizen Service has seen significant growth in participation across England and Northern Ireland, with the programme seeing its 100,000th participant this year. The programme is delivered by regional providers who are performance managed by the NCS Trust, an independent not-for-profit organisation. Regional performance is regularly monitored, along with other factors including quality of NCS delivery and the social mix of participants.

An independent evaluation of NCS will be published by Cabinet Office in 2015, after the conclusion of the 2014 NCS programmes, and will detail the costs and number of young participants during 2014.

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Bovine Tuberculosis

Mr Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (1) if she will place in the Library a copy of the internal review by her Department which upheld an appeal against the use of

regulation 12(5)(c) for the protection of intellectual property to prevent the release of the results of the post-mortems carried out on badgers killed during the pilot culls; [207952]

(2) if she will place in the Library a copy of the internal review by her Department which upheld an appeal against the use of regulation 12(5)(c) of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 in relation to the results of the post-mortems carried out on badgers killed during the pilot culls. [207957]

George Eustice: My officials have explained the handling of this case in separate correspondence. No such internal review took place as your initial request was made in a parliamentary question. The information on the post-mortems carried out during the culls as part of the monitoring of the humaneness of controlled shooting is now publicly available and can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/300388/humaneness-report.pdf

Dogs: Animal Welfare

Simon Kirby: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs if she will introduce new guidelines to protect the welfare of dogs in cars; and if she will make a statement. [207134]

George Eustice: The Government already makes available up-to-date advice to owners when travelling with their dogs in cars. The advice is available on the gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/animal-welfare-in-severe-weather>

EU Law

Mr Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs how many new EU directives and regulations have been transposed into UK law by her Department since May 2010. [207259]

George Eustice: According to departmental records, DEFRA has transposed a total of 36 EU directives into UK law since May 2010, nine of which were transposed without the need to introduce new legislation.

We do not hold a central record of all directly applicable EU regulations coming into effect since 2010. Details of all current European legislation are on the Euro-Lex website:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/browse/summaries.html>

Livestock: Transport

Mr Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps she is taking to ensure that laws relating to the export of live animals are adhered to at ports; and if she will make a statement. [207829]

George Eustice: The Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) is responsible for official controls (including risk-based inspections and checks at ports) in relation to rules on the export of live animals. These controls must be consistent with the relevant animal health and welfare legislation. Where animal

welfare non-compliances are discovered, AHVLA will take the appropriate regulatory action and, where necessary, refer the matter to the local authority for enforcement action.

SCOTLAND

Television

Mr Bradshaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much his Department spent on the purchase of televisions in (a) 2013 and (b) 2014 to date. [207223]

David Mundell: The Scotland Office spend on the purchase of televisions was (a) £1,351.69 in 2013, and (b) £539.96 to date in 2014.

EDUCATION

Chemistry: Teachers

Sir Peter Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will increase the funding available for bursaries for chemistry Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses. [207365]

Mr Laws: Bursaries for pre-initial teacher training subject knowledge enhancement (SKE) courses are intended to support course participants' travel and living costs while they are on the course, and are paid in line with the length of the course. The SKE operations manual contains more detail about funding levels and eligibility criteria for SKE training bursaries. We believe that existing SKE bursary levels are sufficient to meet participants' needs and continue to see strong take-up of SKE courses. We will consider any representations from SKE course participants or providers on bursary funding levels.

Childminding

Lucy Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) when she plans to publish the results of the report on her Department's childminder agency pilots; [207947]

(2) how many (a) childminders and (b) parents responded to the IPSOS Mori and Ecorys survey on childminder agencies; when the results of the survey will be published; and how likely (i) childminders and (ii) parents who responded to the survey were to use a childminder agency. [207951]

Mr Gyimah: The Department for Education published a report which captures key learning from the evaluation of the childminder agency trials on Friday 5 September which is available online at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/childminder-agency-trial-evaluation

Evidence for the evaluation was gathered through a variety of methods including case study interviews or focus groups with representatives from the trials, interviews with childminders and parents, analysis of emerging agency business models and two surveys; one with

childminders and one with parents and carers in 15 of the 19 trial areas. 334 childminders and 424 parents and carers responded to surveys as part of the trials. These surveys are not fully representative of local populations of childminders and parents, and are indicative only.

Children: Mental Illness

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Education pursuant to the answer from the Minister of State for Care and Support of 4 June 2014, *Official Report*, column 102W, on mental illness, what assessment she has made of the impact of these psychiatric conditions on academic attainment levels at GCSE, A levels, Degree and Post Graduate Degree level. [207563]

Mr Timpson: The last official assessment of the levels of psychiatric conditions in young people was published in 2004 by the Office of National Statistics, the 'Mental health of children and young people in Great Britain'¹.

This found that across the general school population 24% of pupils were assessed as being behind in their schooling, with 9% assessed as being two or more years behind.

For those with clinically diagnosed mental health conditions the percentages were:

1. Conduct disorders—59% of children with conduct disorders were behind in their intellectual development, with 36% being two or more years behind
2. Emotional disorders—44% of children with an emotional disorder were behind in their intellectual development, with 23% being two or more years behind
3. Hyperkinetic disorders—65% of children with hyperkinetic disorders were behind in their intellectual development, with 18% being three or more years behind
4. Autistic spectrum disorders—72% of children with autistic spectrum disorders were behind in their intellectual development, with 39% being two or more years behind
5. Multiple disorders—63% of children with multiple disorders were behind in their intellectual development, with 40% being two or more years behind.

We recognise that early identification of mental health issues in children and young people and the provision of appropriate support and treatment can be key to educational attainment, and making a successful transition to adulthood. This is reflected in our advice and guidance to schools.

In June we published advice for schools on mental health and behaviour, helping them to identify and support pupils with unmet needs. The new 0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice, which came into effect this month, has a new category of needs entitled Social, Emotional and Mental Health. It promotes the earlier identification of an individual's mental health needs and sets the expectation that children who are displaying concerning behaviours should be assessed to see if there are any underlying problems, including issues with mental health or emotional well-being.

The new MindEd web portal, funded by the Department of Health, provides more specific training and guidance on mental health to all professionals working with children and young people.

¹ Available at:

Pre-school Education

Lucy Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many of the large nursery chains offer funded places for two year olds as part of the Government's free 15 hours of early education for disadvantaged two year olds; and how many such places are offered in England. [207942]

Mr Gyimah: The Government does not collect this data. Data on Government funded early education, including early learning for two-year-olds is available online at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/provision-for-children-under-5-years-of-age-january-2014

The Government encourages all high-quality early education providers to offer places for disadvantaged two-year-olds. The data published above shows that in January 2014 over 14,000 providers were delivering places for early learning for two-year-olds. This is very significant progress in advance of the 40% entitlement. The Government expects many more providers, including those in the large nursery chains, to offer places now the 40% entitlement has commenced.

Prevent Review

Diana Johnson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if she will publish detailed information on what work her Department has undertaken to implement paragraphs 10.49 and 10.55 of the Government's Review of the Prevent Agenda, published in June 2011; and if she will publish any assessments conducted into the effectiveness of that work; [207953]

(2) what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Education Act 2011 in achieving the aims set out in paragraph 10.53 of the Government's Review of the Prevent Agenda, published in June 2011. [207954]

Mr Timpson: Keeping our children safe, and ensuring our schools prepare them for life in modern Britain, could not be more important. There is no place for extremist views in any school. A dedicated counter-extremism unit was established within the Department for Education in 2010 and has responsibility for implementing the commitments in the Prevent strategy. The Secretary of State's statement to the House on 22 July, in response to Peter Clarke's report into allegations about schools in Birmingham, set out the latest steps that the Government is taking to increase the resilience of schools to extremism, and the Secretary of State will be making a further statement to the House on this subject shortly.

Publicly-funded schools remain under a statutory duty to promote community cohesion and have an important part to play in supporting the creation of more integrated communities. This duty is complemented and reinforced by the requirements on schools to encourage respect for the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs. The Department has consulted on strengthening the independent schools standards, which apply to academies and free schools, to require schools to actively promote these values. Ofsted will introduce an equivalent expectation

on maintained schools through changes to the Ofsted inspection framework later this year, supported by departmental guidance.

Pupils: Disadvantaged

Lucy Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education with reference to her Department's press notice of 16 July 2014 on pupil premium reform, to which 87 local authorities where performance of disadvantaged pupils is a concern the Minister of State for Schools wrote.

[207950]

Mr Laws: I wrote to 87 local authorities in March and April 2014, raising my concern about the 2013 examination results of disadvantaged pupils in particular maintained schools within their areas, and asking them to support those schools' improvement. The recipient list and criteria are below and will be published on GOV.UK shortly.

Letters were sent to local authorities where ministerial letters had been sent in the spring to a small number of maintained schools expressing concern about the progress of disadvantaged pupils at key stage 2, and the progress and/or overall attainment of disadvantaged pupils at key stage 4. Letters were also sent to local authorities where the average GCSE results of disadvantaged pupils across all of their maintained schools declined between 2011 and 2013 or between 2012 and 2013.

Local authorities in receipt of letters:

Barking and Dagenham
Barnsley
Bath and North East Somerset
Birmingham
Blackburn with Darwen
Blackpool
Bolton
Bracknell Forest
Bradford
Brent
Bristol
Buckinghamshire
Bury
Cambridgeshire
Central Bedfordshire
Cheshire East
Cornwall
Cumbria
Derbyshire
Devon
Doncaster
Dorset
Dudley
Durham
East Sussex
Essex
Gateshead
Gloucestershire
Hammersmith and Fulham
Hampshire
Hartlepool
Hertfordshire
Isle of Wight
Kent

Kirklees
Knowsley
Lancashire
Leeds
Leicester city
Leicestershire
Lincolnshire
Manchester
Merton
Norfolk
North Lincolnshire
North Somerset
North Yorkshire
Northamptonshire
Northumberland
Nottingham City
Nottinghamshire
Oxfordshire
Peterborough
Portsmouth
Richmond upon Thames
Rotherham
Salford
Sandwell
Sefton
Sheffield
Shropshire
Slough
Somerset
South Gloucestershire
Southampton
Southend
Staffordshire
Stockport
Stockton-on-Tees
Stoke on Trent
Suffolk
Surrey
Swindon
Tameside
Trafford
Wakefield
Walsall
Warrington
Warwickshire
West Berkshire
West Sussex
Wigan
Wiltshire
Wirral
Wolverhampton
Worcestershire
York

Science: Teachers

Sir Peter Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many (a) pre-ITT and (b) post-ITT Subject Knowledge Enhancement courses were taken in (i) chemistry, (ii) biology and (iii) physics in the last five years.

[207366]

Mr Laws: The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) (and its predecessor) have not allocated places or funding to support Subject Knowledge Enhancement (SKE) for the subject of biology meaning only physics and chemistry can be reported on.

Although the academic year 2013/14 has now concluded, the recruitment data for this period will not be collected until November 2014. The table at Figure 1. below is, therefore, limited to recruitment data supplied by SKE providers for each of the four academic years prior to the academic year 2013/14. Furthermore, funding for post-ITT SKE only began in the academic year 2011/12 and so is not applicable to academic years 2009/10 or 2010/11.

Fig. 1 Pre and post ITT recruitment from the academic year 2009/10 to the academic year 2012/13 in SKE for physics and chemistry

Academic Year	Physics		Chemistry	
	Pre-ITT	Post-ITT	Pre-ITT	Post-ITT
2012/13	437	253	474	159
2011/12	509	139	574	87
2010/11	590	n/a	522	n/a
2009/10	673	n/a	577	n/a

Social Services: Children

Helen Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will review the way in which local authorities carry out their responsibilities for corporate parenting and take any steps needed to ensure that training for councillors involved in that role is both adequate and up-to-date. [207873]

Mr Timpson: We expect all local authorities to be good corporate parents to the children in their care. The standard of corporate parenting is subject to regular review as part of Ofsted inspection. In particular, Ofsted judgments about the quality of leadership assess the extent to which the local authority is an active, strong and committed corporate parent that knows the children and young people it looks after well; is an effective and successful champion of their progress (particularly in education and learning); and an ambitious corporate parent, ensuring that each child has every opportunity to succeed.

We recognise that effective corporate parenting is everyone's business and have consequently funded work by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) to raise awareness of corporate parenting among elected members. This project brings local authority members and directors of children's services together with children in care councils to enhance the voice of the child and spread good practice. The project has also produced training materials which are available to all local authorities.

Special Educational Needs

Steve McCabe: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether her Department conducted a financial impact assessment of the effects of the most recent Education Financial Settlement on students with special educational needs. [207188]

Mr Laws: On 17 July, I announced changes to the way that school funding would be distributed next year. These included the allocation of £390 million extra schools funding to the least fairly funded local authorities,

and some small improvements to the allocation of funds for pupils and students with special educational needs (SEN). The Department for Education consulted on how to allocate the additional funding, and carefully considered the impact of the funding distribution methodology on individual local authorities' ability to meet the needs of such young people. No authority will be worse off as a result of the changes. All authorities should, therefore, be in a position to ensure that all pupils in their area with SEN get the level of support that they require.

Teachers: Disciplinary Proceedings

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on how many occasions in the last 12 months decision-makers within her Department have issued sanctions to teachers after disciplinary hearings that have differed from the sanctions recommended by the Professional Conduct Panel of the National College for Teaching and Leadership; and in what respects those sanctions have differed from the recommended sanctions. [207201]

Mr Laws: In the period 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014, decision makers issued sanctions to teachers after disciplinary hearings that differed from the sanctions recommended by the Professional Conduct Panel of the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) on seven occasions. Details are included within the table below.

Number of cases	Recommendation of panel	Final decision
3	No prohibition.	Prohibition for life with opportunity to apply for the order to be set aside after a minimum period of two years.
3	Prohibition for life with opportunity to apply for the order to be set aside after a minimum period of five years.	Prohibition for life with no opportunity to apply for the order to be set aside.
1	Prohibition for life with opportunity to apply for the order to be set aside after a minimum period of 10 years.	Prohibition for life with no opportunity to apply for the order to be set aside.

JUSTICE

EU Law

Mr Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice how many new EU directives and regulations have been transposed into UK law by his Department since May 2010. [207264]

Mr Vara: Since May 2010, my Department has transposed five EU Directives into UK law.

In the same period, two EU Regulations with application to the UK (either where the UK has exercised its Title V Justice and Home Affairs opt-in, or where no opt-in exists) have come into force and now apply. Two further Regulations in which the UK will participate have come into force, but do not yet apply.

European Convention on Human Rights

Mr Slaughter: To ask the Secretary of State for Justice what his policy is on reform of the European Convention on Human Rights; and if he will make a statement. [207316]

Mr Vara: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given on 1 September 2014, Parliament identifying number 206542.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Ashya King

Lady Hermon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps he is taking to ensure that relatives of Ashya King other than his parents are being facilitated to accompany him (a) whilst in hospital in Spain and (b) on his return journey to the UK; and if he will make a statement. [207802]

Mr Lidington: Foreign and Commonwealth Office Consular officials in Spain have been in regular contact with Ashya's family since he was located and supported his elder brothers in securing daily access to Ashya while in hospital from 0900 to 2200.

