Review of select committee activity and proposals for new committee activity
**The Liaison Committee**

The Liaison Committee advises the House on the resources required for select committee work and allocates resources between select committees; reviews the select committee work of the House; considers requests for *ad hoc* committees and reports to the House with recommendations; ensures effective co-ordination between the two Houses; and considers the availability of Lords to serve on committees.

**Membership**

The Members of the Liaison Committee are:

- Baroness Browning
- Lord Campbell-Savours
- Lord Craig of Radley
- Lord Laming
- Baroness Royall of Blaisdon
- Lord Sewel (Chairman)
- Baroness Stowell of Beeston
- Lord Touhig
- Viscount Ullswater
- Lord Wallace of Tankerness
- Baroness Walmsley

**Declaration of interests**

A full list of Members’ interests can be found in the Register of Lords’ Interests: [http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests](http://www.parliament.uk/mps-lords-and-offices/standards-and-interests/register-of-lords-interests)

**Publications**

All publications of the Committee are available at: [http://www.parliament.uk/lords-liaison](http://www.parliament.uk/lords-liaison)

**Further information**

Further information about the House of Lords and its Committees, including guidance to witnesses, details of current inquiries and forthcoming meetings is available at: [http://www.parliament.uk/business/lords](http://www.parliament.uk/business/lords)

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Review of select committee activity and proposals for new committee activity

REVIEW OF SELECT COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

Introduction

1. Select Committee activity continues to go from strength to strength and to contribute greatly to the House of Lords’ reputation as a second Chamber. The present Parliament has seen an overall increase in this activity, and an increase in the number of ad hoc committees appointed each session, which has included the introduction of post-legislative scrutiny committees. In our 2012 report, following the publication of the Report of the Leader’s Group on Working Practices,1 we reviewed existing select committee activity and recommended an additional unit of committee activity.2 In our 2013 report we carried out another review and recommended a further additional unit of committee activity. We also recommended the appointment of the Communications Committee as a sessional committee at the start of the 2013–14 session.3

2. In 2014 we carried out a light touch review. We recommended the appointment of three new ad hoc investigative committees and one post-legislative scrutiny committee in the 2014–15 session.4 At the start of that session we published a further report, looking back at the investigative select committee activity in the 2013–14 session and reflecting on the further expansion in ad hoc committee activity.5 The present report should be read in the context of our continuous review of committee activity.

Sessional Committees

3. Sessional committees are so called because under Standing Order 64 their orders of appointment remain in force from one session to the next throughout a Parliament until the House orders otherwise. By contrast ad hoc committees are appointed to undertake a particular inquiry and to report thereon to the House.

4. There are currently five House of Lords investigative sessional committees:
   - The European Union Committee

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2 Liaison Committee, Review of select committee activity and proposals for new committee activity (3rd Report, Session 2010–12, HL Paper 279)
3 Liaison Committee, Review of select committee activity and proposals for new committee activity (1st Report, Session 2012–13, HL Paper 135)
4 Liaison Committee, Review of select committee activity and proposals for new committee activity (1st Report, Session 2013–14, HL Paper 145)
The Communications Committee

The Constitution Committee

The Economic Affairs Committee

The Science and Technology Committee

5. In addition, three committees focus on scrutiny of legislation. These are the Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee, the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee and the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. Like the Constitution Committee, the Joint Committee on Human Rights combines investigative and scrutiny functions. All these committees, along with the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy, are sessional committees.

Pre-legislative scrutiny in Session 2014–15

6. There is widespread agreement about the important role pre-legislative scrutiny committees can play in engaging a wider audience in the scrutiny of legislation than is possible on the floor of the House, and in assisting policy formulation. The staff resource currently provided for supporting pre-legislative committees enables the House to provide the support for one such unit of activity at any one time.

7. A joint committee was appointed by the two Houses in November 2014 to conduct pre-legislative scrutiny of the Government’s Draft Protection of Charities Bill, published on 22 October 2014. The Committee was set a deadline for reporting on the draft Bill by 28 February 2015. This was a tight timetable, particularly bearing in mind its proximity to the end of the current Parliament, but the Committee worked within it, holding 13 evidence sessions in November, December and January and publishing its report on 25 February.

8. The Committee’s report supported the Government’s proposals to give the Charity Commission more powers to ensure better regulation of the charity sector but recommended that effective safeguards be added to the face of any Bill to ensure charities and their trustees would be treated fairly by the Commission.

9. We have made provision to support the work of pre-legislative scrutiny committees in the new Parliament, recognising that the production of draft bills in the first session after a general election can be unpredictable.

The work of the three ad hoc committees

10. Following feedback from Chairmen of some of the ad hoc committees appointed in the previous session, this session’s committees started their work particularly promptly in the new session. This was made possible by informal early identification of the Committee Chairmen, which in turn meant that the secretariat were able to press ahead with discussing key themes of the inquiries with potential witnesses, sounding out possible specialist advisers, and so on.
11. We asked the Chairmen of the three ad hoc committees appointed in the present session about their work.

12. Lord Sutherland of Houndwood, Chairman of the Affordable Childcare Committee, drew our attention to the challenges for committees investigating politically live topics in the last session before a general election. Equally the failure by the Treasury to provide a witness had left some important gaps in the Committee’s evidence. Specifically, the Committee had been keen to understand how the Government decided on the trade-offs that were necessary to meet the two sides of its policy aims in childcare—promoting child development through early education on the one hand, and enabling parents to work by subsidising childcare on the other hand. The Childcare minister, Sam Gyimah MP, had told the Committee that the Treasury acted as arbiter in these decisions, but without a witness from the Treasury it had not been able to ascertain how such decisions are made, which policy objective was prioritised, and why. That was important because a key theme of the evidence was that there was a lack of coherence in policy.

13. With the assistance of the Leader of the House, the Chairman of the Liaison Committee met the Permanent Secretary of the Treasury, Sir Nicholas Macpherson, to discuss the difficulties which had occurred in the present and previous session in obtaining evidence from Treasury ministers and officials. They had a productive discussion and clarified the position. We acknowledge that it would not be reasonable for the Treasury to give evidence to all inquiries—ministers and officials could end up doing little else. We consider, however, that Treasury ministers and officials with named responsibilities in policy areas relevant to House of Lords Select Committee inquiries should be prepared to give evidence to those inquiries, and to other inquiries where there is an overriding Treasury interest, subject to such requests being made in good time.

14. Lord Teverson, Chairman of the Arctic Committee, commented on the importance of the Committee’s visit to Tromsø and Svalbard, which had enabled members to meet a wide range of witnesses and to see economic activity, the many international aspects of Arctic issues and scientific research. Lord Teverson had also visited, as a representative of the Lord Speaker, the Arctic Council parliamentary conference in Whitehorse, Yukon and another member had attended the “Arctic Circle” conference in Reykjavik. His Committee’s use of Twitter, with some 500 followers, had been particularly useful in interacting with people in the eight Arctic states and had broadened the call for evidence. The Committee’s report had been enhanced by infographics and additional work on its website.

15. On 9 January 2015 the Arctic Committee held a “schools debate” with students from five schools, on the following motion: “This House considers that environmental protection in the Arctic is more important than the need for economic development and job creation”.

16. Baroness Morgan of Huyton, Chairman of the Digital Skills Committee, said that using iPads had helped the Committee receive documentation in a timely way, and had also assisting in communicating information about the many other events relevant to the Committee’s inquiry. The Committee had received paper copies of the draft report, but had otherwise functioned as an
“iPad only” Committee and this had worked well. Baroness Morgan highlighted the value of the Committee’s informal preparatory work, which included a successful day of seminars at the start of its inquiry. The Committee made use of Twitter via the House of Lords generic Twitter account. Although the report’s publication had a significant impact in social media, garnering more activity than any previous report, having a bespoke account may have allowed for an even greater impact.

17. The Digital Skills Committee’s report asked the Liaison Committee to consider how best to integrate its work in the future work of select committees in the House of Lords.

The work of the post-legislative scrutiny committee

18. Lord Inglewood, Chairman of the Extradition Law (Post-Legislative Scrutiny) Committee, said that his Committee’s inquiry had been worthwhile, although the area of extradition legislation and practice was far from static. There had been a lot of political interest in the inquiry and the Committee had published an interim report on the European Arrest Warrant at a time when it was very high up the political agenda. He considered that there had been some advantages in the Committee’s tight timescale as it had forced the Committee to focus on particular subject areas—a point with which some of the other Chairmen agreed.

19. We consider that the three new ad hoc Committees and the post-legislative scrutiny committee have again worked well this session. We recommend maintaining the current high level of Committee activity in the first session of the new Parliament.

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6 The Digital Skills Committee had joined other House of Lords Select Committees in using iPads instead of paper documentation.
PROPOSALS FOR NEW COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

20. Recommendations 45 and 46 of the report of the 2011 Leader’s Group on Working Practices (paragraphs 236 and 237) were as follows:

“We recommend that the House establish two additional sessional select committees, with the intention of enhancing its capacity to scrutinise Government policy. In determining the remit of these committees, we recommend that particular regard be paid to the need for Lords committees to:

- Make best use of the knowledge and experience of Members of the House;
- Complement the work of Commons departmental select committees;
- Address areas of policy that cross departmental boundaries.

We recommend that in future the work of all investigative select committees of the House should be subject to regular and systematic review, and that, following the appointment of the two additional committees recommended above, any further sessional committees should only be appointed to replace existing committees, without creating extra demands on resources.”

21. Previous Liaison Committee reports have made recommendations based on the 2011 Leader’s Group report. The resulting increase in House of Lords committee activity over the past three sessions has been well received. This has reinforced our view that the best way of ensuring that committees reflect the changing priorities of the House and engage the full range of its membership is to appoint them on a time-limited basis, to conduct a specific inquiry with a membership tailored to that task. Regular turnover of members gives a wider range of members the opportunity to serve, and short, sharp inquiries should also make it easier for members with significant commitments outside the House to participate. Fixed terms have also allowed us to play a more active role in reviewing and adapting the select committee activity of the House, thereby addressing the Leader’s Group recommendation that the House’s select committee activity should be kept under regular review. The resources to support new select committee activity are released at the end of each session, giving this Committee more room to facilitate proposals for new select committees submitted by members of the House in the course of the session.