Business: Human Rights

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions he has had with Ministers in the Home Office on UK efforts to support the protection of human rights in the supply chains for UK companies and products. [207614]

Mr Lidington: Last September, the UK became the first country to launch a National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. On 11 June the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my right hon. Friend the Member for East Devon (Mr Swire), together with the Minister for Modern Slavery and Organised Crime, my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire Moorlands (Karen Bradley), and the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Employment Relations, the hon. Member for East Dunbartonshire (Jo Swinson), held a roundtable discussion with a number of companies and bodies representing business interests, including the British Retail Consortium and the Ethical Trading Initiative, on the voluntary approach to addressing human rights abuses in the supply chains of large UK companies. Our action on tackling slavery in supply chains is consistent with our commitment on business and human rights as set out in our National Action Plan.

Climate Change

Kerry McCarthy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the efficacy of his Department's work on climate change; and what future steps his Department plans to take to support international action on climate change. [207805]

James Duddridge: Ministers have endorsed the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) climate change priorities, including work with the Foreign Secretary's Special Representative, the Department for Energy and Climate Change and other Government Departments and our global network of climate attaches. This is in support of the Government's aim of achieving a global agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through the UN in Paris in December 2015. We work closely with international partners, including through FCO Programme Funds. Recent examples of impact include China launching seven regional Emissions Trading Schemes; international promotion of the UK's Climate Change Act with influence among some 60 countries taking forward climate laws; and under the UK's 2013 Presidency, the G8 recognising that climate change presents a risk to global security. We also promote UK low carbon and environmental goods and services, with UK exports valued at £3.4 trillion in 2011/12 and UK ranked sixth globally with a market share of 3.7%. Climate change and energy security remain foreign policy priorities for the FCO; we keep future plans under constant review.

EU Law

Mr Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many new EU directives and regulations have been transposed into UK law by his Department since May 2010. [207260]

Mr Lidington: Since May 2010 the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has not transposed any EU directives or regulations into UK law.

Mr Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what fines have been levied on the UK Government for non-compliance with EU directives since November 2012. [207280]

Mr Lidington: The UK Government has not been fined for non-compliance with EU directives since November 2012.

Ireland

Naomi Long: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress his Department has made on exploring potential funding options for the Causeway British-Irish Exchange Programme. [207497]

Mr Lidington: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other Government Departments continue to explore whether ongoing or transitional financial support is available to the Causeway Youth Exchange Programme following the British Council decision to withdraw financial support. We will look at all potential options and endeavour to keep the programme stakeholders updated on progress.

Lesotho

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps his Department is taking to assist in the maintenance of peace and stability in Lesotho. [207877]

James Duddridge: I am deeply concerned by the current political and security situation in Lesotho. Staff at our high commission in South Africa, who cover our relations with Lesotho, are closely monitoring events and are in close contact with the key political actors. In my statement of 2 September I welcomed the engagement by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and expressed our hope that all Lesotho's parties will work together to ensure disputes are settled in a peaceful constitutional manner. Lesotho is among the issues I will discuss during my visit to South Africa next week.

Sri Lanka

Robert Halfon: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent assessment he has made of the merits of the appointment of a team of experts led by the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to assist the investigation into alleged abuses in Sri Lanka. [207273]

Mr Swire: On 26 June, the former Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Mr Hague), welcomed the appointment of experts to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Investigation on Sri Lanka. As his statement noted: 'the inclusion of Martti Artisaahri, Silvia Cartwright and Asma Jahangir completes a strong team with a clear mandate from the UN Human Rights Council' to investigate alleged violations and abuses on both sides of Sri Lanka's military conflict. The UK played a key role in securing the investigation.

The full statement can be found at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-welcomes-announcement-of-un-investigation-team-on-sri-lanka>

Television

Mr Bradshaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department spent on the purchase of televisions in (a) 2013 and (b) 2014 to date. [207215]

Mr Lidington: This information is not held centrally. It could be collected only at disproportionate cost.

DEFENCE

Armed Forces: Vehicles

Bridget Phillipson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to the answer of 19 June 2014, *Official Report*, column 726W, on armed forces: vehicles, how many insurance claims relating to Ministry of Defence vehicles were (a) made and (b) paid by his Department on each of the last 10 years. [207501]

Mr Dunne: In line with general Government practice, the Ministry of Defence does not normally insure its assets. Claims against the Department arising out of incidents involving its motor vehicles are handled under contract by its third party motor claims administrators, Gallagher Bassett International Limited. The information sought, which is readily available only for the period from 2007-08, is given in the tables:

Received year	Number of claims		Total
	Class		
	Motor Third Party Bodily Injury	Motor Third Party Property Damage	
2007-08	241	2,225	2,466
2008-09	299	1,916	2,215
2009-10	295	1,592	1,887
2010-11	325	1,534	1,859
2011-12	341	1,320	1,661
2012-13	295	1,324	1,619
2013-14	285	1,273	1,558
2014-15 to date	66	378	444
Total	2,147	11,562	13,709

Received year	Number paid		Total
	Class		
	Motor Third Party Bodily Injury	Motor Third Party Property Damage	
2007-08	197	1,098	1,295
2008-09	251	1,091	1,342
2009-10	239	1,033	1,272
2010-11	270	978	1,248
2011-12	287	814	1,101
2012-13	196	826	1,022
2013-14	148	647	795
2014-15 to date	4	74	78
Total	1,592	6,561	8,153

Military Bases: Northern Ireland

Ms Ritchie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made on the investigation into the deaths of soldiers at Abercorn barracks in Ballykinler in December 2012 and February 2013. [207683]

Mr Francois: The deaths of two soldiers at Abercorn Barracks are a personal tragedy for their families and loved ones, and our thoughts remain with them. As is normal with the death of Armed Forces personnel in the UK, these have been investigated by the local Home Office police force, in this case the Police Service of Northern Ireland. We understand that they have concluded their investigations and passed their conclusions to the Coroner, who is in the process of establishing formal inquests into the soldiers' deaths.

An internal service inquiry has been established by the Army to consider the facts and identify any lessons to prevent anything like this happening again. This is a complex inquiry, involving a significant number of witnesses and, while we are seeking to complete it as soon as possible, determining the findings and recommendations will naturally take time. It is important that the inquiry is conducted properly and given the appropriate space to reach its conclusions. The families have been kept informed throughout.

RAF Brize Norton

Mr Gray: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress is being made on plans for an air freight terminal at RAF Brize Norton. [207588]

Anna Soubry: A modern replacement freight handling facility at RAF Brize Norton is currently planned for delivery early in the next decade.

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency received in each year since 2010; and whether those complaints have been categorised. [207037]

Anna Soubry: The Service Personnel and Veterans Agency, now Veterans UK, received the following number of complaints about the standard of customer service received, categorised into the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS), War Pensions Scheme (WPS) and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS). The number of complaints about standards of customer service from military personnel were only counted from January 2014.

2010

AFPS 30
WPS/AFCS 445
Total Complaints 475

2011

AFPS 15
WPS/AFCS 420
Total Complaints 435

2012

AFPS 10
WPS/AFCS 460
Total Complaints 470

2013

AFPS 30
WPS/AFCS 290
Total Complaints 320

2014 (to 31 July)

AFPS 25
WPS/AFCS 95
Military Personnel 10
Total Complaints 130

Television

Mr Bradshaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much his Department spent on the purchase of televisions in (a) 2013 and (b) 2014 to date. [207211]

Mr Dunne: This information is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Any expenditure on televisions must be necessary, appropriate, cost-effective and an admissible charge to public funds.

TNT

Bridget Phillipson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many files have been lost by TNT archive services in each year of the existing contract. [207299]

Anna Soubry: Since commencement of the Ministry of Defence-TNT Pan Government Records Management Contract on 18 Dec 2003, no files have been lost by TNT archive services.

Unmanned Air Vehicles

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of Elbit's performance in the Watchkeeper programme. [207383]

Mr Dunne: None. UAV Tactical Systems Ltd, a joint venture company owned by Elbit and Thales, is a sub-contractor of Thales UK, the prime contractor for the Watchkeeper programme. It is the responsibility of prime contractors to select and manage the performance of their sub-contractors.

Veterans: Mental Illness

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many and what percentage of veterans who have left the armed forces in the last 20 years have suffered mental illness. [207562]

Anna Soubry: Information on the number and percentage of veterans who have left the Armed Forces in the last 20 years and have suffered from mental illness is not held by the Ministry of Defence.

However, as of March 2014, there were 121,900 ex-Service personnel in receipt of a disablement pension under the War Pension Scheme. Of these, 10,610 (9%) were in receipt of a disablement pension where the recorded condition relates to a mental disorder. As of 31 March 2014, there were 11,165 personnel, who were no longer in Service on 1 August 2014, awarded compensation under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme for an injury or illness attributable to Service. Of these, 1,120 (10%) were awarded compensation where the recorded condition relates to a mental disorder.

Warships

Oliver Colville: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) when he expects a decision to be made on the naming of the new Type 26 frigates; [207163]

(2) what the process is for the naming of Royal Navy ships; [207164]

(3) if he will name one of the new Type 26 frigates HMS Plymouth. [207165]

Mr Dunne: The Ships' Names and Badges Committee (SNBC) is responsible for considering and assessing the possible names for a new ship or class of ship. The committee considers all names which have been proposed, formally and informally, and presents its recommendations to the Navy Board. The name(s) chosen by the Navy Board are forwarded to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence before being submitted to Her Majesty the Queen for final approval. A final decision with regards to this process is not expected until the Type 26 Global Combat Ship programme has completed its assessment phase and any subsequent investment decisions are complete. The SNBC has noted the proposal to use the name HMS PLYMOUTH.

PRIME MINISTER

Counter-terrorism

Steve Rotheram: To ask the Prime Minister what discussions he has had with the (a) Home Secretary and (b) the Secretary of State for Defence on protection from terrorism in northern cities following the most recent rise in the terrorism threat level. [207924]

The Prime Minister: I have regular discussions with the Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Defence.

The Government's first priority is to make sure we do everything possible to keep our people safe.

Islamic State

Paul Flynn: To ask the Prime Minister what recent discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on plans to refuse entry to UK passport holders suspected of participation in terrorist activities with the Islamic State while in Iraq or Syria; and whether in such discussions he has set out to which other countries he expects such passport holders to go after exclusion. [207686]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the statement I made on 1 September 2014, *Official Report*, columns 23-27.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Atos Healthcare: Gloucestershire

Richard Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many medically qualified staff have been employed by Atos in (a) Gloucestershire and (b) Gloucester in each of the last five years. [207160]

Mr Harper: Atos Healthcare has an Assessment Centre in Gloucester undertaking ESA/IBR assessments for those claimants living in Gloucestershire.

While there are a small number of medically qualified personnel permanently based at Gloucester Assessment Centre, other medically qualified personnel also regularly complete assessments at this site.

The number of medically qualified personnel undertaking ESA/IBR assessments at Gloucester Assessment Centre in each of the last five years is as follows:

<i>As at September to August each year</i>	<i>Number</i>
2009-10	24
2010-11	41
2011-12	24
2012-13	25
2013-14	16

The reason the number of medically qualified personnel undertaking ESA/IBR assessments at Gloucester Assessment Centre in each of the last five years has reduced is due to there now being a regular team of 4 practitioners based in Gloucester, which has meant fewer practitioners travelling from other Centres to conduct assessments in Gloucester.

Employment and Support Allowance

Mr Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions whether his Department monitors the number of employment and support allowance claims which are awaiting action by (a) a work capability assessment provider and (b) his Department. [207549]

Mr Harper: Yes.

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the average time taken to process a mandatory re-consideration of an employment and support allowance is; and if he will make a statement. [207948]

Mr Harper: This information is not yet available. DWP statisticians are currently working to collate and quality assure data on Mandatory Reconsideration for Employment and Support Allowance as a priority. The Department has committed to publishing the statistics when the Departmental statisticians judge that the data meet the standards set out in the UK Statistics Authority's Codes of Practice. The aim is to release an initial set of official statistics on Mandatory Reconsideration by the end of 2014.

Employment Schemes: Young People

Stephen Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the contribution by the Minister of State for Employment of 1 September 2014, *Official Report*, column 16, on youth employment (support) how much funding from the youth contract wage incentive scheme has been re-allocated; and to which other areas. [207949]

Esther McVey: DWP has reallocated funds, from the total £1 billion Youth Contract, to focus on the hardest to help youth groups who are still finding it difficult to take up vacancies and encourage self-employment, the table below lists the additional support that is being provided from the Wage Incentive underspend since 2011.

<i>Wage Incentive Underspend Re-allocation</i>	<i>Funding (£ million)</i>
Additional Jobcentre advisor resource in 20 Hotspot areas	56.0
Extension of the New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) Scheme to December 2014	35.0
Funding for BIS for New Enterprise Allowance (NEA) start-up loans	20.0
City Deals (including £5 million for Scotland and Wales and £1.8 million for Glasgow)	56.8
Heywood review of 16-21 year olds: funding to support the 16-17 NEET pilots and the BIS 18-21 Work Skills pilots	6.0
Additional funding for BIS to support young people further away from the labour market for education and training activities intended to lead initially to Traineeships or equivalent provision, and subsequently employment	1.1
Intensive Jobcentre advisor support for disadvantaged NEETs in selected areas	1.1
Total	176.0

Housing Benefit: East Sussex

Simon Kirby: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the effects of the under-occupancy penalty on social housing tenants in (a) Brighton and Hove and (b) East Sussex; and if he will make a statement. [207092]

Esther McVey: The information requested is not available.

On a national scale, reversing the removal of spare room subsidy policy would cost the tax-payer approximately £500 million per annum.

Housing Benefit: Social Rented Housing

Tim Farron: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions if he will make an estimate of (a) the amount of savings accruing to the public purse through penalties incurred on housing benefit arising from the under occupancy penalty to date and (b) the amount paid in discretionary housing payments in that time. [207317]

Esther McVey: The information is as follows.

(a) The Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy is estimated to save around £500 million per year in 2013/14 and 2014/15.

(b) In 2013/14 total discretionary housing payment expenditure by local authorities across Great Britain was £176,393,889. This figure includes amounts spent by Local Authorities over and above their government contribution in DHP funding. At the end of the financial year, 240 out of 380 LAs across Great Britain under-spent by £13,285,430 against the available Government contribution. This was in addition to the £7,111,693 unallocated from the £20 million reserve fund.

Detailed information about discretionary housing payment expenditure was published in June 2014 and can be found at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/322455/use-of-discretionary-housing-payments-june-2014.pdf

Mr Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what financial information is sent to his Department from individual local authorities on the administrative costs incurred in the preparation for, and the processing of, the under-occupancy penalty; and if he will make a statement. [207327]

Esther McVey: The Department has provided funding to each local authority to meet the additional costs resulting from our reforms to Housing Benefit. Local Authority Associations were fully consulted when determining these new costs.

The Department does not collect details of expenditure on Housing Benefit administration from individual local authorities.

Jobseeker's Allowance: Disqualification

John McDonnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) how many youth rate jobseeker's allowance claimants have been referred for sanction while they undertake a traineeship since August 2013; [207912]

(2) what steps are taken against a claimant of youth rate jobseeker's allowance who leaves a traineeship before it was completed. [207935]

Esther McVey: Youth claimant attendance and participation on a traineeship is voluntary so there would not be any sanction if they chose to leave the programme early. However, Jobcentre Plus work coaches interview anyone who does not complete their traineeship to establish why, and to determine the most appropriate next steps towards achieving their job goal.

Personal Independence Payment

Richard Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what recent assessment his Department has made of Atos's performance in carrying out personal independence payment assessments. [207159]

Mr Harper: The Department's contracts with Atos Healthcare (and Capita) for the delivery of assessments for Personal Independence Payment include a full set of service level agreements setting out the Department's expectations for service delivery. We are closely monitoring their progress and are taking action to drive up performance where this does not meet the required standards. We are working closely with our suppliers to speed up the process for claimants.

By the autumn, we expect no one to be waiting for an assessment for longer than 26 weeks and by the end of the year, we expect no one will be waiting longer than 16 weeks.

Alec Shelbrooke: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when applications for personal independent payment will be available online. [207270]

Mr Harper: While Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claims are not currently available online, part of our longer term plan is to develop an online claim service for PIP that meets the needs of our claimants. It is important that we get the design of this right before moving to implementation.

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what assessment he has made of the comparative performance of Capita and Atos in conducting personal independence payment assessments. [207332]

Mr Harper: The Department's contracts with Atos Healthcare and Capita for the delivery of assessments for personal independence payment include a full set of service level agreements setting out the Department's expectations for service delivery, including quality of assessments and the number of days to provide advice to the Department. We are closely monitoring their progress and are taking action to drive up performance where this does not meet the required standards.

We are aware that, in many cases, it is taking longer than we would like for claimants to have their assessments with Capita and Atos Healthcare. To ensure they deliver we are working closely with our suppliers to speed up the process for claimants.

By the autumn, we expect no one to be waiting for an assessment for longer than 26 weeks and by the end of the year, we expect no one will be waiting longer than 16 weeks.

Personal Independence Payment: Scotland

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many personal independence payment (a) registrations and (b) decisions were made in the (i) KA and (ii) PA postcode areas between April 2013 and March 2014. [207333]

Mr Harper: Published statistics show that in the KA postcode area there were (a) 2,840 registrations and (b) 1,070 decisions made for the personal independence payment. In the PA postcode area, there were (a) 2,430 registrations, and (b) 680 decisions made for the personal independence payment.

Social Security Benefits

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions pursuant to the answer of 24 June 2014, *Official Report*, column 180W, on social security benefits, if he will conduct an estimate of the saving to the public purse generated by the reduction of (a) employment and support allowance and (b) incapacity benefit for individuals in receipt of a pension income of more than £85 per week in 2013-14. [207081]

Mr Harper: We have no plans to undertake such an estimate.

John Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what estimate he has made of the difference between changes in (a) carers' benefits, (b) disability benefits and (c) older people's benefits and the rate of inflation in each of the last three years. [207636]

Steve Webb: Carers' and disability benefits, and the additional state pension, must by statute be uprated in line with prices. So the increase in those benefits over the last three years has reflected the increase in the consumer prices index.

The basic state pension has been increased with the triple lock (by the highest of average earnings, CPI or 2.5%), and the standard minimum guarantee in pension credit has been uprated in line with the cash increase in the basic state pension. In each of the last three years, this means that the standard minimum guarantee has increased by more than the minimum requirement of the increase in average earnings. The resulting over-indexation of the standard minimum guarantee has been funded through an increase in the savings credit threshold and the associated reduction in the savings credit maximum.

The table indicates the percentage increases in CPI; basic state pension; average earnings; and the standard minimum guarantee in each of the past three years.

	2012-13	2013-14	Percentage 2014-15
CPI	5.2	2.2	2.7
Basic state pension	5.2	2.5	2.7
Average earnings	2.8	1.6	1.2
Pension credit standard minimum guarantee	3.9	1.9	2.0

Social Security Benefits: Appeals

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what right of appeal claimants will have against reports and decisions made through doorstep interviews where their benefits are affected; and by what legislative means that system of appeals will be introduced. [207153]

Mr Harper: The Department visits some benefit claimants in their home to review their benefit claim and check if the Department or Local Authority is paying the correct amount of benefit. If following the interview it is considered that a claimant's benefit is incorrect the information is passed to a Decision Maker in that part of the Department, or the Local Authority, which pays the benefit to the claimant. If the Decision Maker decides that the benefit award is incorrect a new decision, with dispute rights-Mandatory Reconsideration followed by appeal-will be sent to the claimant. These are not new dispute rights introduced for these home visits. They apply to all appealable benefit decisions and arise from the Social Security Act 1998 and the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

Social Security Benefits: South West

Richard Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions how many (a) work capability assessments and (b) personal independence payment assessments has been undertaken by Atos in (i) the South West, (ii) Gloucestershire and (iii) Gloucester in the last 12 months; and how many assessments resulted in the claimant being found fit for work. [207128]

Mr Harper: Information on the number of Personal Independent Payment assessments completed by provider is not available.

The information we can provide for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) work capability assessments is shown in the following table.

Total number of ESA Work Capability Assessments and, of these, the number found Fit for Work in the South West and Gloucestershire: 1 October 2012 - 30 September 2013

Area	Total (where functional assessment has been completed)			Of which:		
	ESA new claims— Initial assessments	ESA claims— Repeat assessments	Incapacity Benefit re-assessments	ESA new claims— Initial assessments	ESA claims— Repeat assessments	Incapacity Benefit re-assessments
South West Region	14,400	2,000	26,800	3,900	100	3,400

Total number of ESA Work Capability Assessments and, of these, the number found Fit for Work in the South West and Gloucestershire: 1 October 2012 - 30 September 2013

Area	Total (where functional assessment has been completed)			Of which: Fit for Work		
	ESA new claims— Initial assessments	ESA claims— Repeat assessments	Incapacity Benefit re-assessments	ESA new claims— Initial assessments	ESA claims— Repeat assessments	Incapacity Benefit re-assessments
Gloucestershire	1,700	200	2,300	600	*	300

* = Denotes 0 or under 50.

Notes:

1. Figures are rounded to the nearest 100.

2. Figures for Gloucestershire County are derived by summing the following Local Authorities: Cheltenham, Cotswold, Forest of Dean, Gloucester, Stroud and Tewkesbury.

3. These data are not available by parliamentary constituency.

4. Data are for the 12 months: 1 October 2012 to 30 September 2013, which is the latest data available.

5. The initial assessment outcomes relate to the claimant's first assessment before appeal and may include cases that will have been revised following reconsideration.

6. The outcome recorded is the final DWP Decision Maker's decision or the recommendation made by the Atos Healthcare Professional where the Decision Maker's decision is not yet available.

7. The data presented above comes from benefit claims data held by the Department for Work and Pensions. It relates to new and repeat ESA claims and Incapacity Benefits Reassessments. The reassessment of existing incapacity benefits claimants was rolled out nationally from April 2011.

Source:

Data in the table above is derived from administrative data held by the DWP and assessment data provided by Atos Healthcare.

In October 2008, ESA replaced Incapacity Benefit for new claims. The reassessment of existing Incapacity Benefit claimants to see if they are eligible for ESA was rolled out nationally from April 2011 and is ongoing.

Telephone Services

Mr Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what the average time is which a caller to a Department for Work and Pensions telephone line which is not free to call is made to wait while on hold, when listening to a pre-recorded message or selecting options at the start of a telephone call; and what the financial gain is to his Department from the charge levied for a call of that length. [207173]

Steve Webb: This data relates to non-0800 calls and represents the period from the point a customer enters a queue to the point they are connected to an agent, and is drawn from Working Age, Pension Age, Disability and Universal Credit services but excludes Child Maintenance Group. From July 2014 the average speed to answer for such telephony lines was three minutes 20 seconds.

Prior to 1 April no revenue was received for 0845 but with effect from 1st April 2014, the Department changed procedures to receive a rebate equivalent to 0.3p per minute for calls to its 0845 services: this, includes time listening to pre-recorded information, selecting call routing options and waiting for an available agent. This arrangement is in line with Cabinet Office guidance published in December 2013 and is not revenue but used to offset Direct Spend on other services provided by the same supplier. In addition, the Department can confirm that benefit claim lines operate 0800 free numbers. For other help lines the Department is introducing 0345 numbers in addition to its 0845 numbers (customers can then choose the cheapest call option dependent on their telephone or mobile operator.)

Mr Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what financial gain his Department has made arising from the use of telephone lines which are not free to call in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [207183]

Steve Webb: In the five financial years to and including 2013-14 the Department for Work and Pensions received no direct financial or non-financial benefit from its telephony provider for the operation of its telephone services. In line with Cabinet Office guidance published in December 2013, the Department has negotiated a rebate against the cost of providing 0845 services which has a value equivalent to 0.3p per minute for calls to its 0845 services. This arrangement was only effective from 1 April 2014 and the rebate will be used to reduce the costs of other services provided by the same supplier, and currently this negotiated procedure has accrued circa £117,000 (to August 2014.)

Universal Credit

Rachel Reeves: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (1) what proportion of universal credit claimants who have a housing cost element in their payment (a) in total and (b) in each local authority area are in arrears on rent payment; [207867]

(2) how many universal credit claimants (a) in total and (b) in each local authority area are in arrears on rent payments; [207868]

(3) how many and what proportion of universal credit claimants (a) in total and (b) in each local authority area have a housing cost element in their payment; [207869]

(4) how many payments to universal credit claimants have been made direct to a landlord (a) in total and (b) in each local authority area to date. [207870]

Steve Webb: The information requested is not currently available.

The Department published its strategy for releasing official statistics on Universal Credit (UC) in September 2013 which can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/universal-credit-statistics>

As outlined in the strategy, officials are currently quality assuring data for UC therefore it is not yet possible to give a definitive list of what statistics will be provided in the future. These statistics however will be published in accordance with the relevant protocols in the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

The latest official experimental statistics on UC can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/universal-credit-statistics>

Work Capability Assessment

Richard Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what performance targets his Department has set for Atos's contract under the work capability assessment; and whether such targets have been met. [207158]

Mr Harper: The Performance of Atos is measured across a range of service level agreements setting out the Department's expectation for service delivery.

The Department has given Atos Healthcare a clearance target that we expect them to achieve by the end of the contract. We are closely monitoring their performance and currently Atos Healthcare are consistently achieving our monthly clearance expectations.

We are working closely with Atos Healthcare to continually improve their performance and have put in place changes to better manage the flow of work between the Department, all designed to reduce waiting times for claimants. These measures are taking effect and the backlog of cases has continued to fall over the past few months.

BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND SKILLS

EU Law

Mr Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills how many new EU directives and regulations have been transposed into UK law by his Department since May 2010. [207251]

Jo Swinson: Details of all EU legislation, including full details of all EU directives that have come into force since May 2010, can be found on the European Commission's website:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>

Holiday Leave

Mr Laurence Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what recent discussions he has had with his EU counterparts on the inclusion of non-compulsory and non-guaranteed overtime in the calculation of holiday pay; and if he will make a statement. [207840]

Jo Swinson: The Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, my right hon. Friend the Member for Twickenham (Vince Cable), and other BIS Ministers regularly meet other European Ministers and discuss a wide range of issues. Regular discussions also take place at official level.

Minimum Wage

Caroline Lucas: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills pursuant to the answer of 25 June 2014, *Official Report*, column 246W, on the

national minimum wage, how many of the firms named and shamed for breach of the national minimum wage up to 8 June 2014 were issued notices of underpayments once the firm had dissolved; what the time was between each underpayment and the time of issuing of notice; how many of the employers named and shamed (a) paid their employees the underpayment and (b) paid a financial penalty to the Government; and if he will make a statement. [207292]

Jo Swinson: The Government is committed to increasing compliance with minimum wage legislation and effective enforcement of it. Everyone who is entitled to the minimum wage should receive it.

All 30 employers that have been named and shamed up to 8 June 2014 were issued with a Notice of Underpayment (NoU) and were still in existence when the NoU was issued.

The Department's answer to the hon. Member's parliamentary question of 25 June 2014, *Official Report*, column 246W, sets out the months that the NoU were issued. HMRC do not record the time between the date of each underpayment and the issue of the Notice of Underpayment. HMRC can pursue arrears claims for workers going back up to six years and therefore a worker may complain up to six years after the time they think they were underpaid. Additionally, investigations following a complaint may identify further underpaid workers or other periods of underpayment going back several years.

All of the employers who were named and shamed paid the arrears due to workers and also the financial penalty imposed.

Street Trading

Dan Byles: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills on what date his Department plans to meet pedlar stakeholders to discuss Consultation documents BIS/12/605 and 606 on street trading and pedlar laws as proposed by his Department via email on 19 December 2013. [207078]

Jo Swinson: The Government's response to the consultation held in 2012/13 will be published soon and once it is, BIS officials will be very happy to meet with pedlar stakeholders.

Textiles

Mr Ward: To ask the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills what steps his Department is taking to increase textile manufacturing in the UK. [207527]

Matthew Hancock [*holding answer 3 September 2014*]: Companies in the textiles manufacturing sector can access help and advice to grow their business through 'GREAT'

www.greatbusiness.gov.uk

or

www.gov.uk

eligible businesses can gain support in areas such as starting, running, funding, staffing and expanding a business.

BIS has provided targeted support to the textiles sector in a number of ways. Firstly, £12.8 million has been made available from the Regional Growth Fund to support the Textiles Growth Programme, which is focused on creating and safeguarding 1,020 jobs in textiles by supporting capital projects, skills training and research and development in the North of England.

Growth Deals will allow Local Enterprise Partnerships with a textiles manufacturing presence in their regions to prioritise the financial support available (£2 billion a year for 6 years from 2015/16 to 2020/2) for proposals that target this sector.

The Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative (AMSCI) provides grants and loans to successful projects demonstrating real ambition to create globally competitive supply chains. £3.9 million of AMSCI funding has been awarded to C & J Antich Ltd to pioneer a technique for weaving Aluminium Dioxide thread into 3D shapes to form the basis for the production of 'reinforced aluminium'.

Additional funding of £100 million for AMSCI 2014 was announced in April. The new round is open to applications from all organisations operating as part of a manufacturing supply chain including textile manufacturers.

The Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) offers expert advice and grant support to eligible manufacturing companies throughout England. MAS delivers a range of support to manufacturing companies; including those in the textiles sector; ranging from company specific diagnostics, workforce up skilling and grant funding for specific projects to achieve the company's growth ambitions. Since January 2012 MAS have supported 334 companies in the textiles and leather sector to deliver 417 company specific projects, a further 109 projects are due for completion this financial year. 1521 business diagnostics have been undertaken with companies in the textiles and leather sector.