22. Following a similar pattern to the two previous sessions, in autumn 2014 the Chairman invited proposals from members of the House for ad hoc Committees in the 2014–15 session, setting a deadline of 14 January 2015. The Chairman requested that members submitting proposals “should explain in a few brief paragraphs the particular areas you would like to see covered by such an inquiry.” We received an unprecedentedly high number of proposals, as follows:

Constitution and governance of the UK

- Best way to establish devolution within England (Lord Shutt of Greetland)
• Civil service (Lord Butler of Brockwell, Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield and Lord McNally)

• Constitutional arrangements of the home and overseas territories in relation to the United Kingdom (Lord Foulkes of Cumnock)

• Devolution and local government (Baroness Hollis of Heigham)

• Voter registration (Lord Storey and Baroness Grey-Thompson)

Demographic change
• Outlook for UK population growth and its likely consequences (Lord Green of Deddington)

Education policy
• Examining the operation of tuition fees for University students in England (Lord Foulkes of Cumnock)

• Impact of recent education reforms (Baroness Perry of Southwark)

• Policy making and evidence in education (Lord German)

Employment policy
• Employment for young people in the tourism and hospitality sector (Lord Lee of Trafford)

Energy policy
• Recent geopolitical developments affecting energy supplies, including fracking (Baroness O’Cathain)

Environment and Agriculture
• Air pollution (Lord Borwick)

• Genetically modified crops (Viscount Ridley)

• Impact of global population growth on biodiversity (Lord Lea of Crondall)

Equalities law
• Equality Act 2010 (post-legislative scrutiny) (Baroness Thomas of Winchester)

Foreign policy
• Foreign Affairs Sessional Select Committee (Lord Hannay of Chiswick, Lord Howell of Guildford and Lord Jopling)

• Appointment of the United Nations Secretary-General (Lord Dubs)

• Global Jihadist movements, and the international fight against terrorism (Lord Foulkes of Cumnock)
• Sexual violence in conflict: the UK and global response (Baroness Helic)
• Viability of delivering a two-State solution for Israel and Palestine (Lord Warner)

Health policy
• Creation of a health promoting society in the UK (Lord Crisp and Lord Mawson)
• Impact on health outcomes of limited patient choice in accessing healthcare (Lord Ribeiro)
• Patient choice in the NHS (Lord Balfe)
• Political intervention in the NHS since 1970 and the case for an independent NHS (Lord McColl of Dulwich)
• Prevention of mental illness (Lord Farmer)

Housing policy
• Future of residential tenure in England (Baroness Gardner of Parkes)

Human rights
• Criminalisation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in Third Countries (Lord Cashman)
• Religiously based gender discrimination (Baroness Cox, Viscount Bridgeman, Lord Dholakia, Baroness Flather, Lord Marlesford, Lord Taverne, Lord Pearson of Rannoch and Lord West of Spithead)

Immigration policy
• Visa: arrangements for obtaining visa to visit, study and reside in the United Kingdom (Lord Foulkes of Cumnock)

Legal services legislation
• Legal Services Act 2007 (post-legislative scrutiny) (Baroness Deech)

Marriages and partnerships
• Breakdown of marriages and partnerships and in particular the impact on children (Lord Luce)

Personal Data
• Children and Young People (Minors) Data inquiry (Baroness Kidron)

Planning and infrastructure policy
• National policy for the built environment (Baroness Whitaker and Baroness Andrews)
• Development of UK Cities (linked proposal) (Lord Hunt of Chesterton)
Policy formulation

- Innovation and risk culture in Government (Lord Tebbit)
- Role of evidence, data and scientific procedure in the formulation of government policy (Lord Foulkes of Cumnock)

Prostitution Law

- Prostitution Law Reform (Lord Faulkner of Worcester)

Public Service Delivery

- Bridging the gap between the public and private sector (Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe)
- Delivery of services to rural areas and rural communities (Lord Cameron of Dillington)

Public spending

- Implications for the Barnett Formula of the Scotland Acts (Lord Foulkes of Cumnock)

Social mobility

- Social mobility and economic inequality (Lord Teverson)
- Social mobility focussing on the transition from school to work (Baroness Tyler of Enfield)

23. We are grateful to all members who sent in their proposals.

24. We considered all these proposals in accordance with the following criteria for selection which were outlined in the Leader’s Group report. These are that particular regard should be paid to the need for Lords committees to:

- Make best use of the knowledge and experience of Members of the House;
- Complement the work of Commons departmental select committees;
- Address areas of policy that cross departmental boundaries.

25. In February 2013 the Committee agreed that a fourth criterion should be that the Committee activity proposed for ad hoc committees should be capable of being confined to one session. Our fifth consideration is that we have agreed in principle that one of the ad hoc Committees chosen each session should be on an international relations subject.
26. Baroness Helic proposed a select committee on sexual violence in conflict: the UK and global response. Such an ad hoc committee might consider any of the following:

- how outbreaks of sexual violence in conflict might be prevented and mitigated;
- how the UK can best support the reintegration of victims of sexual violence, including countering stigmatism and mitigating the health consequences;
- whether UK policy towards the undermining of ISIL and the stabilising of Iraq and Syria pays sufficient regard to the use of sexual violence as a weapon against Christians, Yazidis and other minorities;
- whether UK policy across the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development (DFID) is sufficiently geared and coordinated to achieve the goal of reducing sexual violence in conflict worldwide;
- the appropriate long-term institutional arrangements for the Government’s Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative;
- whether the UK is taking full advantage of the opportunities presented by membership of multilateral bodies to ensure effective policies and burden sharing;
- the allocation of DFID funding and whether funding is dependent upon compliance with UK policies for preventing sexual violence in conflict;
- whether the UK adequately resources programmes aimed at male victims and whether policy responses take account of their needs;
- whether training of Armed Forces includes the prevention of sexual violence in conflict and assess the training, provided by UK Forces, to other militaries;
- the development of the Defence Academy’s programme;
- which approaches work best in deterring sexual violence in conflict, from prosecution to protection and through carrying out country-specific case-studies.

27. In considering this proposal the Committee was aware of Baroness Helic’s interests as recorded in the register of interests and her work on sexual violence in war situations.

28. We recommend the appointment of an ad hoc committee to consider the UK’s policy and practice of preventing sexual violence in conflict, prosecuting its perpetrators and supporting its victims.
AN *AD HOC* SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL POLICY FOR THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

29. Baroness Andrews and Baroness Whitaker proposed a select committee on policy for the built environment in England. Policy towards the built environment is defined at both the national and local level. At the national level, the framework that governs the use and development of land is set out in legislation. Many of the broad principles of this framework were first developed in the Town and Country Planning Act 1947, and have not been revisited as a whole since then, although they have been supplemented and revised by successive governments. Broad policy direction on the built environment, across diverse areas including housing, green belts, design, the natural environment and heritage, is also set out nationally in guidance.

30. Policy in this area cuts across many departmental boundaries, including the Departments for Communities and Local Government; Culture, Media and Sport; Transport; Energy and Climate Change; and Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. There has not been a holistic inquiry covering the wider field of built environment.

31. An *ad hoc* committee could consider the following aspects of policy in this area:

   • The ways in which national built environment policy is developed and implemented, including inter-relationships between the different Government departments concerned;

   • The effects of national policy in this area; the ways in which national policy affects local authorities, planners, developers, employers, infrastructure providers and others;

   • The impact of the built environment on economic growth, wellbeing, social cohesion and sustainability;

   • Elements that help to determine the national significance and importance of the built environment including, for example, the education and training of planners.

32. We recommend the appointment of an *ad hoc* committee to consider the development and implementation of national policy for the built environment.
AN AD HOC SELECT COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL MOBILITY FOR SCHOOL LEAVERS

33. Baroness Tyler of Enfield proposed a select committee on social mobility focussing on the transition from school to work. An inquiry could focus on:

- careers guidance;
- bridging the gap between teachers and employers;
- access to high quality vocational education and training post 16 including apprenticeships;
- raising aspirations in Further Education colleges; and
- opening the doors to the professions through different access and progression routes.

34. In 2010 the OECD found parental or socio-economic background influences descendants’ educational, earnings and wage outcomes. Yet determining whether social mobility is increasing or decreasing is far from straightforward. For instance, a recent study by the University of Oxford found there has been no decline in social mobility in Britain over recent decades but “rather than going up as in the past, more of us are moving down the social ladder.” Later (post-school) pathways to increased mobility are also possible. This is particularly significant for school-leavers who do not follow ‘traditional’ routes into, for instance, higher education. Recent changes to the participation age mean thousands more school leavers are staying in education or training after the age of 16; alongside increased emphasis on apprenticeships. An inquiry focusing on the social mobility of those in further education and apprenticeships would therefore be well timed.

35. **We recommend the appointment of an ad hoc committee to consider social mobility in the transition from school to work.**
POST-LEGISLATIVE SCRUTINY

A post-legislative scrutiny committee on the disability provisions of the Equality Act 2010

36. Baroness Thomas of Winchester proposed a post-legislative scrutiny committee on the disability provisions of the Equality Act 2010. She envisaged the committee considering if the public and private sectors are fulfilling their obligations in the fields of education, employment, transport and access to goods and services, to enable disabled people to participate fully in, and contribute to, society with dignity and respect.

37. The Equality Act 2010 brought together a number of pieces of equality legislation into one Act. It protects against discrimination on the grounds of the “protected characteristics” of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and requires reasonable adjustments to avoid putting disabled people at a “substantial” disadvantage. These provisions apply to both the public and private sectors in respect of employment, education, goods and services, public services and transport.

38. Limiting the review to disability would help ensure a focussed inquiry. It could focus on discrimination outside employment, allowing it to examine the issues in more depth. An ad hoc committee could consider:

- Adequacy of the Law: Has the Act achieved the aim of harmonising and strengthening disability discrimination law? Are there gaps in legal protection against discrimination that impact on the ability of disabled people to participate fully in, and contribute to, society with dignity and respect?

- Implementation: Are the reasonable adjustment provisions of the Equality Act 2010 being implemented in access to goods and services available to the public? Does the division of responsibilities across several Government Departments support effective implementation?

- Enforcement: Are the enforcement mechanisms accessible and effective for people with disabilities and service providers? How effective is the Equality and Human Rights Commission in fulfilling its enforcement and regulatory role in respect of disability discrimination?