As part of the Sector Mentoring Fund, Manchester Economic Solutions Ltd was awarded £77,500 in January to deliver Mentor Tex, which is a textile sector mentoring programme concentrated in key textiles regions such as Greater Manchester, Lancashire and Yorkshire. The scheme has attracted interest from a wide range of textiles businesses, with 32 mentees and 13 mentors already signed up and other in the pipeline. To date 12 mentoring relationships are already in place and we expect to meet project targets by the end of the summer.

UK Trade & Investment (UKTI) can also help the domestic supply chain for textiles exploit opportunities for exporting into new markets overseas. We are also helping raise skills levels through an unprecedented focus on vocational training, including Higher Level Apprenticeships which will provide for higher level skills and beyond into postgraduate level and professional qualifications.

Finally, the textiles sector, particularly technical textiles, continues to have access to opportunities for technology transfer and the exchange of knowledge provided by the Knowledge Transfer Network.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Africa

Simon Kirby: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what reports she has received on (a) the humanitarian situation in the Central African

Republic and (b) the humanitarian implications of broader insecurity in the Sahel. [207137]

Lynne Featherstone: Ministers are regularly updated on the situation on the Central African Republic (CAR). The humanitarian situation in CAR and among refugees remains critical. Malnutrition rates among refugee children are now over 30%, above the emergency threshold. Insecurity and poor rainfall mean that an estimated 1.7 million people or a third of the population are food insecure across CAR.

The UK has provided £25.5 million in humanitarian and development assistance to the Central African Republic (CAR) crisis since mid-2013.

Across the Sahel region there are ongoing conflicts in Mali, CAR and northern Nigeria which have caused the displacement of thousands of people to the neighbouring countries of Niger, Chad, Cameroon and DRC. The UK has provided £103 million in humanitarian support to the Sahel since the beginning of 2013 to help over 1.6 million people with immediate life-saving assistance.

Burma

Valerie Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many of the survivors of rape by the Burmese Army whose cases have been documented by the Women's League of Burma have received humanitarian and specialist support from her Department. [207564]

Mr Swayne: DFID provides support for women affected by sexual violence and rape, including referrals to specialist centres, but it is part of a wider package of assistance which is not recorded in this way.

Developing Countries: Females

Simon Kirby: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what policies and programmes her Department has to tackle female genital mutilation and early forced marriage; and what progress has been made in this area following the Prime Minister's Girl Summit held in July 2014. [207136]

Lynne Featherstone: The UK is the biggest international donor to efforts tackling female genital mutilation, investing up to £35 million over 5 years. This funding enables three strands of work. First, work directly within local communities and governments to back action to end FGM in 15 countries. Secondly, research into the most cost-effective approaches to ending FGM, to make sure our work has the maximum impact, and thirdly social change communications and support to UK based diaspora groups for efforts to end the practice in their countries of origin.

At Girl Summit 2014, the Secretary of State for International Development announced a new commitment of up to £25 million for a UN multi-country programme to end child, early and forced marriage in 12 countries, and an investment of £31 million to generate new evidence on what works to transform lives of poor adolescent girls. DFID is also exploring new mechanisms to support civil society addressing FGM and CEFM.

DFID is driving forward its work on both of these important agendas. In parallel, we are building on the achievements of the Girl Summit, which included support from over 450 governments, organisations and individuals for a Charter that called to an end to FGM and CEFM, 12,000 social media pledges for this cause, and over 130 policy commitments contributing towards this objective. DFID is working to maintain this international momentum by calling for more signatories to the charter, delivery of the commitments that were made and further action to end these practices.

EU Law

Mr Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many new EU directives and regulations have been transposed into UK law by her Department since May 2010. [207263]

Lynne Featherstone: There have been no new EU directives or regulations transposed into UK law by my Department since May 2010.

Gambia

Alec Shelbrooke: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development (1) what steps her Department is taking to ensure vulnerable people in Gambia are not affected by the decision of the EU to suspend aid to that country; [207272]

(2) what steps her Department is taking to ensure that vulnerable people in Gambia are not affected by deteriorating conditions as a result of the suspension of aid and human rights violations. [207416]

Lynne Featherstone: The EU, with UK support, is seeking to persuade the Gambian Government to improve the human rights situation through its regular political dialogue under the Cotonou Agreement. The release of EU development funds are linked to these discussions.

International Citizen Service: South East

Simon Kirby: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how many young people are involved in the International Citizens Service in (a) Brighton and Hove, (b) East Sussex and (c) South East England; and if she will make a statement. [207139]

Lynne Featherstone: As of 31 August 2014 more than 5,600 UK volunteers had started an International Citizen Service placement. This includes, following the pilot phase, 85 volunteers from Brighton and Hove, 139 from East Sussex (including Brighton and Hove) and 708 from the South East including East Sussex.

Statistics on participating UK volunteers, by age and by region are published annually

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/international-citizen-service-ics-volunteer-statistics-2013-2014>

Nepal

Simon Kirby: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment she has made of the effects on her Department's aid programme in Nepal of the formation of the new government in that country. [207089]

Mr Swayne: As part of the new planning cycle for the Department for International Development my office

in Nepal has made a thorough assessment of the expected effects on the Department's aid programme of the formation of the new government following elections in November 2013.

Accordingly we have shifted our aid programme towards creating the enabling environment for inclusive economic growth including an increased focus on jobs, infrastructure and local development, strengthening effective government including public financial management and anti-corruption measures, and continuing to strengthen the quality and targeting of service delivery. We have increased our focus on mitigating the risks of climate change and inequality so that economic and social gains are safeguarded.

Palestinians

Sarah Champion: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development if she will increase financial aid for Palestine. [206867]

Mr Swayne: DFID is providing nearly £350 million from 2011-15 to address a broad range of Palestinian development aid since the current conflict began. We keep the level of our funding under constant review.

Sarah Newton: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what humanitarian and medical support the Government is providing to the population of Gaza. [207241]

Mr Swayne: The UK is one of the biggest donors to the Gaza crisis, providing more than £17 million in emergency assistance since the beginning of the crisis. DFID is providing essential supplies to thousands of families, helping to repair water infrastructure, deliver emergency medical services, protect the civilian population and deal with food shortages.

St Helena

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what estimate she has made of (a) the current cost of transporting a container of goods to St Helena and (b) the future cost of transporting a container of goods after the RMS St Helena has been decommissioned. [206992]

Mr Swayne: Costs of transportation depend on volume and place of origin. Expressions of interest for ocean freight services are currently being reviewed by the Saint Helena Government.

Telephone Services

Valerie Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development under what timetable her Department plans to phase out use of telephone lines with the prefix (a) 0845, 0844 and 0843 in accordance with the Cabinet Office guidance on customer service lines published in December 2013 and (b) 03 and 08, where 03 is the primary number under a dual numbering system. [207287]

Mr Swayne: DFID will phase out 0845 numbers next month. A 0300 number will be available from mid-September 2014, the 0845 number will be decommissioned by end of 2014.

Television

Mr Bradshaw: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development how much her Department spent on the purchase of televisions in (a) 2013 and (b) 2014 to date. [207219]

Mr Swayne: DFID spent £832.97 on purchasing televisions in 2013; no televisions have been purchased in 2014 to date.

Turks and Caicos Islands

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what assessment she has made of the social and environmental effect of conditions imposed on UK Government loans to the Turks and Caicos government. [206996]

Mr Swayne: The Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) are not in receipt of a loan from the UK Government.

West Africa

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for International Development what steps her Department has taken to combat the spread of Ebola in the last four months. [207880]

Lynne Featherstone: The current outbreak of Ebola poses a serious public health risk to West Africa and is

deeply concerning. The UK is taking a leading role in working with the countries affected and with the international community to ensure that the outbreak is contained and help reaches those in need. In total, over £25 million of British funding is supporting the global effort to contain this disease. This includes £5 million of new direct funding to help partners working on the ground like the WHO, Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières? to treat victims and prevent the spread of Ebola in West Africa. Over £20 million of UK support is helping contain Ebola through commitments to multilateral institutions (the World Bank and the African Development Bank) and the EU.

HEALTH

Ambulance Services: East Midlands

Andrew Bingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many ambulance calls from (a) the East Midlands and (b) High Peak constituency were responded to in each of the last five years; [207319]

(2) what proportion of ambulances in (a) the East Midlands and (b) High Peak constituency failed to respond within their targeted response times in each of the last five years. [207318]

Jane Ellison: Information is not available in the format requested.

Information on the number of ambulance calls receiving an emergency response from the East Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust, and the proportion of those that were responded to within the standard response time, for the last five years, is shown in the following table:

	Category A calls resulting in an ambulance arriving			Category A calls resulting in an emergency response		
	Thousand	Thousand	Percentage	Thousand	Thousand	Percentage
2009-10 ¹	186.5	180.1	96.5	186.6	137.6	73.7
2010-11 ¹	205.0	191.8	93.5	205.2	148.6	72.4
2011-12	222.0	204.9	92.3	222.4	167.1	75.2
2012-13	234.1	215.0	91.9	37.0 ² April to May 2012	28.3 ² April to May 2012	76.4 ² April to May 2012
2013-14	245.2	230.0	93.8	n/a	n/a	n/a

	Red 1 calls resulting in an emergency response			Red 2 calls resulting in an emergency response		
	Thousand	Thousand	Percentage	Thousand	Thousand	Percentage
2009-10 ¹	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2010-11 ¹	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2011-12	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
2012-13	19.1 ² June 2012 to March 2013	13.4 ² June 2012 to March 2013	70.0% ² June 2012 to March 2013	178.4 ² June 2012 to March 2013	134.7 ² June 2012 to March 2013	75.5% ² June 2012 to March 2013
2013-14	19.4	13.8	71.3	226.1	161.5	71.4

n/a: Not available.

¹ Before April 2011, data were collected annually by the Health and Social Care Information Centre in the KA34 Ambulance Statistics, and are not necessarily consistent with later data supplied to NHS England.

² From June 2012 Category A calls were split into Red 1 (most serious/time critical) and Red 2 (serious but less time critical). It is not possible to compare Red 1 and Red 2 data from June 2012 onwards with earlier years due to different clock start times.

Sources:

1. 2009-10 and 2010-11: Health and Social Care Information Centre.

2. 2011-12 onwards: NHS England Ambulance Quality Indicators.

Ambulance Services: Yorkshire and the Humber

Jon Trickett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the average ambulance response time in the Mid Yorkshire NHS trust is. [206940]

Jane Ellison: Ambulance services in Yorkshire are provided by the Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

NHS England only regularly collect median average ambulance response times from entire ambulance trusts. It is not possible to give such figures for smaller areas.

The median averages for the Yorkshire Ambulance Service for the last 12 months for which data is available are in the following table.

Table: The median ambulance response times to treatment for category A¹ calls for Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust, April 2011 to April 2014 inclusive

	Median time to treatment for Category A calls (in minutes)
May 2013	5.2
June 2013	5.3
July 2013	5.6
August 2013	5.6
September 2013	5.5
October 2013	5.6
November 2013	5.7
December 2013	5.9
January 2014	5.5
February 2014	5.7
March 2014	5.6
April 2014	6.4
May 2014	6.9

¹Category A calls are defined as those that are the result of immediately life threatening incidents.

Source:

Ambulance quality indicators, NHS England, www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/ambulance-quality-indicators

Cancer

Andrew Bridgen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of progress on the Cancer Strategy target of saving an additional 5,000 lives from cancer per year by 2014-15; [207197]

(2) what steps (a) his Department and (b) NHS England are taking to address weaknesses in cancer patient experience and staff engagement. [207199]

Jane Ellison: Cancer survival and mortality rates continue to improve although it is too early to assess progress against our ambition to save an additional 5,000 lives per year by 2014-15, to halve the gap between the survival estimates in England and those in the best countries in Europe. Proxy measures are being developed to enable an assessment of progress in a more timely manner, particularly in terms of the proportion of cancers diagnosed at stages one and two and cancers diagnosed through emergency routes.

The National Health Service and Public Health Outcomes Framework indicators and the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Outcomes Indicator Set are starting to enable us to assess progress, at national and local level. For example, data on one-year survival from all cancers and one-year survival from breast, lung

and colorectal cancer were published as part of the CCG outcomes indicator set for the first time on 19 June 2014. NHS England is continuing to monitor the progress of the NHS in reducing mortality from cancer in line with the NHS Outcomes Framework, and from 2014-15 there will be a range of new NHS Outcomes Framework indicators reflecting different stages of diagnosis which will provide a good proxy measure in future on progress in delivering earlier stage of diagnosis of cancer.

The Mandate for the NHS for 2014-15 sets out an ambition for England to become one of the most successful countries in Europe at preventing premature deaths. Tackling premature deaths from cancer will contribute to this. A range of work at national and local level is aimed at improving cancer survival. For example, results from the first national "Be Clear on Cancer" lung cancer campaign in 2012 showed that around 700 extra patients were diagnosed with lung cancer compared to the previous year. Approximately 400 of these patients had their lung cancer diagnosed at an early stage, with around 300 more patients having surgery, giving them a better chance of survival.

NHS England took over responsibility for the annual national cancer patient experience survey from April 2013. The survey results are used by a range of stakeholders to identify practices that lead to positive experience for patients, and promote improvements.

NHS England is working with NHS Improving Quality and other partners to develop more effective ways of using the survey results within the NHS, for example, working with successful and struggling organisations to identify and spread best practice.

CCGs are currently in the process of finalising measurable levels of ambition to improve patient experience and will be holding providers to account. These are based on NHS England's new measure for poor inpatient experience which includes whether patients are treated with dignity and respect.

Compassion in Practice, the three year vision and strategy for nursing, midwifery and care staff, is also seeking to increase feedback from vulnerable and disadvantaged patient groups, who can have poorer experiences of care.

In April 2014, NHS England introduced the staff friends and family test for all NHS Trusts in England, as research shows the strong link between levels of staff engagement and quality of patient experience.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

Jim Dowd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps his Department has taken to ensure that patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) have access to oxygen therapy when travelling abroad; for what reason the NHS contractor in England no longer provides that service; and if his Department will instruct the contractor to fully inform COPD patients about the provision of oxygen therapy when they are travelling abroad. [207504]

Jane Ellison: There are four oxygen suppliers covering England. They have never been contracted to supply oxygen for people travelling outside of the United Kingdom (UK). Oxygen for use on holiday is only available free of charge for trips in the UK, and can be arranged through the patients current oxygen provider or a general

practitioner. Oxygen suppliers in the UK have leaflets that are available to patients setting out the arrangements for people wishing to go on holiday. If a patient is holidaying in Europe oxygen can be arranged through the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) scheme with a valid EHIC. The Department's Call Centre can supply the relevant contact details of officials in European countries. The person travelling will need to contact the authorised oxygen company for the country they are travelling to in order to make the necessary arrangements required to book state-funded Oxygen Therapy equipment. If they are travelling outside Europe, they will need to contact an oxygen company that supplies the country they will be visiting. To find an oxygen provider outside the UK, the individual can contact the British consulate in the country they are travelling to, an oxygen supplier in the UK, or the British Lung Foundation.

Dental Services

Mr Leech: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many requests have been made by dental practices in England for their Unit of Dental Activity price to be increased in the latest period for which figures are available; and how many such requests have been granted. [207204]

Dr Poulter: The information requested is not held centrally.

Depressive Illnesses

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people suffered from repeat episode depression in each year for which data is available. [207560]

Norman Lamb: The number of people who suffered from repeat episodes of depression is not available.

The only data which can be provided are the number of referrals received by Improved Access to Psychological Therapy (IAPT) services, for people with a provisional diagnosis of Recurrent Depression.

These data include a count of referrals, not distinct people and one person may have multiple diagnoses. Many episodes recorded by IAPT services do not have a provisional diagnosis recorded when the referral is received.

Data are available by quarter for 2012-13 and 2013-14. These data have been collected nationally since April 2012.

New IAPT service referrals with a primary diagnosis of Recurrent Depression, England

	Referrals
2012-13	
Q1—April-June	4,300
Q2—July-October	4,430
Q3—November-December	4,485
Q4—January-March	4,756
2013-14	
Q1—April-June	4,990
Q2—July-October	5,738
Q3—November-December	5,820
Q4—January-March	5,888

Note:

Not all referrals have a provisional diagnosis recorded.

Source:

IAPT Dataset

Fibromyalgia

Andrew Bingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate his Department has made of the number of fibromyalgia sufferers in the UK; [207312]

(2) how much his Department has spent on research into fibromyalgia in the last three years; and what guidance his Department gives on support to be given through the NHS for fibromyalgia sufferers. [207313]

Norman Lamb: The Department has made no estimate of the number of fibromyalgia sufferers in the United Kingdom. As the condition is poorly understood and there is not specific diagnostic test, it is difficult to make a reliable estimate

Although there is no cure for fibromyalgia, some treatments can ease symptoms and support improved quality of life for patients. The treatments offered will depend on the severity of a patient's condition, but may include: pharmacological pain relief; physiotherapy; dietary and exercise advice; counselling or cognitive behavioural therapy; and self-management programmes which aim to give patients the skills and confidence to manage their conditions more effectively. There are also a number of NHS Trusts that offer specialist fibromyalgia clinics, such the Royal National Hospital for Rheumatic Diseases in Bath, which patients can access on referral from the clinician responsible for their care.

In each of the last three years, the Department's National Institute for Health Research has spent £0.1 million on fibromyalgia research.

General Dental Council

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations he has received regarding the General Dental Council's proposed increase to the annual retention fee for dentists. [207132]

Dr Poulter: Since 1 July 2014, the Department has received a number of representations regarding the General Dental Council's (GDC) proposed increase to the annual retention fee for dentists. As at 3 September 2014, these representations included seven items of correspondence: one from the Chair of the GDC, one from the British Dental Association and five from Members of Parliament. The Department has received two related Parliamentary Questions and has responded to an e-petition opposing an increase in the GDC's annual retention fee.

In my role as Parliamentary Under Secretary for Health, on 3 September 2014, I also met with the GDC where, among other things, concerns about the proposal fee rise were discussed.

General Practitioners

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many GPs (a) excluding retainers and registrars and (b) including retainers but excluding registrars there were in the financial year (i) 2009-10 and (ii) 2013-14. [207856]

Dr Poulter: The annual National Health Service General and Personal Medical Services workforce census, published by the Health and Social Care Information Centre,

shows the numbers of general practitioners (GPs) working in the NHS in England at 30 September each year, which is a snap shot taken at the mid-point of the financial year.

The numbers of full-time equivalent GPs, excluding retainers and registrars, and including retainers but excluding registrars, working in the NHS in England as at September 2010 and September 2013 are shown in the following table. The latest available statistics are as at 30 September 2013 and were published on 25 March 2014.

General Medical Practitioners full-time equivalents 2010 and 2013, England, GPs total

	<i>full time equivalent and percentages</i>			
	<i>2010</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2010-13 (change)</i>	<i>2010-13 (percentage change)</i>
GPs (excluding retainers and registrars)	35,243	36,294	1,051	3.0
GPs (including retainers but excluding registrars)	31,356	32,075	719	2.3
GP Providers	31,525	32,201	676	2.1
Other GPs	6,962	8,032	1,070	15.4
GP registrars ^{1,2}	3,718	4,093	375	10.1
GP retainers	169	126	-43	-25.5

¹ GP Registrar count from 2008 onwards represents an improvement in data collection processes and comparisons with previous years should be treated with caution.

² From 2012, GP Registrars have been removed from the GP Workforce collection where a duplicate record already exists on the Electronic Staff Record. Due to a change in coding practices in some regions GP Registrars are increasingly recorded on the ESR system rather than the GP Exeter Payment System. All these staff are not shown in the GP Registrar totals but are included in the HCHS Medical and Dental Registrars total.

Notes:

1. These statistics relate to the contracted positions within English NHS organisations and may include those where the person assigned to the position is temporarily absent, for example on maternity leave.
2. Full Time Equivalent refers to the proportion of each role's full time contracted hours that the post holder is contracted to work. One would indicate they work a full set of hours, 0.5 that they worked half time.
3. From April 2013 Public Health England was excluded from workforce publications.

Source:

Health and Social Care Information Centre General and Personal Medical Services workforce census

Health Protection Agency: Colindale

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether he has made any plans for the future of the Colindale Health Protection Agency site. [207040]

Jane Ellison: Over the past 18 months, Public Health England has been developing the Outline Business Case for a major capital investment in public health science, including modern facilities, called the Science Hub programme (previously called the Chrysalis programme). Under this plan, services would relocate from Colindale to Harlow in a phased programme between mid 2018 and 2021.

Government will make a decision in autumn 2014.

Health Services: Foreign Nationals

Adam Afriyie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent steps he has taken to ensure that foreign nationals pay for healthcare they receive in the UK. [207406]

Jane Ellison: The Department is working to support the National Health Service to increase the recovery of costs from overseas visitors and migrants. We aim to

recover £500 million annually by the middle of the next Parliament, which will be reinvested into the NHS to support the sustainability of NHS frontline services.

The Department published its Implementation Plan on 14 July 2014 at:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/recovering-costs-of-nhs-healthcare-from-visitors-and-migrants

This sets out how the Department will improve the recovery rates from overseas visitors and migrants over the next year. It announced a number of measures to support these efforts but also laid the foundations for additional areas to be looked at as the programme progresses.

As part of the programme the Department is starting a programme of financial incentives to support the NHS in identifying chargeable visitors and migrants using the NHS. These incentives recognise the administrative and financial burdens that can face NHS trusts in the recovery process and aim to counter balance these. The implementation plan provides the full detail of these schemes.

In Vitro Fertilisation

Toby Perkins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many cycles of IVF treatment are offered free of charge to patients by each clinical commissioning group in England. [207079]

Jane Ellison: The information requested is not collected centrally. The level of provision of infertility treatment, as for all health services they commission, is decided by local clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and will take into account the needs of the population overall. The CCG's decisions are underpinned by clinical insight and knowledge of local health care needs. As such, provision of services will vary in response to local needs.

NHS England expects that all those involved in commissioning infertility treatment services to be fully aware of the importance of having regard to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence fertility guidelines.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease

Alec Shelbrooke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what support his Department is providing to King's College London to assist the development of the MAP vaccine for Crohn's disease from animal testing to human trials; [207271]

(2) what support his Department is giving to King's College London to work on developing the MAP vaccine for Crohn's disease from animal testing to human trials. [207417]

George Freeman: The Department's National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) is not currently funding any Crohn's vaccine development work at King's College London.

The Government has funding mechanisms in place for research and development relating to innovative medicines.

The NIHR welcomes funding applications for research into any aspect of human health, including Crohn's disease and vaccines. These applications are subject to peer review and judged in open competition, with awards

being made on the basis of the importance of the topic to patients and health and care services, value for money and scientific quality.

The NIHR manages the Efficacy and Mechanism Evaluation programme, which bridges the gap between preclinical studies and evidence of clinical efficacy. The aim is to secure the progress of new technologies and interventions through their early clinical trials and onto larger, later clinical trials. The programme is funded by the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the NIHR.

Other sources of funding include the Biomedical Catalyst, which is a funding programme jointly operated by the MRC and Innovate UK. The programme provides responsive and effective support for the best translational life science opportunities arising. Grants are available to United Kingdom academics and small and medium enterprises seeking to move their research more quickly from discovery to commercialisation.

Meningitis: Vaccination

Luciana Berger: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when his Department plans to introduce the meningitis B vaccine. [207051]

Jane Ellison: We are committed to introducing this vaccine as soon as practicable, subject to the manufacturer offering the vaccine at a cost-effective price, in line with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation's recommendation.

Multiple Sclerosis

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps (a) his Department and (b) NHS England have taken to ensure that accessible information is produced about multiple sclerosis treatment options; [207186]

(2) what steps he plans to take to increase the role of people with multiple sclerosis in decision-making processes relating to their treatment; [207193]

(3) if he will take steps to ensure that all people with relapsing remitting multiple sclerosis are invited to talk with a specialist about potential treatment options arising from new disease-modifying drugs; [207203]

(4) what recent assessment he has made of the provision of licensed treatments for multiple sclerosis in the NHS in England; and if he will take steps to increase the availability of such treatments; [207242]

(5) if he will take steps to ensure that regular reviews of treatment and care by multiple sclerosis (MS) specialists are available for all people with MS in England. [207243]

Norman Lamb: The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) clinical guideline '*Multiple sclerosis: Management of multiple sclerosis in primary and secondary care*', published in 2003, set out best practice in the care, treatment and support for people with this condition. The guidance emphasises that patients with multiple sclerosis (MS) should be involved in all decisions relating to their treatment and care and are supported to manage their condition. It also sets out that clinicians and other members of a patient's healthcare team such as nurses and social workers, are responsible for discussing with patients the frequency and methods of reviewing their care needs.

We have made no recent assessment of the provision of licensed treatments for multiple sclerosis in the National Health Service in England. However, NICE has published technology appraisal guidance recommending a number of drugs for use in treating MS, subject to certain clinical criteria. There is a legal requirement on the NHS to provide funding for treatments and drugs recommended by NICE technology appraisal guidance within three months of NICE technology appraisal guidance being published. Clinicians should discuss with patients, including those with relapsing and remitting MS, the availability of any new treatments and the guideline makes clear that commissioners should ensure that all people with MS have ready access to a specialist neurological service which includes the provision of specific pharmacological treatments.

The guideline also stresses the importance of clinicians communicating clearly with patients which includes making leaflets and other information resources available. The provision of these resources is a matter for local NHS organisations.

Charlotte Leslie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many clinical commissioning groups currently commission specialised multiple sclerosis centres. [207925]

Norman Lamb: NHS England has advised that clinical commissioning groups do not currently commission specialised services for Multiple Sclerosis (MS). NHS England commissions specialised services, including commissioning 15 Adult Neurology centres which will provide services for MS patients.

Nurses: Car Allowances

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health with reference to section 17 of the NHS Terms and Conditions of Service handbook, amendment number 33, what assessment he has made of the effects of the change in the fuel allowance to 20 pence per mile on retention of nurses in the NHS. [207860]

Dr Poulter: As with all staff covered by the Agenda for Change Terms and Conditions, nursing staff incurring motoring costs during their national health service duties will receive reimbursement of these costs at the published mileage rates to ensure that they are not out of pocket.

The change in fuel allowance for NHS staff to 20p per mile for mileage over 3,500 came into force on 1 July 2014 following a regular review of motoring expenses, based on information provided by the Automobile Association (AA) about the running costs of motor vehicles. This process of six-monthly reviews of motoring costs based on AA information was agreed by trade unions and employers, to ensure that NHS staff are not out of pocket for travel costs incurred in the performance of their NHS duties. In agreeing this system, employers and trade unions have recognised that there will be both upward and downward movement in costs, and subsequent mileage rates. These rates will be reviewed in November 2014, and will again be based on information provided by the AA.

We are unable to correlate the level of reimbursement for motor travel with the rate of recruitment and retention of nurses.

The latest NHS workforce statistics show that there are now over 3,700 more nurses, midwives and health visitors¹ than in May 2010. NHS workforce statistics for July 2014 will be published in October.

¹ Including Health Visitor Minimum Data Set

Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome

Fiona Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many incidents in which non-patient egg donors had (a) severe ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome and (b) ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome were categorised as (i) Grade A incidents and (ii) Grade B incidents in each year since 2009 for which records are available.

[207298]

Jane Ellison: The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) has advised that three incidents of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome involving a non-patient egg donor were reported to the HFEA by licensed clinics in 2009, 2011 and 2014. The three incidents were severe and graded 'B'.

Palliative Care

Andrew Bridgen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the Palliative Care Funding Review pilots are due to report.

[207198]

Norman Lamb: NHS England will publish a draft national tariff document in February 2015. This will include details of a development currency for palliative care which will be based upon the data collected as part of the Palliative Care Funding Review pilots and the views of the palliative care sector. A draft will be published as part of an engagement process in the autumn.

Parkinson's Disease

Naomi Long: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what steps his Department has taken to improve compliance in (a) hospitals and (b) care homes with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines that people with Parkinson's disease should have their medication given at appropriate times and should be allowed to self-administer if necessary;

[207493]

(2) what steps the new NHS safety action team plans to take to reduce avoidable harm resulting from delays or omissions in medication for hospital patients with Parkinson's disease;

[207494]

(3) how many of the NHS trusts involved in the Sign up to safety campaign have a policy of stocking medicines for the treatment of Parkinson's disease in their emergency medications cupboards.

[207495]

George Freeman: Following publication of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance that people with Parkinson's disease should have their medication given at appropriate times and should be allowed to self-administer if necessary, the National

Patient Safety Agency issued a rapid response report (RRR) on omitted and delayed medicines on 24 February 2010, (NSPA/2010/RRR009) *Reducing harm from omitted and delayed medicines in hospital*, which applies to the National Health Service in both England and Wales. A copy of this report has already been placed in the Library, and a copy is available at:

www.nrls.npsa.nhs.uk/resources/patient-safety-topics/medication-safety/?entryid45=66720&=2

Under the Health and Social Care Act 2008, all providers of regulated activities, including care homes have to register with the Care Quality Commission, the independent regulator of health and adult social care providers in England, and meet a set of requirements of safety and quality. One of these requirements relates to the management of medicines and requires that a provider protects service users against the risks associated with the unsafe use and management of medicines.

NHS England's Safer Medication Practice Team in Patient Safety, is finalising an e-learning package to help reduce omission and delay in the administration of medicines, including for Parkinson's disease. This package will be available for all health professionals who prescribe, dispense and administer medicines in hospitals. It aims to increase awareness of the frequency of incidents and harm that are associated with omitted and delayed medicine doses in hospital and describes safer practice

In addition, in March 2014, a joint NHS England and The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency Patient Safety Alert, 'Improving medication error incident reporting and learning', was issued. A copy of this has been placed in the Library and is available at:

www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/psa-med-error.pdf

This alert directs NHS and independent sector organisations to identify medication safety officers by 19 September 2014. They will be empowered to champion and facilitate local learning from patient safety incidents, including those that arise from omissions and delay of medicines for Parkinson's disease. A National Medication Safety Network is to be established for discussing potential and recognised safety issues and identifying trends and actions to improve the safe use of medicines. The network will also work with new Patient Safety Improvement Collaborative, that will be set up later this year

NHS England does not hold information on the number of NHS trusts that are involved with the Sign up to Safety campaign or the number of trusts who have a policy of stocking medicines for the treatment of Parkinson's disease in their emergency medicines cupboards.