39. We recommend the appointment of an ad hoc post-legislative scrutiny committee to consider the impact on people with disabilities of the Equality Act 2010.
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We have made provision to support the work of pre-legislative scrutiny committees in the new Parliament, recognising that the production of draft bills in the first session after a general election can be unpredictable. (Paragraph 9)

2. Treasury ministers and officials with named responsibilities in policy areas relevant to House of Lords Select Committee inquiries should be prepared to give evidence to those inquiries, and to other inquiries where there is an overriding Treasury interest, subject to such requests being made in good time. (Paragraph 13)

3. We consider that the three new ad hoc Committees and the post-legislative scrutiny committee have again worked well this session. We recommend maintaining the current high level of Committee activity in the first session of the new Parliament. (Paragraph 19)

4. We recommend the appointment of an ad hoc committee to consider the UK’s policy and practice of preventing sexual violence in conflict, prosecuting its perpetrators and supporting its victims. (Paragraph 28)

5. We recommend the appointment of an ad hoc committee to consider the development and implementation of national policy for the built environment. (Paragraph 32)

6. We recommend the appointment of an ad hoc committee to consider social mobility in the transition from school to work. (Paragraph 35)

7. We recommend the appointment of an ad hoc post-legislative scrutiny committee to consider the impact on people with disabilities of the Equality Act 2010. (Paragraph 39)
APPENDIX: COMMITTEE PROPOSALS FROM MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE

Letter from Lord Balfe

Patient choice in the NHS

My contention is that we could make the NHS much more user friendly if we increased the power of the patient. I have lived partially in Belgium and France for the last 35 years. They both have fully socialised health systems but the system they use particularly for primary health (i.e. GP) referral gives the patient a lot more power over the choice of doctor.

Consumer choice has grown in virtually every area of life with the sole exception of medicine where the access to primary care other than via the GP effectively eliminates choice for other than those who can pay. Ironically of course virtually the only alternative is to present oneself at A&E and we all know the problems being faced there.

I would like to see a committee which looked at this small but significant area where choice could be expanded. I was recently speaking to Baroness Jay and she indicated that she would be interested and supportive of such an initiative.

At a time when it is important to demonstrate the usefulness of the Lords to a sceptical electorate I believe that an enquiry such as this would be able to draw on the many skills to be found on all our benches. The final report could significantly influence policy and reflect well on our House.

It is possible to write endlessly on a subject but this short note outlines the main points I wish to make.

BALFE

Letter from Lord Borwick

Air pollution

From the Great Stink of 1858 to the Great Smog of 1952, population growth and industrialisation have reduced the quality of the air in the UK, especially in big cities. The Clean Air Act of 1956 was perhaps the earliest significant attempt to enshrine in law the protection of air quality.

Science is delivering more local knowledge on air pollution, so Parliament has to again be ahead of the changes and pressures that will bring.

Individuals often think that they cannot improve air quality through their own actions alone. The same can arguably said for Government Departments. The work of this special committee will interest and involve a number of departments, and will facilitate collaborative work across government to understand and tackle air pollution.

While much is known about CO₂ and its impact on the environment, there is far less awareness of the harm to public health caused in particular by particulate matter (PM₂·₅ and PM₁₀) and nitrogen oxides (nitrogen dioxide and nitric oxide).
Both are a result of the combustion process (road transport is the largest source of nitrogen oxides in the UK) and exposure can lead to inflammation of the airways, cardiovascular and respiratory illness. Public Health England has estimated that PM$_{2.5}$ alone is responsible for nearly 29,000 deaths a year across the UK with the health cost equating to £16 billion per annum.

If the UK is to succeed in improving air quality, then it needs to be embedded across all government departments. This committee will establish work already being undertaken across key departments and identify areas for future improvements. In particular it will focus on:

- **Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**—overall responsibility for air quality but additional role in supporting local authorities to reduce emissions
- **Department for Health**—Public Health England’s outcomes framework includes a requirement to reduce mortality attributable to particulate air pollution while the health impacts of poor air quality are leading to increased pressure on NHS services
- **Department for Energy and Climate Change**—responsible for addressing climate change (predominantly CO$_2$), but can also drive improved emissions through cleaner energy
- **Department for Transport**—has a role in both promoting greener private transport but also in minimizing the impact of public transport on the nation’s health
- **Department for Education**—children are particularly susceptible to air pollution; the department has a role in supporting schools to improve the lung health of their pupils, from environmental changes to education
- **Department for Business**—businesses need to be supported to transition to cleaner energy sources
- **International efforts**: London receives fines from the EU for poor quality air—should we seek the growth of clean air zones in Europe? Future real time monitoring of air pollution from space gives the chance for consumers to take local action

I refer the reader to my interests in the Register of Interests, particularly those as Trustee of the British Lung Foundation.

BORWICK

**Letter from Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe**

*Bridging the gap between the public and private sector*

An eternal topic of discord is whether a function or body should be in the public or private sector. Bridging the gap would be a great step forward for society.

To privatise or not will be highly topical in the year ahead. Can the Lords contribute constructively to the debate or get a real debate taking place? Could the Lords point to a new way forward? I think so. Would you put this please to Lord Sewel as a topic possibly for Select Committee examination.

BROOKE OF ALVERTHORPE
Letter from Lord Butler of Brockwell, Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield and Lord McNally

*Civil Service*

We are writing again to ask the Liaison Committee to establish a Select Committee to examine the recent and proposed reforms and changes to the civil service and examine their possible impact on the ethos of public service within our civil service and on its integrity as a body selected on merit and politically neutral.

BUTLER, HENNESSY OF NYMPSFIELD, McNALLY

Letter from Lord Cameron of Dillington

*Delivery of services to rural areas and rural communities*

The remit would include how different government departments “rural proof” their policies and delivery mechanisms. Do the managers (civil servants) understand the problems of delivery to the rural poor when public transport is almost non-existent? Do they understand the extra costs involved in delivering to sparse populations—usually necessitating more but smaller health centres and schools, but also a greater number of social workers who spend a disproportionate amount of time travelling? Does each department have in place the necessary understanding and processes to ensure the rural population are not disadvantaged.

I have just finished a piece of work for Defra on this subject and it would be good to follow it up.

However, I would also propose that this working group looked at the delivery of services to rural people, particularly deprived rural people, by the private sector. Do banks, the Post Office, the gas companies try to ensure that rural customers have a fair crack of the whip? Apart from Royal Mail, the water companies and BT, should the others apply a universal service which costs the same on Dartmoor as it does in Plymouth? Of course the crucial one is broadband. How can we get broadband to those parts that are hard to reach and also how can all of the above organisations harness it to ensure fair delivery—e.g. a video link to the doctor, the jobcentre, the court, the bank etc. in every village hall or village shop? Can Government help here?

Of course it may be that the powers that be might consider such a rural group too narrow and maybe any ad-hoc committee should look at the delivery of services generally across the board (I know Lord Adonis was suggesting such a thing a year or so ago). In that case I would be happy to make my desired focus part of a wider remit—but it would have to be a pretty important part of that remit.

CAMERON OF DILLINGTON

Letter from Lord Cashman

*Criminalisation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people in Third Countries*

I write to propose an *ad hoc* Committee on this subject. Whilst steering clear of interference in the internal policies of other countries, it would examine the complex issues surrounding Government policy on asylum seekers. These include consideration of the questioning by immigration officials of people seeking asylum on the grounds of suffering persecution for their sexuality. It also would include their treatment by fellow inmates and others in immigration detention centres.
Both these are areas which have given rise to recent concern and it would be helpful to hold an impartial and independent inquiry into them, which the breadth of experience of members of the House of Lords would be well placed to undertake.

The committee would look at Commonwealth countries around the works where criminalisation exists, the penalties, the death penalty included, as well as countries where repeal has occurred and where Bills are pending. It would need to take evidence from public health experts, religious leaders, NGOs and LGBT activists.

The committee’s findings could further the debate on the impact of such laws on Fundamental human rights as well as public health and freedom of movement of LGBT people into such countries.

CASHMAN

Letter from Baroness Cox and Viscount Bridgeman, Lord Dholakia, Baroness Flather, Lord Marlesford, Lord Taverne, Lord Pearson of Rannoch and Lord West of Spithead

Religiously based gender discrimination

We write in response to the invitation from Lord Sewel to send suggestions for inquiry topics for Ad Hoc Committees to the Liaison Committee.

We wish to apply for consideration of a Committee to enquire into issues relating to religiously based gender discrimination. This is a topic of great significance, affecting many women in diverse communities in many parts of the country. They are very keen for a wider inquiry to assess the situation and to generate constructive remedies.

We believe this is a crucial time for such an inquiry as part of wider commitment to the promotion of gender equality and eradication of discrimination. Although the request has been stimulated by concerns brought to our attention by Muslim women, the inquiry would encompass such discrimination wherever it is a cause for concern.

A fuller study and analysis of these issues would have the support of many individuals and organisations concerned with gender equality and human rights. We believe that an Ad Hoc Committee to study these issues is ‘an idea whose time has come’.

We would naturally be very willing to meet to discuss this possibility if this would be helpful. If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

COX, BRIDGEMAN, DHOLAKIA, FLATHER, MARLESFORD, TAVERNE, PEARSON, WEST
Letter from Lord Crisp and Lord Mawson

Creation of a health promoting society in the UK

Rationale for the Committee

The founding of the NHS in 1948 was a great national coming together around the common purpose of providing health services for everyone. An equally bold initiative is needed today to bring together the expertise and resources of all the parts of society which impact on health to improve health for all and create a health promoting society. As we all know, improving health services will not by itself improve the health of the population. It is not enough to improve services for people with diabetes, we need also to help others avoid getting the diseases.

NHS England and Public Health England have started in a very positive way to stress the importance of health promotion and disease prevention. However, health professionals and governments cannot do this by themselves. Everyone has a role to play here. Town planners and architects can design buildings and cities that enhance health; schools and universities can promote health literacy; businesses can develop healthy products and help their employees be healthy. Citizens can take greater responsibility for themselves and civil society can drive change alongside health services and local and national government. Moreover there is now clear international evidence about how to slow down the increase in diabetes, reduce heart disease, and combat depression and loneliness in old age.

The World Health Organisation has memorably written that “Modern societies actively market unhealthy lifestyles”. The time is right to reverse this and begin to create a health-promoting society where all its parts market healthy lifestyles. Much of what is needed is already happening in part and in parts of the country but there is not a concerted and unified approach which draws on the resources and energy of all sectors. A Select Committee should examine this area and consider what can be done to create a health promoting society for the future.