The NPSA RRR referred to above, identified medicines used to treat Parkinson's disease as critical medicines. Although emergency medicine cupboards are not mentioned directly in the RRR, NHS organisations have to review and where necessary make changes to systems for the supply of critical medicines within and outside of hours to minimise risks related to omitted or delayed doses of medicines.

Patient Choice Schemes

Ian Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimate he has made of the number of appointments booked through the NHS Choose and Book service in each of the last 12 months.

[207281]

Jane Ellison: On average, every working day around 40,000 outpatient referrals are booked through Choose and Book and patients from over 90% of GP practices are referred using the Choose and Book service every week. Each month this represents around 500,000 referrals being made from GP practices to first consultant-led outpatient services through Choose and Book.

Use of Choose and Book is, however, significantly greater than this with an additional 200,000 or so referrals per month being booked to other outpatient services, which include allied health professionals, GPs with special interests, diagnostic and assessment services. These are not currently included as part of the utilisation figures below as the denominator data is not currently reported at a national level.

The following table shows the percentage of first outpatient referrals and the total number of referrals booked through Choose and Book between July 2013 and June 2014. Booking reports are available on the Choose and Book website:

www.chooseandbook.nhs.uk/staff/bau/reports/?searchterm=reports

	Utilisation ¹ (%) (GP to first consultant outpatient)	Total number of referrals booked
July 2013	52	786,212
August 2013	53	690,431
September 2013	53	717,987
October 2013	53	798,605
November 2013	52	723,663
December 2013	51	640,101
January 2014	54	803,350
February 2014	51	725,563
March 2014	52	785,484
April 2014	51	756,372
May 2014	52	772,120
June 2014	51	791,019

¹ Utilisation is calculated as the percentage of referrals made to first consultant-led outpatient services using the Choose and Book system, compared to the total number of referrals made to first outpatient services, as reported by provider organisations to the Department.

Ian Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions he has had with (a) NHS bodies and (b) patients' groups on the effectiveness of the NHS Choose and Book service. [207282]

Jane Ellison: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has regular meetings with both national health service bodies and patient groups in which a number of different issues are discussed.

In addition to these conversations, teams within the Health and Social Care Information Centre have carried out extensive conversations on both the effectiveness of Choose and Book and the vision for the new NHS e-Referral Service.

Between September 2013 and 31 August 2014, a total of almost 5,000 users representing almost 500 different NHS and independent organisations have taken part in stakeholder engagement events about Choose and Book.

Ian Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the levels of patient satisfaction with the NHS Choose and Book service. [207283]

Jane Ellison: The NHS e-Referral Service (Choose and Book) Programme Team carried out a patient survey in January and February 2014 via the NHS Choices website. The survey received 2024 fully completed responses.

The full results of this survey are available at:

www.chooseandbook.nhs.uk/staff/gettingmore/benefits/2014_Survey_Results

The survey found that 72% of patients referred via Choose and Book are 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the service.

Prisoners: Mental Illness

Chris Ruane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what his most recent estimate is of the number and percentage of prisoners who suffer from (a) mental illness and (b) repeat episode depression. [207561]

Norman Lamb: We have made no recent estimate. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) 1998 survey, 'Psychiatric Morbidity among Prisoners in England and Wales', is the most recent survey of mental illness and substance misuse amongst prisoners.

The survey showed that a large proportion of the prison population were experiencing significant mental health problems. The ONS estimated that about 90% of adult prisoners had at least one of five disorders considered in the survey (personality disorder, psychosis, neurosis, and alcohol misuse and drug dependence). 40% of male sentenced prisoners and 63% of female sentenced prisoners had experienced neurosis, which included depressive disorder and depressive episodes.

Prosthetics

Tom Blenkinsop: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what assessment he has made of the practicality and safety of the recycling of prosthesis components issued by the NHS; [207347]

(2) what estimate he has made of the cost to the NHS of repairs to prostheses in each of the last five years. [207348]

Norman Lamb: No such assessment has been made of the practicality and safety of the recycling of prosthesis components issued by the national health service, or the cost to the NHS of repairs to prostheses in each of the last five years.

Radiotherapy

Tessa Munt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) pursuant to the answer of 21 July 2014, *Official Report*, column 1007W, on radiotherapy, in what respects University College Hospital London has failed to meet NHS England's service specifications for gamma knife services; [206965]

(2) if he will investigate the reasons why NHS England is instructing hospitals with patients presenting as clinically urgent to treat such patients with innovative radiotherapy at the hospital's financial risk while it decides whether to fund the patient; and if he will issue guidelines on how hospitals which have followed that instruction will receive reimbursement for such expenditure if NHS England subsequently refuses to fund the treatment. [206974]

Jane Ellison: University College Hospitals London (UCLH) did not apply to be a contracted provider of gamma knife services for NHS England. For this reason it has not been formally assessed against the service specification. The gamma knife referred to is owned and operated by Queen's Square Radiotherapy Centre (QSRC) Ltd, a private company wholly owned by Medical Equipment Solutions Limited, in premises owned by UCLH under a commercial agreement with UCLH.

As the national health service was going through a major transition in 2013-14 it was decided at that time that there should be no new market entrants for stereotactic radiotherapy services. Therefore only existing commissioned providers were asked to identify the services that they considered themselves to be providing, and UCLH did not express an interest in respect to gamma knife treatment. QSRC Ltd is not an existing NHS England commissioned provider and therefore was not assessed against the service specification.

All patients need to be treated in accordance with the prescribed clinical pathways and in line with contractual agreements with providers. If providers treat outside the required contractual agreements then they do so at their own financial risk, and this is why NHS England instructs hospitals to this effect where no contractual arrangement is in place.

Tessa Munt: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people in what age group have been funded for proton beam therapy in each of the last five years; and in what location each person was so treated.

[207871]

Jane Ellison: The information is provided in the following table:

	Children	Adults	Total	Location
2009-10	8	12	20	France, USA and Switzerland
2010-11	30	20	50	USA (38 patients) and Switzerland (12)
2011-12	66	13	79	USA (majority of patients) and Switzerland
2012-13	83	16	99	USA (majority of patients) and Switzerland
2013-14	1103	121	1224	All USA

¹ Figure includes treatments given and treatments due to be given following approval.

It is not possible to provide a more detailed analysis of age group by location of treatment because it might be possible to identify individual patients from the data.

Standardised Packaging for Tobacco Independent Review

Philip Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health with reference to the answer of 12 May 2014, *Official Report*, column 406W, on Standardised Packaging for Tobacco Independent Review, how much was spent under each cost-heading during the life of the Review.

[207354]

Jane Ellison: This information is available on the King's College website:

www.kcl.ac.uk/health/packaging-review.aspx

Television

Mr Bradshaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much his Department spent on the purchase of televisions in (a) 2013 and (b) 2014 to date. [207216]

Dr Poulter: The Department has spent £5,202.54 on the purchase of televisions in 2013 and £10,478.20 in 2014 to date.

Travel: Insurance

Charlotte Leslie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will have discussions with the travel insurance industry about including cover for mental health problems as standard in travel insurance policies. [207927]

Norman Lamb: No current discussions are planned between the Secretary of State for Health and the travel insurance industry about including cover for mental health problems in standard travel insurance policies. Decisions on whether to include particular terms and conditions in insurance contracts, including whether to cover mental health problems as standard, are commercial decisions for individual insurers, and the Government does not seek to intervene in these decisions.

The Equality Act 2010 should provide adequate protection from potentially discriminatory practice. Under the Act, it is illegal to discriminate against people who have a disability (which includes mental health problems), or have had one in the past. This includes refusing to provide a service for someone with a disability, or providing the service on worse terms than for non-disabled people.

ENERGY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Housing: Energy

Huw Irranca-Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what estimate he has made of the number of homes reliant on off-grid energy in each (a) constituency and (b) local authority area. [207641]

Matthew Hancock: DECC publish estimates of the number of households without a gas connection by local authority. These are available on the Government website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sub-national-estimates-of-households-not-connected-to-the-gas-network>

Nuclear Power

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what information he has received from the UK civil nuclear sector of the creation of the new N-Group forum; what additional resources have been committed to non-departmental public bodies responsible to his Department to support participation in N-Group; and what discussions he has had with the (a) Chairman and (b) Chief Executive of the Office for Nuclear Regulation on that body joining the N-Group. [207674]

Matthew Hancock: The Nuclear Institute announced the formation of the N-Group, an informal group of representatives of organisations interested in the UK nuclear industry, in June. No additional resources have been provided to non-departmental public bodies responsible to the Department to support participation in N-Group and I have had no discussions with the Office for Nuclear Regulation about participation.

COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Fire Services: Pensions

Lyn Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will make it his policy that the firefighters' pension scheme be subject to a formal actuarial evaluation every three years. [207278]

Penny Mordaunt: Valuations of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes in England are undertaken in accordance with Directions issued by the Treasury under the Public Service Pensions Act 2013. The Directions ensure that valuations of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes are carried out every four years and that there is a transparent and consistent approach to valuations across public service pension schemes.

Lyn Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will introduce transitional protection in the proposed 2015 pension scheme for those firefighters who joined the service and the pension scheme at age 18 years, and will have made a full contribution before the earliest age at which they could retire within the scheme. [207279]

Penny Mordaunt: The Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 does not have a cap on the amount of pension that a firefighter can earn. This means that every year that the firefighter pays employee contributions into the 2015 scheme, they will earn more pension. This is the case whatever age the firefighter joined the 2015 scheme, including if they transferred across from the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 after joining at age 18.

Mobile Homes: Cooperatives

Graham Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what recent steps he has taken to encourage the ownership and management of park homes on a cooperative model. [207404]

Brandon Lewis: Park home sites can be jointly owned by home owners and run on a co-operative model. We have not taken steps to promote this. Our priority has been to tackle poor management practices in the sector

which is why we have implemented the Mobile Homes Act 2013, which significantly increases the rights of home owners and provides them with better protection.

Planning Permission

Andrew Bingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what guidance his Department gives on the weight that should be given to a neighbourhood or village plan that has been submitted to a planning authority when considering planning applications. [207308]

Brandon Lewis: Planning applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. An emerging neighbourhood plan may be a material consideration. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the weight that may be given to emerging plans in decision taking. We have set out in planning guidance where circumstances may justify the refusal of planning permission on the grounds that an application would be premature in relation to the emerging Local or neighbourhood plan. Any weight a relevant policy could carry in determining a planning application remains with the decision maker.

Television

Mr Bradshaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government how much his Department spent on the purchase of televisions in (a) 2013 and (b) 2014 to date. [207209]

Kris Hopkins: The Department for Communities and Local Government has not purchased any televisions in 2013 and 2014. To place this in context, the Department in the last Parliament under the previous Administration spent £22,527 on four flat-screen televisions, equivalent to £5,632 per television—as outlined in the answers of 1 September 2009, *Official Report*, column 1832W and 16 December 2009, *Official Report*, column 1265W.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Assaults on Police

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers serving in each force were physically or verbally abused during the course of their duties in each of the last five years. [207766]

Mike Penning: The table provided contains statistics on the number of police officers assaulted while on duty in England and Wales, by each police force area, 2009-10 to 2013-14.

Number of police officers assaulted¹ while on duty² in England and Wales, by police force area, 2009-10 to 2013-14

	2009-10	2010-11 ³	2011-12 ³	2012-13 ³	2013-14 ³
Avon & Somerset	160	139	166	134	127
Bedfordshire	42	60	28	32	53
Cambridgeshire	132	90	93	90	-
Cheshire	-	-	-	-	85
Cleveland	155	9	1	5	53

Number of police officers assaulted¹ while on duty² in England and Wales, by police force area, 2009-10 to 2013-14

	2009-10	2010-11 ³	2011-12 ³	2012-13 ³	2013-14 ³
Cumbria	96	89	76	64	49
Derbyshire	120	82	57	49	32
Devon & Cornwall	168	196	176	147	121
Dorset	70	74	69	61	78
Durham	126	121	102	102	81
Dyfed-Powys	59	63	69	56	65
Essex	330	355	315	331	344
Gloucestershire	-	53	100	79	86
Greater Manchester	-	-	-	-	-
Gwent	103	93	93	87	82
Hampshire	-	306	373	106	-
Hertfordshire	62	77	45	64	95
Humberside	147	132	116	107	90
Kent	389	308	334	335	307
Lancashire	303	327	331	257	192
Leicestershire	138	143	107	126	121
Lincolnshire	110	80	82	86	80
London, City of	24	9	12	9	5
Merseyside	171	84	113	112	141
Metropolitan Police	1,897	1,827	1,811	1,492	-
Norfolk	120	79	68	80	85
Northamptonshire	104	126	109	62	58
Northumbria	579	528	511	511	306
North Wales	76	94	140	112	62
North Yorkshire	-	47	55	54	35
Nottinghamshire	110	212	159	137	161
South Wales	178	177	146	154	121
South Yorkshire	112	58	78	63	59
Staffordshire	108	96	83	22	79
Suffolk	31	33	67	52	44
Surrey	137	130	152	128	135
Sussex	310	345	224	178	168
Thames Valley	179	198	207	231	193
Warwickshire	61	65	52	57	2
West Mercia	91	100	159	165	163
West Midlands	678	471	276	406	423
West Yorkshire	433	351	286	238	274
Wiltshire	66	77	63	67	75

¹ Data not available. Force not able to supply data at time of collection.

² These figures are based upon self-reported assault data held within police forces' human resource or health and safety systems. These figures include assaults which result in:

a. Serious injury-those assaults for which the charge would be under Section 18-wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm, and Section 20 Offences Against the Person Act 1861-inflicting grievous bodily harm, without intent and malicious wounding.

b. Minor injury-those assaults for which the charge would be under Section 47 Offences Against the Persons Act-assault occasioning actual bodily harm, Section 38 Offences Against the Person Act-assault with intent to resist, Sections 89(1)-assault on a constable and assault on person assisting a constable and 89(2) Police Act 1995-resisting or wilfully obstructing a constable in the execution of his duty and Section 39 Criminal Justice Act 1988-common assault and battery.

c. No injury.

These figures also include verbal threats and attempts of assault which are perceived to have genuine intent.

Recording practices may vary over time and between forces.

³ Includes assaults on police officers on duty as well as those assaults on officers off duty, while acting in their capacity as police officers.

³ These figures are not regularly published; they have not been verified by police forces and should be treated as provisional.

Civil Disorder: Compensation

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations she has received regarding the amount of compensation that would be received by businesses for damages from rioting under the proposed reforms to the Riot (Damages) Act 1886; and if she will make a statement.