Scope of inquiry

The House of Lords is uniquely placed by virtue of the experience and diversity of its membership to take a view of this sort across the whole of society - a very large number of Lords would have an interest in the subject and be able to contribute. It is also able to call on experts from throughout the UK and beyond. The inquiry would be cross-cutting in nature and would need to seek evidence from a range of Government Departments, and others. I would suggest the Committee proceeded through calling for evidence, reviewing the literature, interviewing experts and its own discussions to:

- seek to understand the way the health of the population is affected by wider forces—the so-called social and environmental determinants of health
- review current activity in this field led by NHS England, Public Health England and others—identifying gaps and activities which could be extended
- examine international experience for lessons about what has and hasn’t worked elsewhere
- understand the financial implications—noting at the outset that diabetes and the complications of diabetes cost almost 1% of GDP so there is a major financial as well as human incentive to reduce the numbers of people affected
• consider the longer term implications of this approach on the education and training of professionals and the culture of the NHS, local authorities and other health and care provides

I would envisage the Committee providing a report which explained very clearly the importance of this approach and set out the practical steps needed to align the necessary coalition of interests and begin to make progress at scale.

CRISP, MAWSON

Letter from Baroness Deech

Legal Services Act 2007 (post-legislative scrutiny)

I suggest post-legislative scrutiny of the Legal Service Act 2007 (or a broader but similar inquiry into regulation of legal services). It has been widely agreed almost since its passing that the Act is unsatisfactory and that the framework it established needs fundamental revision. The Ministry of Justice consulted on this, responded that it was indeed unsatisfactory but that since there was no consensus on the way forward, nothing was to be done in the short term. The forum comprising the existing 9 approved regulators is working to formulate changes that need to be made if and when a government finds time for fresh legislation, but there are many differences about exactly what to do. The Act is unsatisfactory in that it has a long list of statutory objectives, without hierarchy, some of which conflict with others. Its intention was to establish an oversight regulator (the Legal Services Board) which would do no more than ensure that the front line regulators were acting reasonably, and “assist” (the exact word in s.4) when necessary. However the Legal Services Board (LSB) has become a micromanaging, doubleguessing, interventionist, costly organisation, causing delay and expense which is ultimately detrimental to the interests of clients. Do we need a single overarching regulator, or is it better to have smaller regulators closer to the regulated community?

New issues have arisen for legal services and their users now that legal aid has been removed. In 2007 this development and the recent financial crisis were not foreseen. The pressing issues of affordability of legal advice and the survival of smaller providers need to be addressed. Alternative business structures are just beginning to come on the scene and their contribution to these issues could do with examination. Should the regulator(s) be an economic regulator or a professional regulator? The Act does not provide the full independence that is necessary to keep the regulatory arms of the profession separate from the representative arms, and includes a clumsy concept of “approved regulator”, which has the potential to set up a conflict between the representative and regulatory arms. The Act is overburdened with consultation provisions, and the way it has been implemented gives the impression (to foreign observers) of too much governmental interference in the legal profession, which was never the intention. The LSB’s regulatory approach has not been proportionate as required in s.3(3).

The Lord Chancellor has said that the LSB should be working towards its own extinction (http://www.legalfutures.co.uk/latest-news/grayling-tells-lsb-work-towards-abolition); the time is therefore ripe for consideration of a new start.

Such an inquiry would be widely welcomed and could be completed within months.

DEECH
Letter from Lord Dubs

Appointment of the United Nations Secretary-General

The United Nations (UN) plays a crucial role in coordinating global responses to the world’s most significant and complex problems. It is an important tool for the UK in addressing these challenges, achieving foreign policy goals and maintaining international influence. As a permanent member of the Security Council and major contributor to the UN’s budget, the UK has a particular stake in the Organisation’s effectiveness. It also has a special responsibility for the appointment of the Secretary-General.

The next appointment is due to be made in 2016. Last time, the UK was widely perceived to have played a negligible role in the selection, with China, Russia and the US deciding behind closed doors who should fill this important post.

While all governments are able to nominate candidates, it is the Security Council that puts forward a single name—subject to veto by any of the permanent members (P5)—for the rest of the UN’s members to rubberstamp. There is no formal job description or timetable; no search committee or selection panel; no interview process or vetting. Parliaments and civil society are not involved.

The UK should play a bigger role in the selection of the next UN Secretary-General, and in efforts to improve the appointment process in 2015, ahead of a decision the following year. Unlike many UN reform issues, this is both viable and timely. The present system is largely based on customary and informal practices. Reform proposals would find support within the wider UN membership, which has repeatedly signaled that the current process is wholly unsuited to producing the best candidate.

An ad hoc committee could assist HMG by:

- Examining options for reforms to the appointment process that the UK could propose, such as a formal timetable, hearings with candidates and how to address the practice of “regional rotation” of postholders
- Recommending practices the UK could itself adopt, such as the involvement of Parliament and civil society in HMG’s deliberations on the appointment - this would set a compelling example to other UN member states
- Discussing the processes by which the UK decides which candidates to nominate and support for this and potentially other senior UN appointments

This work could make a tangible contribution towards strengthening the UN and its leadership, as it seeks to deliver the raft of initiatives under discussion in 2015, such as the global frameworks on sustainable development, non-proliferation, peacebuilding, gender and climate change. It would also reinforce the UK’s position as a responsible and progressive member of the P5 in the UN’s 70th anniversary year.

DUBS
Letter from Lord Farmer

Prevention of mental illness

The House of Lords is a repository of considerable expertise concerning mental health and a large number of members (from a broad base of parties and the cross-bench) have taken an important leading role, whether in research, advocacy or both, which has been successful in forming government policy or transforming services.

Important examples include:

- Lord Layard, who made such a compelling economic case for the funding of taking therapies on the NHS that it led to well over a billion pounds of new health spending,
- Lord Adebowale who campaigned tirelessly to see a reduction of deaths in custody, many of which are the result of heavy-handed restraint of people with mental health conditions, which led to the Metropolitan Police’s own review.
- Baroness Greenfield who is sounding an important alarm about the effects on the physiology of young brains of very high levels of screen use.
- Lord Stevenson who has called time on mental health discrimination through changes to the law and
- Lord Bradley and Baroness Corston, whose reports on prisoners and their mental health are constantly cited, years after publication.

Please forgive any omissions but this scant detail is included mainly to give an indication of how the House of Lords has a towering reputation in this broad field. The cost of mental illness to society has risen to over £100bn per year: the media and the public would consider it highly appropriate for members to turn their attention now to prevention, and it would be hard for any government to ignore their recommendations.

This would not simply be a charter for more spending on mental health, but would bring together all relevant existing government action, across a range of areas (including the publicly-funded Time to Change campaign which is successfully tackling stigma of mental illness) and highlight how to we can galvanise communities, families, schools and workplaces to become part of the solution.

Causes of poor mental health: the starting point for inquiry

Commonly divided into biological, social and psychological causes, there are also interactions and overlaps between these three categories:

- Biological factors include genetic predisposition, brain injury and the effect of illicit drugs.
- Social factors include fragmented and unsupportive communities, poor housing, inadequate health care, poverty and racial or sexual discrimination.
- Psychological factors include insecure attachments to parents in infancy, sexual and physical abuse in childhood, poor parenting, bullying or

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7 All statistics taken from Centre for Social Justice, 2011, Mental Health: Poverty, Ethnicity and Family Breakdown, pp 9-10 (recommended reading for the Ministerial Advisory Group on Equality in Mental Health)
harassment, the absence of one or more confiding relationships, family breakdown and bereavement.

In particular it is important to be aware of the contributing effects of:

- Poor parental mental health: children growing up with parents who are depressed or have serious mental health conditions themselves experience a four to five fold increase in the rate of onset of emotional and conduct disorder.
- Parental unemployment, which carries with it a two to three fold increased rate of onset of emotional/conduct disorder in childhood.
- Child abuse and adverse childhood experiences: these result in a several-fold increased rate of mental illness and substance misuse/dependence in later life.
- Mental disorder in childhood and adolescence also leads to a broad range of poor adult outcomes including higher rates of adult mental illness, poor educational outcomes, unemployment and low earnings, teenage parenthood, marital/relationship problems and criminal activity.
- Early effective treatment during childhood and adolescence can prevent a significant proportion of adult mental disorder; interventions with parents and especially those that take place in the early years provide key opportunities to promote mental health and prevent mental illness.
- Physical illness: this greatly increases risk of mental illness, with studies indicating that between 17 per cent and 27 per cent of hospitalised patients experience major depression after coronary artery disease (CAD) and as many as half of all cancer sufferers become depressed. (Mental illness is also causally associated with poor physical health.)

FARMER

Letter from Lord Faulkner of Worcester

Prostitution Law Reform

Different approaches to reforming the law are being adopted in various countries—e.g., decriminalisation in Australia and New Zealand, criminal sanctions against purchasing sexual services in France and the Scandinavian countries—but the law in Britain has changed little in recent years, with the Policing and Crime Act 2009 and the Sexual Offences Act 2003 being the two pieces of legislation which seek to regulate the “sex industry”.

The BBC website has posted this:

“What is the current law on prostitution?

The laws around prostitution in England and Wales are far from straight-forward. The act of prostitution is not in itself illegal—but a string of laws criminalises activities around it. Under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is an offence to cause or incite prostitution or control it for personal gain.

The 1956 Sexual Offences Act bans running a brothel and it’s against the law to loiter or solicit sex on the street. Kerb-crawling is also
banned, providing it can be shown the individual was causing a persistent annoyance.

Adverts placed in phone boxes have been banned since 2001. Human trafficking, a component of modern prostitution, is also covered by the law. There are also general laws on public nuisance and decency which can be used to target the sex trade.”

A new select committee could gather evidence from around the world, review the state of the law in Britain (particularly from the standpoint of the police and local authorities), and perhaps come to a view on what sort of changes were desirable.

FAULKNER OF WORCESTER

Letter from Lord Foulkes of Cumnock

Constitutional arrangements of the home and overseas territories in relation to the United Kingdom

Constitutional arrangements with the home and overseas territories have been largely ignored this parliament. An ad hoc select committee could therefore seize the opportunity to hear from representatives of these territories the problems they currently face, the issues they wish to see resolved, and allow the government to articulate, and start to consider, whether or not our current constitutional arrangements are fit for purpose.

Examining the operation of tuition fees for University students in England

Such a committee would explore the impact of the new regime on students in England, the health of its financial affairs, and the progress it has made in achieving its stated aims with regards to access, quality of teaching, and the competitiveness and strength of our universities. It would also explore the equity of the current arrangements, especially in relation to the regimes under which students from other parts of the UK study.