[207569]

Mike Penning: A number of organisations responded to the recent public consultation on reform of the Riot (Damages) Act. The consultation ran from 5 June to 1 August. These responses covered the full range of proposals, including the Independent Reviewer's recommendation to cap compensation based on business

turnover. These representations are being considered and the Government's response to the consultation will be published in due course.

Departmental Records

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what criteria are used in her Department to decide what historic files should be (a) retained and (b) destroyed; when these criteria were established; and what reviews have been undertaken of these criteria since.

[204142]

Karen Bradley: The Department's policy on whether to retain or destroy a file is to follow the cross-governmental guidance provided by The National Archives (TNA)

where the length of retention is allocated based on legal or business requirements and historical importance. The result is that files are kept for different lengths of time depending on their content.

Those files where another Government Department is the policy lead or which contain minimal or duplicated content are kept for the shortest period before destruction. This period could be up to 10 years. Those which contain papers relating to issues such as legislation, major policies or notable events may be kept for up to 25 years with some files being transferred to TNA following a review of their importance in line with policy and their value for future historical research. These arrangements have been in place since 1982, with the most recent review of procedures having taken place in 2010.

NATO

Paul Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what his most recent estimate is of the cost of policing the NATO summit in Newport. [207377]

Mike Penning: The majority of the summit costs will be met by Her Majesty's Government. The overall final costs are expected to be reported formally after the summit has concluded.

Police: St Helena

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what resources UK police forces provided to the police service of the British Overseas Territory of Saint Helena in each of the last five years. [207764]

Mike Penning: The Home Office does not hold information on all official visits by UK police officers to Saint Helena. However, since January 2009, under section 26 of the Police Act (1996), the Home Office has authorised deployments of three UK police officers to St Helena to provide advice to the St Helena police: a detective constable in 2010 and a chief superintendent and detective constable in 2013.

Police: Surveillance

Helen Goodman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what safeguards have been put in place to prevent undercover police officers from forming sexual relationships with those they are investigating. [207400]

Mike Penning: The Code of Ethics, published by the College of Policing on 15 July 2014, sets out the principles and the standards of professional behaviour expected of all police officers in England and Wales. The Code of Ethics makes clear that police officers must:

“not engage in sexual conduct or other inappropriate behaviour when on duty.”

The revised Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) Codes of Practice were laid in Parliament on 22 July 2014. The revised Codes of Practice make it clear that, in the same way as other police officers, all undercover officers must comply and uphold the principles and standards set out in the Code of Ethics.

Special Constables

Andrew Gwynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Special Constables in the (a) Metropolitan Police and (b) Greater Manchester Police have been subject to disciplinary proceedings in each of the last five years; and how many such officers were subsequently relieved of their duties following such proceedings. [207765]

Mike Penning: The Home Office does not hold information on the number of special constables that have been subject to disciplinary proceedings, nor those who were subsequently relieved of their duties following such proceedings. However, the Home Office does collect statistics on the number of special constables that have been dismissed and figures for (a) and (b) have been provided in the following table. The reasons for dismissal cannot be identified.

Number of special constables (headcount) dismissed¹ by Greater Manchester police and the Metropolitan police, 2009-10 to 2013-14²

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Greater Manchester police	0	6	1	3	0
Metropolitan police	5	10	6	18	44

¹ Includes members of staff required to resign and staff whose contract has been terminated.

² These figures are not regularly published; they have not been verified by police forces and should be treated as provisional.

TREASURY

Children: Day Care

Lucy Powell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether households comprising (a) one disabled parent unable to work and another parent in work and (b) a single disabled parent will be entitled to receive help through tax free childcare. [207930]

Priti Patel: Details of the eligibility criteria for Tax-Free Childcare can be found in Chapter 2 of 'Delivering Tax-free Childcare: the Government's response to the consultation on design and operation':

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/318953/PU1607_Tax_free_Childcare_response.pdf

Credit: Interest Rates

Mike Kane: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate his Department has made of (a) the number of payday firms that will be in operation and (b) the projected consumer demand for payday loans in (i) 2015, (ii) 2016 and (iii) 2017. [207342]

Andrea Leadsom: The Government has fundamentally reformed regulation of the consumer credit market. Responsibility for consumer credit regulation transferred from the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) to the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) on 1 April 2014.

In the FCA's consultation paper on the cap on the cost of payday loans, the FCA assesses that its proposals will lead to a risk of contraction in both the online and

high-street markets. FCA modelling suggests that its cap proposals would mean at least one high street firm would continue to offer payday loans and at least the three largest online firms continuing in the market, although the FCA expects that more firms will be able to adapt their businesses to operate under the price cap and remain in the market.

Mike Kane: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what analysis his Department has made of the performance of credit caps on payday lending firms in operation in (a) the USA, (b) Canada and (c) Australia. [207343]

Andrea Leadsom: The Government legislated to require the FCA to introduce a cap on the cost of payday loans, to protect consumers from unfair costs.

In making this decision the government considered the international evidence in support of a cap. As part of its work to design a cap to meet the needs of UK consumers, the FCA took into account international comparators conducting detailed case studies on experiences of price cap setting in Australia, Canada, US, Finland and Japan. The FCA spoke to international regulators and experts to understand the rationale and designs of price caps, as well as the impact they had on consumers and industry in these countries.

EU Law

Mr Redwood: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new EU directives and regulations have been transposed into UK law by his Department since May 2010. [207266]

Mr Gauke: Details of all current EU legislation are on the Euro-Lex website:

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/browse/directories/legislation.html>

We do not hold a central record of the EU directives the Treasury has transposed into UK law since 2010 nor a record of all EU regulations that came into effect during that period.

Gold: Prices

Mr Mark Williams: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer pursuant to the answer of 7 July 2014, *Official Report*, column 121W, on gold prices, if he will request that the review into the operation of the gold market consider the appropriateness of allowing and encouraging gold investments within ISAs. [207326]

Andrea Leadsom: The Fair and Effective Markets Review, which has been tasked with considering how to raise standards in fixed income, currency and commodity markets, has been in operation since June 2014. The terms of reference for the FEMR can be found at

<http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Documents/news/2014/tor.pdf>

At this time, the Government has no plans to amend the terms of reference.

NATO

Stephen Doughty: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Government will repay additional costs incurred as a result of hosting the NATO Summit by (a) the Welsh government, (b) Welsh local authorities and (c) Welsh police forces. [207631]

Danny Alexander: In line with established arrangements for funding comparable events, the general principle is that costs directly related to the event, such as those directly attributable to infrastructure and policing for specific supporting activities at the summit and the UK role in hosting, will be met by the UK Government. However, additional costs which in the devolved context normally fall under the remit of the devolved Administration are expected to be met from within existing budgets.

Revenue and Customs

John McDonnell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many HM Revenue and Customs staff worked in the Personal Tax (Operations) Directorate in July 2014; and what his forecast is of the number working in that Directorate in (a) October 2014, (b) January 2015, (c) April 2015, (d) July 2015, (e) October 2015, (f) January 2016 and (g) April 2016. [206677]

Mr Gauke: The Department does not generally release staffing figures at a Directorate level.

Tobacco

Rehman Chishti: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) how many arrests HM Revenue and Customs has made in (a) Medway and (b) Kent for offences relating to the sale of illicit cigarettes in each of the last 10 years; [207962]

(2) how many occasions a lottery retailing licence has been removed for selling illicit (a) cigarettes and (b) alcohol in each of the last 10 years; [207963]

(3) on how many occasions HM Revenue and Customs has formally objected to the renewal of a retailer's alcohol licence for selling illicit tobacco in each of the last 10 years. [207964]

Priti Patel: HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) Criminal Investigation (CI) is responsible for carrying out enforcement action to seize non duty paid alcohol and cigarettes, be they illicit or otherwise. Our Management Information (MI) does not differentiate between the different types of cigarettes or alcohol and we do not provide data on a regional basis, only national statistics. HMRC CI do record the number of arrests made but again this data is not differentiated between the different types of cigarettes or alcohol and we do not provide data on a regional basis only national statistics.

HMRC is not responsible for making an application to the courts for the revoking of a trader's retail alcohol licence: that remains the responsibility of the appropriate Trading Standards office. Normally Trading Standards Officers will accompany HMRC CI officers when they visit a premises suspected of having non duty paid or illicit tobacco or alcohol products. If such products are found, then they can evidence the fact and take such action they deem appropriate. HMRC CI MI does not capture such referrals nor the results of any action that may be taken by the appropriate authority.

Similarly HMRC are not responsible for terminating a traders National Lottery Licence: that remains the responsibility of Camelot. Where HMRC CI seize non duty paid or illicit tobacco or alcohol products, there is a protocol for Camelot to be notified so they can take

such action they deem appropriate. HMRC CI MI does not capture such referrals nor the results of any action that may be taken by the appropriate authority.

Tobacco: Smuggling

Rehman Chishti: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of cigarettes on which tax has not been paid in (a) Gillingham and Rainham constituency, (b) Kent and (c) England in the latest period for which figures are available. [207961]

Priti Patel: Estimates of the volume losses associated with the illicit market for cigarettes for the period 2008-09 to 2012-13 are published in 'Tobacco Tax Gap estimates: 2012-13'. The figures are available in table 1.1.

These estimates cannot be disaggregated by the type of illicit activity, e.g. through smuggling, counterfeiting or other fraud, or by any geographical level lower than the UK.

The methodology for producing the estimates are provided in the 'Methodological Annex for Measuring Tax Gaps 2013'.

The "Tobacco Tax Gap estimates" can be accessed via the following link:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/249543/131009_Publication_of_Tobacco_Tax_Gap_estimates_2012-13.pdf

TRANSPORT

Buses: Tyres

Steve Rotheram: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he plans to publish the conclusions to research into tyre-ageing on buses and coaches that he commissioned in December 2013. [207824]

Claire Perry: My officials have consulted with experts from the British and the European tyre manufacturing industry who have provided consistent advice that chronological age is not an indicator of a tyre's mechanical properties. Further research is currently being planned and the outcomes will be available next year.

Cycleways

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many segregated bicycle lanes have been constructed in England in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; [207928]

(2) how many segregated bicycle lanes have been constructed in England in each of the last 20 years. [207899]

Mr Goodwill: The Department for Transport does not centrally hold figures for how many segregated bicycle lanes have been constructed over the last twenty years. The Department has provided significantly more funding than the previous administration to local authorities to implement cycling schemes, including segregated bicycle lanes, for instance through the Cycling Ambition Grants, Local Sustainable Transport Fund and Local Growth Fund.

Directly Operated Railways

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what total mobilisation costs have been incurred by each franchise operated by Directly Operated Railways since 6 May 2010. [207864]

Claire Perry: The only franchise operated by Directly Operated Railways (DOR) since 6 May 2010 is InterCity East Coast. The costs for mobilising DOR to take over the running of that franchise in November 2009, as reported by the National Audit Office (NAO), were £5.6 million. The full NAO report was published 22 March 2011 and is available on the NAO website at:

<http://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/1011824.pdf>

Driving: Licensing

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many driving licence (a) applications and (b) renewals breached the target timeframe for processing in each of the last five years; and in how many such cases the breach arose as a result of delays in medical assessments. [207167]

Claire Perry: The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) does not hold separate figures for applications for a driving licence and renewal applications which missed the target for processing. However, the total number of driving licence applications where the target time for processing has been breached is shown in the table:

	<i>Total number of all driving licence applications received including applications to renew a driving licence</i>	<i>Total number of applications for a driving licence, including applications to renew a licence, where the target was missed</i>	<i>Total number of applications for a driving licence, including applications to renew a licence, where the target was missed due to medical investigations</i>
2009-10	8,794,140	184,398	48,146
2010-11	9,716,576	318,982	58,825
2011-12	9,834,914	98,086	57,552
2012-13	9,769,331	194,751	77,764
2013-14	10,233,837	241,437	63,963

The number of applications and renewal applications where the target was missed due to medical investigations also includes cases where the DVLA has been notified of a medical condition which requires further investigation. However, these notifications were not necessarily associated with an application for a driving licence or an application to renew a licence.

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many driving licence (a) applications and (b) renewals the DVLA has received in each of the last five years. [207184]

Claire Perry: The number of driving licence applications and applications to renew a licence received at the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency in the last five years is set out in the table below:

	<i>Total number of all driving licence applications received including applications to renew a driving licence</i>	<i>Total number of applications received to renew a driving licence</i>
2009-10	8,794,140	3,164,424
2010-11	9,716,576	4,113,264
2011-12	9,834,914	4,272,278
2012-13	9,769,331	4,271,609
2013-14	10,233,837	4,315,268

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the current target timeframe is for processing of driving licence (a) applications and (b) renewals; and whether the same timeframe applies in the case of licences that have a medical test as part of the application. [207185]

Claire Perry: The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's (DVLA) targets for processing driving licence applications are to deliver:

98% of first provisional driving licences within eight working days;

98% of vocational driving licences within eight working days; and

98% of all other driving licence applications, including renewal applications within 10 working days

Where a driving licence application requires medical investigations, the target is to conclude 90% of all cases and make a licensing decision within 90 working days.

EU Law

Mr Redwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many new EU directives and regulations have been transposed into UK law by his Department since May 2010. [207265]

Claire Perry: The Department for Transport has transposed 44 EU directives since May 2010. This number comprises fully transposed directives which originated from the European Commission's Directorate General Mobility and Transport.

The Department for Transport has been tracking EU regulations since 8 July 2010. Since that date, 164 EU regulations in the Department for Transport's area of responsibility have come into effect.

Details of all EU legislation, including full details of all EU regulations that came into force before 08/07/2010, can be found on the Commission's website:

<http://old.eur-lex.europa.eu/en/index.htm>

for older legislation and

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html?locale=en>

for legislation since 1 April 2014.

Ferries: Safety

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the current level of compliance is with the (a) Merchant Shipping (Weighing of Goods Vehicles and other Cargo) Regulations 1988, (b) Merchant Shipping (Weighing of Goods Vehicles and other Cargo)

(Amendment) Regulations 1989 and (c) Merchant Shipping (Weighing of Goods Vehicles and other Cargo) (Application to non-UK Ships) Regulations 1989 at each UK port licensed to operate passenger ferry services. [207124]

Mr Hayes: Shipping companies are required to have in place procedures for ensuring that the weighed weights of trucks are used for stability calculations, and these procedures are documented in the ships Safety Management System which is audited regularly by surveyors of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA). MCA surveyors inspect car ferries in operation, and part of the checks confirm that the ships' masters are correctly using the weight information supplied by weighbridges.

As a result of these proactive audit process the MCA does not routinely collect information on compliance with the Merchant Shipping (Weighing of Goods Vehicles and other Cargo) Regulations 1988 (as amended).

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the current level of compliance is with the Merchant Shipping (Emergency Equipment Lockers for Ro/Ro Passenger Ships) Regulations 1988 amongst ship owners operating licensed passenger ferry services from UK ports; what the penalties are for non-compliance; and if he will publish a list of all instances of non-compliance with these regulations recorded by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency since 1988. [207127]

Mr Hayes: The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) does not record the information in the format requested.