Global Jihadist Movements, and the international fight against terrorism

Such a committee would explore the nature, outlook, strength and motives of global jihadi movements, discerning factors in their rise and trends in their development. It would also focus on the relationship between these movements and the states that fund either related ideologies, or the organisations themselves, in order to recommend what sort of approach the UK should take, as a member of both the EU and NATO, to combat the rise of such groups globally.

Visa: arrangements for obtaining visa to visit, study and reside in the United Kingdom

Following various reforms this parliament, it would be beneficial if visa policy as a whole could be investigated, including the impact of current arrangements on Britain’s economic competitiveness, the higher education sector, immigration control and relations with other countries and regions.

Role of evidence, data and scientific procedure in the formulation of government policy

Such a committee would explore to what extent government and the civil service are putting to use the latest in data technology, scientific testing (such as randomised control tests), and evidence collection techniques in the formulation of policy. It would inquire into the process through which policies are formulated,
to what extent they are based on available evidence, gaps in our evidence base, and what can be done to make government more evidence-based, and data savvy.

**Implications for the Barnett Formula of the Scotland Acts**

Following on from the Scotland Act, and the expected implementation of the Smith Commission proposals, it would be beneficial if an ad-hoc committee explored the consequences of these reforms for the Barnett Formula, including potential problems, inequities, and their consequences for each devolved administration and the UK as a whole.

**FOULKES OF CUMNOCK**

**Letter from Baroness Gardner of Parkes**

**Future of Residential Tenure in England**

Having read in the “Red Benches” the instructions from the Lord Chairman of Committees to write to you to suggest topics for Select Committees, I am writing to suggest that we have a committee to look into the need for reform/Consolidation of the Housing and/or Property Acts which have piled up over the years and now need sorting out so that ordinary people can know where they stand. I appreciate that might be a long term aim, my present proposal is more limited.

**GARDNER OF PARKES**

**Letter from Lord German**

**Policy Making and Evidence in Education**

This inquiry would investigate the structure of research evidence provision and its use by Ministers and policy makers in the education functions of government.

The OECD report (*Evidence in Education: Linking Research and Policy*) stated “Education policies and systems in all OECD countries are coming under increasing pressure to show greater accountability and effectiveness. However, the information for policy making is often unsuitable, either because the rigorous research required for policy needs has not been conducted, or because the research that is available is contradictory and does not suggest a single course of action. It is crucial that educational policy decisions are made based on the best evidence possible.”

This conclusion is borne out in the UK in a study conducted by the CfBT Education Trust of three decades of education initiatives. The study concluded that pressure for quick fixes can outweigh research evidence when Ministers set schools policy. The report’s contributors included a number of former Secretaries of State. In the introduction written by a previous Secretary of State for Education (now a Member of the House of Lords) the report states: “The relationship between education politics and education research has not been an easy one.”

I would anticipate that such an inquiry would wish to examine:-

- The nature and impartiality of available research evidence provision to Ministers
- The use of such evidence in policy making
• The structures for research evidence provision in England and the UK, their independence and cohesion, and any lessons to be learnt from the UK’s independent provider of evidence in the health sector (NICE), and

• structures used by governments in other countries.

This is a very timely inquiry for this year, with an incoming five year term government having the opportunity to develop its evidence base for policy change in education. Additionally, this is an area with clear cross party interest across the House. There are many Members with an interest in education, including many with relevant Ministerial experience, who could be contributors to the inquiry. It is a subject which would benefit from the measured, evidence-based, cross party approach of Lords Committees, and is broader in scale than the subjects that are usually considered by Committees of the House of Commons. A Lords Committee report on these issues—with recommendations for actions would greatly assist future education policy developments.

GERMAN

Letter from Lord Green of Deddington

Outlook for UK population growth and its likely consequences

The UK population has grown continuously for most of the past century. In recent decades migration has taken over from births as the main driver. The recent acceleration of population growth is the greatest since 1901–11. There is no current sign that this population growth will moderate. The latest projections from the ONS indicate that, at current levels of net migration, the UK population (now 64 million) will reach 75 million in 2037. As it is now 65 years since the subject was thoroughly considered (by the Royal Commission on population, 1949, Cmd 7695, HMSO), the time is now ripe for thorough review.

The first phase might involve an examination of the three main determinants of population growth (births, deaths and migration) in the very different circumstances of each constituent part of the UK. Of these, migration is the most variable and has the most effect on population growth. It is also the only one capable of being influenced by government policy.

A second phase would examine the consequences of such continued population growth if it were to come about. For example:

• The impact on infrastructure, roads, rail etc.
• The effect on demand for housing
• Pressures on education and health services
• The impact on our environment and quality of life

GREEN OF DEDDINGTON

Letter from Baroness Grey-Thompson

The formation of an Ad Hoc Committee on Electoral (or Voter) Registration would be both well-timed and welcomed across both Houses, the political parties, members of civil society and those members of the public concerned with the health and future of the UK’s democratic processes.
Recent events and several ongoing processes regarding the administration of the UK’s electoral and administrative systems make the topic of voter registration one of the utmost importance and deserving of consideration by the House. Of most relevance include:

- the ongoing transition from ‘head of household’ to individual electoral registration (‘IER’) and its impact on (i) the voting electorate in forthcoming elections and referenda, and (ii) prospective boundary changes
- the move to, and availability of, on-line registration
- the matter of devolved electoral arrangements, including registration, in Scotland and Wales
- the remaining ‘lessons to learn’ from the changes to the electoral registration system in N. Ireland
- the record levels of registration during the Scottish Independence Referendum
- the impact lowering the voting age has had, and will (or may) have, on electoral registration matters across the UK
- the matter of registration for (i) overseas citizens, (ii) prisoners, and (iii) members of the Armed Forces
- voter and citizen engagement proposals (i.e. ‘same day’ registration, school- and college-based registration, National Voter Registration Day etc.)
- the matter of the ‘open’ register and its sale by Local Authorities
- the legality surrounding parties and candidates registering electors
- Electoral Registration Officers’ duties, funding, performance, guidance, redress, accountability etc., and
- the concerns around under-represented groups on the register (young people, BAME groups, disabled people etc.).

The current climate indicates that, with millions of eligible electors missing from the register, now is time for Parliament to examine the policies, processes and track records of the Government, the Cabinet Office, the Electoral Commission, Local Authorities, local EROs and civil society organisations in this vitally important foundation of the UK’s democracy.

GREY-THOMPSON

Letter from Lord Hannay of Chiswick

Foreign Affairs Sessional Select Committee

Thank you for reminding us that the Liaison Committee will shortly begin considering the framework for Committee work in the new parliament.

This letter is simply to reiterate my long-standing view that the House of Lords would greatly benefit from having a standing Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. My current appointment on the Arctic Committee has merely strengthened that view. Important though the Arctic is, it is surely odd that that is the only non-EU international issue which is being discussed by a Committee in a year of unprecedented international change?
I suggest that the start of a new Parliament is the ideal moment to remedy this gap in the Committee coverage; and I hope these views can be given due consideration by the Liaison Committee.

HANNAY OF CHISWICK

Letter from Baroness Helic

Sexual Violence in Conflict: the UK and global response

The widespread use of rape as a weapon of war has serious implications for the UK national interest in preventing conflict. Warzone rape fuels conflict by creating a cycle of injustice and violence. It is a significant factor in refugee flows, and has considerable economic costs in affected nations. It creates a call on vast sums in international aid assistance, and undermines development including the advancement of women’s rights. And it makes a mockery of international justice, since there have only been a handful of prosecutions for many hundreds of thousands of wartime rapes over the last 20 years.

This is rape used as a weapon, to tear apart communities, as a tool of ethnic cleansing, political or religious oppression, and even of terrorism. It has been used as a military tactic in nearly every major conflict of our lifetimes from the Balkans to Burma, and Colombia to Somalia. And it is a major feature of conflicts we are grappling with today: the UN has confirmed, for example, that both the Assad regime and ISIL are using sexual violence as a tactic in the Syrian conflict, and that thousands of Christian and Yazidi women and girls have been sold into sexual slavery by ISIL. The use of rape as a tool of terrorism and religious extremism against minorities is an extremely worrying new trend.

There is growing recognition that warzone sexual violence is a key foreign policy and security issue. This summer the Ministry of Defence published its latest forecast of risks to security facing the UK over the next 30 years. One of its key predictions was that over the next 30 years “sexual violence will almost certainly continue to be a feature of conflict and state violence and, used as a weapon of war, has the potential to be a significant factor in instability”. (MoD, Global Strategic Trends Out to 2045). However, this prediction in itself is an admission that policy responses to these crimes are not yet effective in deterring warzone rape as a weapon, making it an important subject for consideration by Parliament.

There is cross-party consensus on the importance of this issue, expressed in support for the Government’s Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI) launched in May 2012. But there has never been a Parliamentary Committee of either House devoted to exploring this issue in depth, and to scrutinising the approach of all the relevant governments departments. An Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Violence in Conflict would be therefore breaking new ground.

There are also serious questions about whether the UK and global response to the use of rape as a weapon of war is commensurate with the scale of the problem in countries like Iraq and Syria, and whether other nations are bearing their share of the burden. The Committee’s recommendations could therefore be extremely topical and valuable in generating international attention and political will.

And there are questions about the appropriate long-term footing of PSVI, so the Committee could consider how and if it should be placed on a permanent basis as
part of the UK’s long term approach to conflict prevention and development, and fully integrated into wider efforts on women, peace and security.

In addition an ad hoc Select Committee could:

- Consider whether UK policy towards the undermining of ISIL and the stabilising of Iraq and Syria pays sufficient regard to the use of sexual violence as a weapon against Christians, Yazidis and other minorities.
- Consider whether UK policy across the FCO, MoD and DfID, is sufficiently geared and coordinated to achieve the goal of reducing sexual violence in conflict worldwide.
- Consider whether UK policy on the training of our own and other Armed Forces includes the prevention of sexual violence in conflict, and is sufficiently.
- Consider whether the UK is taking full advantage of the opportunities presented by membership of multilateral bodies to ensure effective policies and burden sharing.
- Consider the situation of men and boys as hidden victims of sexual violence in conflict, and whether policy responses take account of their needs.
- Explore what approaches work best in deterring sexual violence in conflict, from prosecution to protection.
- Review the evidence to determine whether outbreaks of sexual violence in conflict can be predicted and therefore prevented and mitigated before they occur.
- Carry out country-specific case-studies, supported if appropriate by visits by the Committee, to affected countries.
- Make recommendations for the appropriate long-term institutional arrangements for the government’s Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative.

Ending sexual violence in conflict is a moral imperative, a vital matter of sustainable development and international peace and security, and an issue of UK foreign policy leadership in the world. I therefore strongly believe that this Committee would be a worthwhile use of the expertise of Members with interest and expertise in these cross-cutting issues; that the establishment of such a Committee would be welcomed by many international organisations in the UK and around the world; and that the Committee’s findings would be of practical value and impact in the UK and internationally.

I attach a list of potential witnesses and Peers who have shown or are likely to take an interest.

**Potential witnesses**

The Committee might wish to take evidence from a wide range of UK and international actors across the diplomatic, military, development and international justice spheres, as well as survivors of sexual violence and groups working with them. Potential witnesses could include:

- Ministers and Permanent Secretaries from the FCO, DfID and MoD
• The Rt Hon William Hague MP, Leader of the House of Commons, co-founder of the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative (PSVI), and the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict
• Ms Angelina Jolie, UNHCR Special Envoy and co-founder of PSVI
• Madame Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict
• Ms Fatou Bensouda, Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court
• Dr Denis Mukwege, Director, General Reference Hospital of Panzi, leading surgeon dealing with injuries sustained from sexual violence in conflict
• Leymah Gbowee, Nobel Laureate, Liberia
• Major-General (ret) Patrick Cammaert, former Commander of UN Peacekeeping operations in the DRC
• Mme Jeanine Mabunda, the Personal Representative of the Head of State in the fight against Sexual Violence and Child Recruitment, DRC
• Mme Bineta Diop, African Union Special Envoy for Women Peace and Security
• Ambassador Marriet Schuurman, NATO Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security
• Erin Gallagher, investigator at the International Criminal Court for the Former Yugoslavia, dealing with cases of warzone rape
• Maxine Marcus, prosecutor and/or investigator in Chad (for Darfur), Sierra Leone, Bosnia, Ingushetia/Chechnya, Ivory Coast, and Guinea
• Sabiha Husic, Director of the “Medica Zenica” safe-house in Bosnia-Herzegovina
• Kolbassia Haoussou, Survivors Speak OUT! Network, which includes survivors of rape
• Ingrid Elliott (Member of the UK PSVI Team of Experts)
• Philip Lancaster (Canadian former military, currently delivering PSVI training in Mali with the EU Training Mission)
• Peter Maurer, President, International Committee of the Red Cross
• Lt General David Morrison, Chief of the Australian Army
• Justin Forsyth, Chief Executive, Save the Children UK
• David Mepham, UK Director, Human Rights Watch
• Professor Christine Chinkin, London School of Economics
• Madeline Rees, Secretary General, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom
• Brigid Inder, Executive Director, Women’s Initiatives for Gender Justice
• Rob Williams, Chief Executive, War Child
Letter from Baroness Hollis of Heigham

Devolution and Local Government

In the light of Scotland, and also yesterday’s debate on economic leadership of cities—might we consider a committee on Devolution and Local Government? It would be very timely. And its recommendations, if any, could feed into any Constitutional Convention should one emerge.

HOLLIS OF HEIGHAM

Letter from Lord Howell of Guildford

Foreign Affairs Sessional Select Committee

The case not just for ad hoc committees but for an established House of Lords International Affairs Committee grows ever stronger, and the lacuna in Parliament’s contribution in these fields to public and policy debate ever more apparent as the years go by.

At a time when, inevitably, the main focus of the public political debate is—and will continue to be—on domestic issues which divide the parties, how good it would be (both for the country and for the House of Lords) to see their Lordships focus on the broader geo-political issues and trends which in reality have far more impact on British lives and interests than many of the topics dominating the daily media or the party political platforms.

Almost all the subjects in my note of January 2014 remain in more urgent need of examination than ever. Almost all the situations referred to have deteriorated in ways detrimental to Britain. Almost all have suffered from a lack of in-depth examination and coherent public debate. Scarcely any have been addressed profoundly by any other Committee of either House.

I would add that many of these subjects cut across the traditional departmental lines—which is, of course, precisely why the Commons Departmental committees find them hard to address and why the Lords Committees would be so much better placed to do so.

Here is an updated (2015) list, including and building on many of the topics which were suggested last year—and the year before!

- The UK and the new Middle East. There is a big still unexplored area here covering not just the twists and turns in the soured Arab ‘Spring’ but key geo-politics, national security, major implications of Islamic civil war, the Caliphate and the revolutionised energy scene, commercial and financial aspects and a host more.

- The ever greater ubiquity and influence of China on almost every aspect of—and across all continents—to the new international scene and the direct impact on many areas of British life, interests and policy.

- The worsening assault on Christian communities as more aggressive forms of Islam gain traction—and the whole challenge to the European structure of values and principles of governance.

- The implementation of the International Defence Engagement Strategy. (Examination of the now visible merging of defence, military, foreign and
economic policy in modern conditions—a pattern which our 2013–14 report on Soft Power and British Influence highlighted but which requires considerable further exploration).

- The UK and the new models of Asian modernisation now emerging. Do we understand and can we relate to what is actually happening outside the West? How do we help shape and work with the new international order that is emerging.
- The UK, the Maghreb and MENA, with Egypt in particular—again, a whole new scene with direct implications for several Whitehall departments.
- Eastern Mediterranean—Cyprus/Turkey/Lebanon/Israel/Egypt/Greece. Few have yet realized that the whole East Med scene is being transformed by new politics and new energy discoveries.
- The changing nature of international terror—its random nature, the empowerment of terror by technology and its implications for the UK.
- New international crime patterns, including cyber-crime. Already touched on by other Parliamentary committees but badly needing to be interwoven with foreign policy.
- The UK and the USA—obvious time for a re-set, although not all policymakers have yet grasped this.
- Nation-building—UK, EU and US efforts—a fairly dismal string of failures so far. Where should we be going?
- Follow-up on Britain’s links with the network of relations with the other 52 Commonwealth countries, where the Commons FAC has made a number of recommendations all of which require pursuing and enhancing—with emphasis on the growing centrality of Australia and Canada in supporting British aims.
- Follow-up work on the FAC report on Turkey and the rise of the new Middle East powers.
- Growing importance of the African voice in all international issues, alongside the prospect of transformed economic outlooks in several key African states.
- The rise and significance of new 21st century regional organisations, both in Pacific Asia and in Central (Caspian) Asia, and British interests in these regions e.g. Shanghai Cooperation Organization.
- Prospects for UK commercial, political and security cooperation with new allies, such as Korea, China, Japan, Mexico. Turkey, Brazil.
- The impact of digital fabrication on trade supply chains and international relations—and the future of trade blocs.
- Modernisation of global energy governance (post-OPEC) and the UK’s role and interests in this field.

HOWELL OF GUILDFORD
Letter from Lord Hunt of Chesterton

**Development of UK Cities**

Recent government policies have been changing about the role of government in the economic, political, environmental and health aspects of cities in the UK, for example in regional economic bodies, local government constitution and its relation to national or devolved governance, environment regulation and planning to reduce risks of floods and pollution and knock-on consequences for health and well being in cities.

There have been reports by HoL committees and HoL debates on these issues, but no attempt to consider how they interact. There are lessons of best practice in integrated policy making that should be considered, both in the UK and abroad—this should be a particular feature of the Committee’s work.

Witnesses should be called from the many organisations engaged in practical, governmental and research organisations. Surprisingly few reports or books have been written that bring such studies. (c.f. The environment of London, 2005, (Ed Julian Hunt). Imperial College Press).

Enormous new investment in the infrastructure, housing, environment, energy etc. are under consideration. These should be considered by the Committee to understand how they interact. Is the garden city model appropriate?

I am copying this to Baronesses Whitaker and Andrews who I gather are writing to you as well on this idea.

HUNT OF CHESTERTON

Letter from Lord Jopling

**The Commonwealth, “the emerging powerhouses of Asia”**

I find it unbelievable that the Lords with all its inhouse expertise does not have a permanent Select Committee on Foreign Affairs. As a member of C committee and a former chairman I am acutely conscious of all the worldwide developments and situations which C committee cannot cover because they are outside the remit and constraints of the EU. I need only mention the Commonwealth or the emerging powerhouse nations of Asia to illustrate the gaps.

JOPLING

Letter from Baroness Kidron

**Children and Young People (Minors) Data inquiry**

The inquiry would focus on children and young people’s data—how it is being collected and what it is being used for. In addition the Committee would consider ‘Terms and Conditions’ the mechanism by which the vast majority of data is collected.

Data gathering is ubiquitous on the web and has been largely ignored by policy makers and children’s organisations. This inquiry would provide a valuable building block in our understanding of the issues that young people face in the
interactions with the online world. It would also address a ‘sensitive’ issue for parents.

The report would be a welcome contribution to a wider debate about data, which has yet to consider the specific needs and status of children and young people.

The Use of Data

The Committee would investigate what use is made of children and young people’s data collected as they use online and digital services. Specifically; Look at the legislative framework and industry ‘codes of conduct’ for collecting the data of minors; Seek to establish if young people are aware of the mechanics of data collection; Look at potential harms or unintended consequences for young people in having their data collected; Question if data collection could be used for benefits that are not currently routine. Look at examples of ‘best practice’ of data gathering in areas heavily used by under 18’s.

Whilst current practice would be at the heart of the inquiry—the Committee would also include emerging technologies—The Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence (AI)—and consider the proposed developments in data gathering in these areas specifically from the point of view of children and young people.

T&Cs

In calling for evidence the committee would map the current legislative context. Gather evidence of T&Cs that are intended for children and young people and report back on ‘best practice’ of age appropriate T&Cs.

It would consider T&Cs intended for adults that children are agreeing to without the legal capacity to do so. And call for evidence from parents (and other supervising adults) on the circumstances in which adults knowingly facilitate access, on behalf of minors, to sites that are designated for adults or older children.

It would also consider their access to age inappropriate material, but only as one component of the broader question of entering into agreements that they do not have the maturity or circumstances to understand.

The committee would seek to bring together commercial providers outside of the tech sector, the tech sector, legal opinion, expert academics and children organizations. As a central component of this inquiry, the Committee would proactively seek to capture children and young people’s voices and reflect their experience.

KIDRON

Letter from Lord Lee of Trafford

Employment for young people in the Tourism and Hospitality sector

I write to suggest a Select Committee examination of employment for young people in the Tourism & Hospitality sector. As you will be aware this industry would virtually collapse without the huge number of employees from overseas, particularly so in London. Frankly there should be hardly any youth unemployment in this country given the opportunities in this sector. Query rates of pay relative to welfare benefit and also a possible historical, cultural antipathy to service sector work.
Letter from Lord Luce

Breakdown of marriages and partnerships and in particular the impact on children

I believe that this is one of the most important social issues of our time and that a Committee would serve a strong public service in enquiring into and reflecting on this important subject.