The MCA does record non-compliance, or deficiencies, of items for which there are specific codes, for example emergency lighting. The Emergency Equipment Lockers do not have a specific code, and items similar to those kept in the Emergency Equipment Locker may be located in other parts of the ship. These may need to be recorded as non-compliant although, the records do not indicate whether such deficiencies relate to equipment in one of the Emergency Equipment Lockers or elsewhere in the ship.

The penalties for non-compliance are:

'the owner and master of the ship shall each be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or on conviction on indictment to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or a fine or both.'

Level 5 is currently set at £5,000.

Malaysia Airlines

Mr Gregory Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the Civil Aviation Authority the lessons to be learned following the loss of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17. [207882]

Mr Goodwill: The Department for Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority are already working closely together in considering the impact and lessons learned from flight MH17. The UK Government is also playing an active role in the taskforce set up by the International Civil Aviation Organisation to consider the international management of overflight risks in conflict zones.

Merseyrail

Steve Rotheram: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of whether Merseyrail has an appropriate emergency response plan to deal with a terrorist attack on the rail network; and on what date the last Merseyrail emergency response drill was carried out. [207806]

Claire Perry: The National Railways Security Programme (NRSP) requires all Train Operating Companies, including Merseyrail, to have response procedures in place to respond to any security incidents on their station and trains and to review these contingency plans annually. It also recommends that they exercise these plans on an annual basis. The Department does not collect information on the frequency of exercises because this is a matter for decision by the rail operators within the framework set by the NRSP.

Network Rail

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether there is a mechanism to enable the transfer of Network Rail's Control Period 6 funding into Control Period 5; and whether such a mechanism has been used. [207862]

Claire Perry: Network Rail's funding requirement for Control Period 5 was settled in the Office of Rail Regulation's Final Determination for 2014-19 published in October 2013. Network Rail has committed to deliver its obligations within this level of funding. Were more funding ultimately required to deliver contracted obligations at an efficient cost, this would be a matter for the regulator to discuss with the Secretary of State. Funding for the next Control Period (2019-24) will not be determined until the regulator completes its next periodic review in 2018.

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he expects to introduce legislation to make Network Rail subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000. [207863]

Claire Perry: The Government and Network Rail have agreed that Network Rail will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 in relation to its public functions. This requires secondary legislation, which the Government will bring forward at the next opportunity with the intention of making Network Rail subject to the Freedom of Information Act by April 2015.

Before then Network Rail will continue to exercise transparency to the public through its Transparency Strategy, which includes a voluntary information publication scheme. This was introduced in June 2012 to make the company more transparent and accountable to the wider public.

Nottingham-Lincoln Railway Line

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make an announcement on improvements to the Nottingham to Lincoln line. [207826]

Claire Perry: My officials have been working with East Midlands Trains, local authorities, LEPs and Newark Business Club, in order to develop proposals to provide an improved train service for passengers travelling between Nottingham and Lincoln, following service cuts overseen by the previous Government.

We are hopeful that a decision will be made in the coming weeks.

Pedestrian Crossings

Sheila Gilmore: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the recommendations contained in the report, A review of pedestrian walking speeds and time needed to cross the road, published by Living Streets and Transport Research Laboratory on 1 September 2014. [207955]

Mr Goodwill: The Department notes the recommendation that the relevant guidance on this subject should be updated.

The Department expects to bring the successor to the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions, which will include all pedestrian crossing types, into force in 2015 and once that is complete will consider the need to update existing guidance.

Railways

Heidi Alexander: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the process is for the review of the National Rail Conditions of Carriage; when that review will be completed; and whether there will be consultation with (a) consumer groups and (b) the general public about the outcome of that review. [207166]

Claire Perry: The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) is responsible for the National Rail Conditions of Carriage (NRCoC). The NRCoC is a Schedule to the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement (TSA), an agreement between train operators that sets out arrangements for the carriage of passengers and the retailing of tickets. The written approval of the Secretary of State for Transport is required before any changes can be made to the NRCoC.

ATOC is currently reviewing the NRCoC, with a view to publishing a revised version in spring 2015. ATOC has stated that it intends to consult passenger groups (including Passenger Focus and London TravelWatch) on any changes it proposes to make to the current NRCoC before submitting the revised version to the Secretary of State for approval.

Railways: North of England

Lilian Greenwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with rolling stock companies on the replacement or refurbishment of Pacer units as part of the Northern/TPE franchise consultation. [207866]

Claire Perry: We expect to require bidders for the Northern and TPE franchises to put forward options for replacing Pacer units, which for many are a source of dissatisfaction with rail services in the north. The Secretary

of State for Transport has not had any discussions with rolling stock companies regarding this as it is a matter for train operators.

Rescue Services

Paul Maynard: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport with reference to the request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 of 10 February 2014, reference F0001198, for what reasons the Maritime and Coastguard Agency cannot attribute incidents to any particular Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre. [207419]

Mr Hayes: The instances whereby Coastguard incidents cannot be attributed to any particular Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) are caused when an incident is created with no attendant position.

These may be inland incidents where a MRCC was advised but not involved, such as the use of a Search and Rescue Helicopter for a non-maritime task, or where an incident was logged with no certainty of the position of the casualty.

Roads: Repairs and Maintenance

Stephen Barclay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which local highways authorities are not members of maintenance alliances. [207937]

Mr Goodwill: The Department does not hold the information on which local highway authorities are members or not of maintenance alliances as it is for each highway authority to decide on whether they wish to become a member.

The Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme does, however, hold information on each alliance that has been formed and this can be seen at the following weblink:

<http://www.highwayefficiency.org.uk/connect-and-share/connect/collaborative-alliances.html>

In July 2012 the Programme published a toolkit which promotes the benefits of highway authorities

working collaboratively with other authorities as part of an alliance. This toolkit can be found at the following weblink:

<http://www.highwayefficiency.org.uk/efficiency-resources/collaboration--change/local-highway-authorities-collaborative-alliances-toolkit.html>

Stephen Barclay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which local highways authorities do not use the pothole repair methods recommended the highways maintenance efficiency programme report, Prevention and a Better Cure: Potholes Review, published in April 2012. [207938]

Mr Goodwill: The Department encourages local highway authorities to adopt the recommendations and approaches set out in the Pothole Review Report. Applications submitted by local highway authorities through the £200 million Pothole Fund announced in the Budget of March 2014 demonstrated that the majority of authorities had implemented recommendations in the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme report.

It is, however, for each local highway authority to decide on the methods to be applied to pothole repairs based upon their local knowledge and circumstances.

Stephen Barclay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport with reference to the National Audit Office report, maintaining strategic infrastructure: roads, what savings, under what headings, the Highways Agency has made in each of the last three financial years; and what savings are forecast for 2014-15. [207939]

Mr Hayes: The savings achieved in the past three years (2011/12 to 2013/14) total £136 million. The forecast for 2014/15 is £102 million (remains in line with the forecast in the June NAO report). This would total savings of £238 million for the four year SR10 period ending in 2014/15. Almost two thirds of the total savings will be achieved through maintenance contracts. See following table.

Highways Agency Savings

£ million

	2011/12	Actual			2014/15	Total SR10 Act/Feast
		2012/13	2013/14			
Savings on Maintenance Contracts	(6)	33	52	74		153
Other (Incl Increased use of in house-staff)	19	19	19	28		85
Total Savings	13	52	71	102		238

In reference to the National Audit Office (NAO) report, 'maintaining infrastructure: roads', the Highways Agency took a range of actions to achieve the savings and budget reductions set in the Spending Review 2010 (SR10). The main action relating to maintenance was; to renegotiate its existing and continuing maintenance contracts to give an affordable level of service; and it also developed a new type of contract in which it specified outcomes rather than prescribing maintenance activities. When maintenance contracts are renewed they are negotiated using the new type of contract. The majority of savings were anticipated to be achieved through the contract renegotiations.

Another area of savings identified in NAO report was the use of in-house staff to cover areas of work such as commercial and asset management.

Stephen Barclay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the scope for the Highways Agency and local highways authorities to share departments, plant and staff and other resources used by their contractors; and what estimate he has made of the savings arising from such integration of resources. [207940]

Mr Goodwill: While no assessment or estimate of savings has been made in respect of the Highways

Agency and local highway authorities integrating services, the Highways Agency takes advantage of opportunities to share resources with local authorities where it is able to do so and it is appropriate.

Roads: West Midlands

Gavin Williamson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much funding his Department has allocated to each local authority in the West Midlands for road improvement in each of the last five years. [207314]

Mr Goodwill: The Department for Transport provides funding to local highway authorities through a number of programmes which can be used to improve local roads.

The following table provides the funding allocated to the West Midlands authorities since 2010-11. This funding includes Integrated Transport Block, Maintenance Block, Additional Block funding, the Pothole Fund, Severe Weather funding, Local Major Projects and the Local Pinch Point Fund.

Authority	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	£ million 2014/15
Herefordshire	13.610	12.929	9.985	11.376	16.756
Shropshire	19.665	18.988	14.792	16.700	19.612
Staffordshire	24.457	26.448	21.113	27.180	31.187
Stoke on Trent	4.653	4.423	3.681	3.973	5.163
Telford and Wrekin	4.296	4.520	3.682	5.202	4.836
Warwickshire	16.243	16.173	13.504	17.593	22.359
Worcestershire	17.423	19.106	18.152	21.849	24.221
CENTRO— West Midlands ITA	66.783	48.727	45.791	42.295	53.626
Birmingham ¹	5.125	2.683	0	7.500	5.700
Coventry ²	0.298	0.488	0	2.411	4.870
Dudley ²	0.812	1.125	0.100	0.473	1.438
Sandwell ²	7.750	8.718	3.800	3.420	1.461
Solihull ²	0.223	0.453	0	0.495	3.696
Walsall ²	0.208	0.522	0	0.352	0.888
Wolverhampton ²	0.648	0.446	0	1.688	3.078

¹ Birmingham have not received block or additional funding for highways maintenance since April 2011 as their PFI project became operational in June 2010.

² The capital block funding for all the Councils that form the Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) is allocated to the ITA, however additional funding for highways maintenance, the Pothole Fund, severe weather funding, Local Major Projects and the Local Pinch Point Fund is paid directly to each Council.

In addition the Department is providing £625 million to Birmingham city council for their Highways Maintenance PFI project which became operational in 2010 for a 25 year period. Local authorities are also able to use revenue funding which is provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government through the Revenue Support Grant for highway improvements.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
April	—	—	—	Thailand and Germany	Singapore and India
May	—	—	Oslo	Vietnam	—
June	Oslo	Athens	Germany	Athens	Oslo and Athens

Roads: Wildlife

Richard Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what guidance he gives on procedures to be followed by highways authorities and police forces with respect to the identification of deceased animals on the road network. [207900]

Mr Goodwill: No specific guidance has been provided on this subject.

Section 7.17 of the Highways Agency's Network Management Manual (NMM)

http://www.dft.gov.uk/ha/standards/nmm_rwsc/docs/nmm_part_7a.pdf

describes processes that must be followed when canine remains are found on the strategic road network although it does also recognise that it is impossible to guarantee that remains can be fully identified due to the high speed nature of the Agency's roads.

Local highway authorities also remove dead animals from all roads and public spaces for which they are responsible. This includes wild animals such as badgers, foxes, and deer along with domestic pets such as cats and dogs. If pets are found, authorities try to identify the owners if the pet has a collar or microchip.

Shipping: Registration

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's (MCA) annual budget was for promoting the UK Shipping Register internationally to encourage ship owners to register their ships in the UK in each year since 2009-10; and what the MCA's budget is for such work in 2015-16; [207097]

(2) how many overseas visit trips (a) Ministers, (b) officials in his Department and (c) officials from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency have undertaken in each year since 2009-10 to promote the UK Shipping Register to ship owners; and what the (i) destination and (ii) cost was of each such trip. [207104]

Mr Hayes: The table shows the overseas visits made by officials from the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) to promote the UK Shipping Register (UKSR) to ship owners since 2009-10. It also shows the cost per year for these trips and the MCA's planned expenditure for promoting the UKSR.

The expenditure in 2013-14 was higher than originally planned because of the decision to raise the profile of the UKSR in international markets, in particular China and the Far East. This included attendance by UKSR officials at shipping industry and ship building trade shows, and also official receptions for shipping industry leaders at UK missions overseas.

Ministers attended the events in Athens in June 2012 and 2013, and Singapore in February 2014 with the MCA. Those attendances were part of a wider programme of events involving shipping and transport in general. Costing the element involved in the promotion of the UK Shipping register is not possible.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
July	—	—	—	—	—
August	—	—	—	—	Germany
September	—	Germany	Germany	Germany	—
October	—	—	India	—	—
November	Rotterdam	—	Shanghai	—	Athens and Singapore
December	Shanghai	—	Hong Kong	—	Shanghai
January	—	—	—	—	—
February	—	—	—	Tokyo and Copenhagen	Singapore and Germany
March	—	—	Germany	—	—
Planned expenditure	£44,500	£32,400	£25,000	£21,739	£19,284
Total spend	£16,048.57	£5,082.48	£26,040.48	£19,083.68	£40,272.52

Telephone Services

Valerie Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport under what timetable his Department plans to phase out use of telephone lines with the prefix (a) 0845, 0844 and 0843 in accordance with the Cabinet Office guidance on customer service lines published in December 2013 and (b) 03 and 08, where 03 is the primary number under a dual numbering system. [207289]

Claire Perry: The process for phasing out telephone lines with the prefix (a) 0845, 0844 and 0843 in accordance with the Cabinet Office guidance is now well advanced. There is one legacy 0845 850 0095 DVLA Drivers Medical Enquiries fax number published on GOV.UK which is retained for legacy reasons in case some literature with this number is still in circulation. Other numbers have transitioned to 0300 numbers which are charged at standard geographic rate (the same as 01 or 02 numbers) and are free as part of “inclusive minute” packages. In response to (b) there are no 03 and 08 combinations.

Television

Mr Bradshaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department spent on the purchase of televisions in (a) 2013 and (b) 2014 to date. [207224]

Claire Perry: The requested information is provided as follows.

Organisational Unit	(a) 2013	(b) 2014 (to date)	£
London headquarters	—	—	2,788
Rail Accident Investigation Branch	—	—	96
Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency ¹	3,120	—	2,729
Maritime and Coastguard Agency	4,423	—	—

¹ Includes data for former Driving Standards Agency and Vehicle Operator Services Agency

UK Chamber of Shipping

Katy Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many officials from the UK Chamber of Shipping have been seconded to work in his Department since May 2010; and in what areas of maritime policy each such member of staff has been so employed. [207103]

Claire Perry: No officials from the UK Chamber of Shipping have been seconded to work in the Department for Transport since May 2010. The Department works very closely with the UK Chamber on many key aspects of maritime policy, and discussions with them are on an ongoing basis. The Department is also keen to increase secondment opportunities more generally with transport industries, both encouraging incoming secondees to the Department, and outward secondments for staff.

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