I should say that I have talked about this to Lord Laming who has authorised me to say that he supports this idea most strongly.

In addition, Baroness Butler-Sloss also endorses the proposal.

Letter from Baroness Perry of Southwark

Impact of recent education reforms

In the past few years, there have been more changes to the way in which our country’s schools are organised, and the content of what is offered to young people, than at any time since the end of World War 2.

A brief look at what has happened will demonstrate the scale of the change. In structural terms, the growth of the Academies Programme—giving immense freedom to what is now nearly two thirds of Secondary schools and an ever growing number of primary schools—is nothing short of a revolution. Free Schools have been widely established on initiatives of groups in the community, whether of parents, or faith and charities. The long history of local authority control of education has been challenged by these changes, and the issues around ultimate accountability are still being thrashed out.

Changes to assessment at key stages of children’s progress have also been fundamental. Primary schools are challenged to deliver basic skills to all pupils. Secondary schools have undergone a total overhaul of the 16+ and ‘A’ level examination regime, demanding a rigour and precision in the way pupils are internally assessed and prepared for external assessment.

Perhaps the most far-reaching reforms have been in the curriculum, in what is offered to pupils of all ages in terms of the knowledge and skills they acquire over the years they spend in education. This reform has not only been in academic subjects; vocational education has also been transformed. From a confusing host of vocational offerings many of which led to no useable qualification, to a small, tightly defined set of work-related courses, designed to allow those many young people who choose to follow a vocational route to enter the workforce with skills which are relevant to employers’ and the economy’s needs.

At the same time as these reforms to vocational qualifications have been introduced, the number of apprenticeships has been hugely increased, offering a real prospect of alternative job-related routes for young people as they reach 16+.

Changes have also been made to the way in which teachers are trained and to who enters the profession. Designated schools have taken on much of the responsibility for training the new entrants and for assessing their competence to become fully
recognised members of the profession. Entry requirements of higher achievement at first degree levels have been introduced, and the ‘Teach First’ programme for new graduates to try out their interest in teaching as a profession have brought a different cohort of young people into schools. Teacher assessment, largely related to the pupils’ performance, has created a new climate within schools.

After the introduction of such fundamental change, it is so very important that an assessment is made of the impact of all this reform. The impact will need to be assessed many times over the years ahead, and though a short-term select committee cannot provide all the answers, there are questions which can be pursued now to which an inquiry by a select committee of this House is well placed to deliver some answers.

The specific questions to be addressed should include:

- How well have schools and teachers and teachers embraced the changes to the curriculum and examinations? And
- Have they been implemented in the way they were designed, or have schools designed their own way of incorporating the changes—in particular to the changed curriculum?
- Has pupil achievement been lifted by the reforms, and if so, in what specific way?
- Have the publicised problems arising in some faith schools being dealt with to ensure these do not arise in future?
- Have the changes to teacher-education and to entry requirements to the teaching profession improved the quality of teaching and the pupils’ experience?
- What has been or will be the impact on social cohesion of the changes, most especially the changes to the structure of schools through the spread of academies and free schools
- Will the changes to both academic and vocational qualifications have a positive impact on the national economy?

The method of inquiry should include:

A. Paper review

- A review of the statistics of a) how many schools have undergone the change to academy status and b) how many pupils have been involved in this change.
- A review of the number of free schools which have been established and the number of pupils in those schools.
- A review of the statistics of achievements of pupils in the academies and free schools as measured by examination results and—if possible—by employment or higher education entry outcomes of school leavers from academies and free schools.
- A review of the numbers of young people who have entered and those who have completed apprenticeships.
- A review of where the new schools have been established and their impact on the numbers in neighbouring schools.
• A review of the news coverage of some of the problems in faith schools.

B. Witnesses

• Representatives of the teaching profession (Union and subject associations).
• Heads of schools from local authority schools, academies and free schools.
• Educational researchers who have made relevant studies into the issues defined.
• Representatives of local authorities.
• Employer organisations.
• Employers who offer apprenticeships.
• Representatives from academy sponsors.
• Representatives from parents from all types of schools.

C. Visits

The Inquiry should include visits to two or three schools of different types, to meet staff and parents as well as offering the opportunity to speak with pupils of all ages about their experience (this is probably better than requiring young people to come to Parliament to give formal evidence to the Committee).

PERRY OF SOUTHWARK

Letter from Lord Ribeiro

Impact on health outcomes of limited patient choice in accessing healthcare

I would like to put forward a suggestion for a select committee looking at the impact on health outcomes of limited patient choice in accessing healthcare. In the light of the focus on pressures on the NHS, and in particular on Accident and Emergency departments, this topic could hardly be more timely.

An ad hoc committee in this area would be tasked with considering the steps that we could take to improve the current system of accessing care, both to manage those pressures and to improve health outcomes.

This would cover two main angles:

• Whether the current system (with GPs as the primary point of care, but where people also access help and support through A&E, pharmacists, telephone service etc.) works well to get people the care they need as quickly as possible; and

• Whether alternative systems—such as those in France, where patients can access specialists directly—should be considered.

It could also examine whether patients should have greater choice as to the GP/hospital/specialist to visit based on the new amount of data available.

I am conscious that the House of Commons Health Committee is examining accident and emergency services at present. My proposal, though, would be wider in scope, looking at the case for new models of accessing healthcare more generally. By taking in that broader view, the Lords would complement the work of the Commons and inform public debate in this important area. Furthermore, as
the proposal would consider the role of local authorities and other care providers in enabling patients to access healthcare, it would meet the Liaison Committee’s concern that proposals should be cross-cutting in nature.

There would be no shortage of suitable witnesses for written and oral evidence. As well as witnesses from the NHS and medical professionals (including the relevant representative bodies), the Committee could also hear from patient groups, public health experts and health economists. In so doing, there would be a rich base of evidence upon which the Committee could draw in reaching its conclusions.

Finally, by virtue of the health and care expertise on all benches, a committee on health outcomes would make excellent use of the breadth and depth of knowledge of members of this House.

RIBEIRO

Letter from Viscount Ridley

Genetically modified crops

As of 13 Jan 2015, the European Parliament has delegated responsibility for licensing genetically modified crops back to national governments as a result of a British initiative. This means the crops may be planted in the UK within the next few years. It would be a good time for a House of Lords committee to re-examine the question of how such crops should be regulated so as to maximize their economic and environmental benefits, and the opportunities for British science.

Issues that the ad hoc committee could examine are:

- The growing evidence that GM crops have reduced pesticide use and increased yield throughout the world. A recent study from Gottingen University in Germany found that they have cut pesticide use by farmers by an average of 37% and increased crop yields by 22%, while the greatest gains in yield and profit were in the developing world. Do GM crops represent an economic opportunity for British farming, and does their lack represent a threat to British farming?

- The growing problem of herbicide and pesticide resistance in British agriculture, with black grass and aphids developing resistance to conventional sprays, and with increasing political opposition to new sprays. Does genetic modification offer an opportunity to improve plant and animal health?

RIDLEY

Letter from Lord Shutt of Greetland

Best way to establish devolution within England

The work of such a committee would take into account

- The lessons learnt from the asymmetrical Devolution now established in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London (together with the expected further devolution following the aftermath of the Scottish referendum and the Stormont House agreement)

- The attempts made to date in England with the “Combined Authorities”, Police Commissioners and the Local Enterprise Partnerships.
• The concerns that devolution should bring about Democratically Elected bodies that are understood by people even though beyond the scope of traditional Local Government.

• That all areas of England (urban, suburban and rural) are embraced within a system that is comprehensive and fair.

SHUTT OF GREETLAND

Letter from Lord Storey

Voter Registration

Can I suggest that an ad hoc Select Committee might address the issue of Voter Registration, how successive initiatives have been until now, and what possible initiatives could be considered for future efforts to highlight this particular issue?

STOREY

Letter from Lord Taverne

Religiously based gender discrimination

I would like to support the request made by Baroness Cox for the appointment of a select ad hoc committee to inquiere into religiously based gender discrimination. I believe that its incidence among Muslim women is a very serious social problem that has not had the attention it deserves.

TAVERNE

Letter from Lord Teverson

Social mobility and economic inequality

Outline remit

To consider the trends in the UK and comparative nations in social mobility over recent decades, and how increased mobility can be given new impetus. The enquiry would give special attention to the parallel trend of increasing economic and financial inequality in developed nations, and how these two policy areas can be reconciled for the future benefit of the UK, its citizens, its economy, and its cultural and social cohesion.

Why this subject?

The issue of social mobility has been a regular matter of debate in recent years because of the perception, together with strong evidence, that it is declining in the UK. All parties basically prescribe to the position that a society with a high level of social mobility is a healthy and dynamic one. Low social mobility causes long term structural social issues and less dynamic economic, social and political societies.

At the same time there is a parallel trend in developed nations that income inequality is increasing. It is also generally accepted that highly unequal societies are less effective and less healthy than more equal ones—though this is not an argument for ‘utopian’ equality of all.

Although each does not lead directly to the other (globalisation may arguably be a significant reason for economic inequality growth) they do feed on each other.
Greater social mobility could decrease the degree of economic inequality. Increasing economic inequality can make social mobility more difficult to achieve. There is an important dynamic between the two.

It is basically around how to give new impetus in these two areas to achieve a long term healthy and dynamic society and economy

TEVERSON

Letter from Baroness Thomas of Winchester

Equality Act 2010 (post-legislative scrutiny)

A post-legislative scrutiny committee to consider how effectively the Equality Act 2010 is working for people with disabilities.

I envisage the committee looking in particular at the extent to which both public and private sectors are fulfilling their obligations in the fields of education, employment, transport and access to goods and services, to enable disabled people to participate fully in, and contribute to, society with dignity and respect.

Any such committee might want to add to, or subtract from, this list of subjects—there are various possibilities, but now would seem the right time to see how the Act was working for people with disabilities. I declare an interest!

I would just add that Lord Holmes of Richmond, the Disabilities Commissioner for the Equality and Human Rights Commission, backs this proposal enthusiastically.

THOMAS OF WINCHESTER

Letter from Baroness Tyler of Enfield

Social mobility focussing on the transition from school to work

Introduction and background

Social mobility in the UK is a topical and pressing cross-cutting issue that requires the attention of Parliament in 2015. Over the past decade, there has been increasing political interest in the concept of social mobility; the extent to which an individual’s life chances are determined by the socio-economic circumstances into which he or she is born. The level of social mobility in a society is widely regarded as a yardstick of its fairness and equality, outwardly signalling whether citizens achieve social and economic status through hard work and ability, or as a result of advantages bestowed upon them by their parents. Absolute social mobility refers to changes in the labour market and occupational system that creates jobs for people to move into. Relative social mobility is the movement of individuals up and down the social scale.

Much of the research suggests that since the end of the so called “golden age” of social mobility sometime in the 1970s, the level of social mobility in British society has stagnated or even declined (but see section 2 below). Additionally, the UK continues to rank near the bottom of all OECD countries in relations to social mobility.

Specific statistics on the current state of social mobility in the UK are troubling. Although just 7% of pupils are privately educated, they account for 59% of our
cabinet ministers, 45% of our senior civil servants, 15 out of 17 of our Supreme Court judges and heads of division and 54% of our country’s leading journalists. Whilst 1 in 5 children are on free school meals, this can be said of just 1 in 100 Oxbridge entrants. Prominent members of all major political parties have expressed concern about this trend and the extent to which “the upper echelons of power are held overwhelmingly by the privately educated or the affluent middle classes” (quote from Sir John Major in late 2013).

New research questioning the existing orthodoxy

A notable feature of the debate around social mobility is that it appears to be regarded as an established fact that mobility in the UK is ‘grinding to a halt’ or even ‘going into reverse’. However, the evidence in support of this is starting to be contested. The most recent research undertaken on social mobility in the UK by researchers at the Universities of Southampton, Oxford and the LSE actually suggests a slight improvement in social mobility in the latter decades of the twentieth century. This disjuncture between evidence and perception is unfortunate, as effective interventions must start with a clear assessment of the problem. Thus an ad hoc Select Committee applying proper and transparent scrutiny to changes in social mobility in the UK would be of great value.

A notable feature of the debate is that education is universally seen as fundamental to increasing social mobility. It is, however, less clear that social mobility will automatically be enhanced by policies which seek to expand educational attainment at the population level. There are at least two reasons why this is so. First, the value of a qualification in the labour market can be expected to decrease, the more people obtain it. Thus, policy interventions which achieve small improvements in the level of education achieved by an entire cohort are unlikely to have any impact on relative social mobility. For instance, recent evidence from Southampton University shows that the raising of the school leaving age in 1973 had no effect on rates of social mobility. Second, people can and do change how they respond to policy measures in ways which serve to reinforce the status quo. For example, if more children from working class backgrounds obtain university degrees, then middle class parents respond in ways which maintain their children’s advantage in the labour market.

New research is also pointing up the link between growing income inequality and poorer social mobility. For example a new report from the OECD emphasises the negative association between income inequality and average educational attainment. There is also a significant body of research suggesting that rising inequality and lower social mobility are both features of what is sometimes called the “hollowing out” of the labour market. In other words the UK labour market is increasingly characterised by high skill, high wage jobs on the one hand and low skill, low wage jobs on the other.

Summary of Proposal

In summary my proposal is that one of the new ad hoc Committees should examine the new academic evidence on social mobility and consider its implications for policy interventions that will be effective in improving levels of relative social mobility. It would do this by focussing particularly on the transition from different types of schools to the workplace in terms of careers guidance, bridging the gap between teachers and employers, access to high quality vocational education and training post 16 including Apprenticeships, raising aspirations in
FE colleges and opening the doors to the professions through different access and progression routes.

The Committee would be able to take a long term perspective (15-20 years) and draw on international evidence from other countries that enjoy higher rates of social mobility than the UK.

**Recent Parliamentary Work on Social Mobility**

Parliamentarians in both Houses have been looking at social mobility for some time. There is already a solid foundation on which a Select Committee could build including the work of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility. However a Lords Select Committee on Social Mobility would provide a more prominent and weighty platform to examine the newly emerging research and its policy implications and to generate a national conversation.

**Interest to Peers**

Given the strong cross party interest in social mobility an ad hoc Lords Select Committee would be of interest to Peers across the political spectrum as well as to Cross Benchers who are experts in the relevant fields. Further, the challenge of improving social mobility is inherently multi-disciplinary, and therefore well suited to the wide range of experts currently sitting in the House of Lords.

**Conclusion**

The extent to which the circumstances of an individual’s birth, rather than merit, determine his or her chances in life remains a deeply troubling feature of British society. As legislators and policymakers, we can make an informed and weighty contribution towards remedying these social injustices. A Lords Select Committee on Social Mobility focussing on fair access to educational and vocational training and opening more doors to a career in the professions would provide the House and interested Peers with an ideal opportunity to carry out this task.

TYLER OF ENFIELD

**Letter from Lord Warner**

**Viability of delivering a two-State solution for Israel and Palestine**

This proposal has the full support of a number of Peers across the benches that I have consulted—Lords Alderdice, Cope, Hannay, Patel and Wright, together with Baronesses Blackstone, Morris, Tonge and Warsi. I have not yet heard from two other Peers that I have consulted—one Labour and one Lib Dem—but have no reason to think they would not be supportive. I am writing with the knowledge of those I have consulted.

The proposed remit for the Committee is “to examine the viability of delivering a two-State solution for Israel and Palestine.” We see the Committee tackling a prescribed set of practical issues in the time available to them. An illustrative set of such questions would be:

- What are the main issues that divide the two parties (e.g., borders, Jerusalem, the future of settlements, the Jordan valley, refugees, water) and what approaches might be helpful?
• What arrangements are feasible to assure the security of both States under a two-State solution?

• What are the responsibilities of all signatories of the 4th Geneva Convention to uphold International Humanitarian Law?

• What role can the UK most effectively play in international efforts to resolve the conflict, such as those by the EU, UN and regional peace initiatives?

The thinking behind this proposal is that formally at least both sides support a two-State solution and another look at practical issues might be a helpful contribution to this end before time runs out.

I hope the Liaison Committee will look sympathetically at the proposal. If you need more information do let me know. I am copying this to those whom I have consulted.

WARNER

Letter from Baroness Whitaker and Baroness Andrews

National policy for the built environment

This letter asks the Liaison Committee to consider the establishment of an ad hoc Select Committee on policy for the built environment in England. It sets out the reasons under the criteria identified by the Committee in their Report of 4 March 2014 (HL Paper 145).

Topicality

The pressures on the built environment are unprecedented. First we would cite the deep and widespread crisis in the supply of housing. There are three million adults aged 20-34 still living with their parents; there are 1.7 million people on the waiting list for affordable homes in England alone; house prices in London at least are fourteen times the average salary; and in the last fourteen years house prices have increased by 155%, while wages have increased by only 41%. The relation of this to built environment policy is two-fold: there is an issue of land availability, with not enough available land suitable for housing, and also one of housing land utilisation, that is, policies to encourage high density encourage the building of flats rather than houses, which in turn increases the demand for scarcer houses, thus putting up the price still further. There are perverse incentives to development which inhibit long-term good management of estates; and there is a lack of design capacity on the part of planning authorities which could make new applications more acceptable to local communities.

Also, the pressing need for new and renewed infrastructure makes demands upon policy-makers which compel choices in a difficult economic climate, where resources need to be balanced with unusual care, so that environmental sustainability and quality of life are not imperilled while growth is maintained.

In addition to controversies about density, there are issues about tall buildings in cities, about the tension between localism and integrated planning, about the role of the green belt and about the role of the historic environment as a national asset. The development of town and infrastructure planning has not recaptured its postwar energy, nor has it fully recovered from the low public esteem which followed trends of the sixties and seventies. Parliament has not had real
opportunities to reach views on these issues and informed opinion which can steer legitimised and authoritative guidance needs to be developed.

Current work on housing, such as the Lyons Review, and prospective studies to be carried out by Keith House and Natalie Elphicke MP, do not cover the whole field of built environment, and by the same token the Armit review of infrastructure does not extend to affordable housing. The Farrell review was a valuable objective beginning of national significance, but it does not have the same status as a Select Committee examination. A holistic view of all the choices facing policy-makers concerned with the built environment, with the authority of Parliament, is necessary.

**Importance**

It is hardly necessary to explain the importance of an equitable solution of the housing crisis, which affects millions of families. But intensive housing, whether as infill development, or as urban extensions, or in high-risk areas, such as flood plains, invites major controversy. Current attempts at solutions, such as Garden Cities, are being developed with haste, separately from considerations of the whole of their environment. The built environment has a significant influence on health, including from the amount and accessibility of recreational or park land in urban areas, the density and nature of the road network and the transport facilities and housing standards themselves. Poorly designed buildings, including housing, in the wrong place will leave the wrong legacy. Changes which cannot be undone and whose effect is large are undertaken in isolation from each other.

The crucial need for renewal of our infrastructure and its role in economic growth is well understood but also controversial. The National Planning Policy Framework is a considerable simplification and reduction from its 2010 predecessor, and there is scope for a fresh analysis of its implications.

To take a longer look at the development of contemporary pressing social issues, one could argue that while health became particularly salient about seventy years ago, and education gradually reached prominence during the last fifty years, the importance of place and what human intervention does to it in the form of the built environment has yet to be properly appreciated. The need for a better understanding is made acute by the challenge of sustainability and adaptation to climate change. This importance lies essentially in the profound impact of the built environment on thriving—on economic growth, wellbeing, social cohesion and sustainability.

**Use of experience and expertise of Members of the House**

This House is perhaps unique in the mix of expertise it can call on and the wealth of experience its members can offer. It is notable that in the debate on the built environment on 13 July, several of the 13 speakers mentioned that there should be an ad hoc Committee on this topic. Other members from all parts of the house have now expressed support for an ad hoc Select Committee, including Lord Best, Lord Deben, Baroness Ford, Lord Hunt of Chesterton and Lord Lloyd-Webber.

**Cross-departmental boundary themes**

The subject of this proposed Select Committee crosses many departmental boundaries, including DCLG, DCMS, DfT, DH, DECC, BIS and DEFRA.
We would also attach special importance to setting out recommendations for an implementation process and for monitoring our recommendations.

**Conclusion**

In short, the built environment is an area of public policy which has not been exposed to sustained scrutiny by the range of experience and expertise which this House can call on, and the UK is in great need of the benefits of such scrutiny.

WHITAKER, ANDREWS